

# Japan Now: September 2024

*Japan Now* is the email newsletter of the Consular Office of Japan in Anchorage

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## Harvest Moon

Day by day, Alaskan nights are starting earlier and getting chillier, all the better to look up at the sky to catch a glance at the Northern Lights. Unfortunately, the people of Japan don't have the opportunity to see the Northern Lights, but there is a tradition of looking up at the night's sky in September to see something else, the Harvest Moon, in an event known in Japan as Jugoya (the Fifteenth Night).

Long ago, the Full Moon was seen by townsfolk that relied on agriculture as a symbol of a bountiful harvest, so the people began making offerings of dango, sweets in the shape of the Moon made from that year's rice, bean, or potato harvest. This was done to receive the Harvest Moon's blessing and to give thanks for that year's harvest. Still today, many people celebrate Jugoya by holding Moon-viewing parties and making Tsukimi Dango (Moon-viewing dango).



### When is this year's "Harvest Moon?"

The Moon is said to be brightest, and therefore the most appropriate for these Moon-viewing parties, on the fifteenth night of the eighth month of the lunar calendar. This year, that would mean the Harvest Moon will appear on the night of **Tuesday September 17th, 2024**.

In Japan, this year's Harvest Moon will fall on the night before the Full Moon, so it will be a near-perfectly round Moon, great for celebrations. Alaska is even luckier! That night is predicted to be a Super Full Moon! Hopefully there won't be a single cloud in the night's sky.



## 2024 Summer Festival

On Sunday, August 11, the Consular Office of Japan in Anchorage and the Japanese Association of Alaska (JAA) co-hosted a summer festival at the Moose Lodge in Anchorage. Following the opening remarks given by JAA President George Tolbert and Head Consul Hamada welcoming the guests in attendance, short speeches were given by former Lt. Governor Mead Treadwell and State Representative Andrew Gray highlighting Japan's influence on Alaska's economy among other topics.

Aside from classic summer festivities like Bon-odori and Kingyo Sukui (a Summer Festival game where you have to scoop goldfish using a very thin paper net), there were also several performances of traditional Japanese arts like Taiko drumming, the Okinawan Sanshin, and even a live laido demonstration (the Japanese art of unsheathing a katana quickly for sudden attacks). Despite the rain-heavy beginning, the energy of the attendees made it an event to remember.

The Consular Office of Japan in Anchorage would like to thank everyone that attended and looks forward to working with JAA in the future to organize events like Summer Festival in order to showcase Japanese culture in Alaska.



## 2024 JET Program Participants Depart for Japan



On August 1st and 2nd, 2024 the Consular Office of Japan in Anchorage held a Pre-Departure Orientation and Luncheon for six new Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program participants from Alaska to prepare them to move and assist in English education at schools in Japan.

At the Pre-Departure Orientation, the new JET Program participants learned about travel procedures, their full orientation in Tokyo, and many tips about starting their new life in Japan. This included presentations from the travel agency that organized their flights and presentations from former JET program participants on teaching, living in Japan, and how to succeed on the JET Program. At the Luncheon, the six participants were joined by members of the Consular Office including Head Consul Kiyohiko Hamada, representatives from the Alaska JET Alumni Association (AKJETAA), as well as Paul Dunscomb, a

professor at the University of Alaska Anchorage who helped conduct the interviews for the six then candidates.

At the Luncheon, the JET Program participants were able to share where they were going to live and work in Japan, and the guests could share words of wisdom for their life and work in Japan. Head Consul Hamada wished the participants the best in their endeavors in Japan, and urged them to make the most of their new homes by taking part in local events.

Early on the morning of August 3rd, around 1 a.m., the six boarded their flight to Tokyo without incident. After a three-day orientation in Tokyo with all hundreds of other participants, they made their way to their placement locations all across Japan. This year's JETs were all placed in different prefectures; Hokkaido, Miyazaki, Tottori, Yamanashi, Toyama, and Kochi. The Consular Office of Japan in Anchorage looks forward to hearing about their experiences and hopes the participants continue to be a cultural bridge.



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## School Program



The Consular Office of Japan in Anchorage conducts in-person school visits by sending members of our staff to local schools.

Some of our past events have promoted cultural exchange through PowerPoint presentations about Japanese culture, origami and calligraphy events, and even traditional Japanese games like Kendama (known to many Americans as Cup-and-ball).

Our office performs visits to schools from elementary to high school level. If you would like to contact us about conducting a visit, please reach out to us.

Email: [inquiry-ak@se.mofa.go.jp](mailto:inquiry-ak@se.mofa.go.jp)

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