



[The Nippon Foundation News] Obon

Greetings from The Nippon Foundation. *Obon* is a summer holiday observed in Japan to honor one's ancestors, whose spirits are said to return to earth at this time. The holiday is primarily observed from August 13-15 according to the traditional Japanese lunisolar calendar, although in some regions it is observed in mid-July according to the Gregorian calendar. Although not an official public holiday, many businesses, restaurants, and shops close and at larger companies this is when many employees take their summer vacation. This makes it one of the busiest travel periods of the year, with many people in large cities returning to their hometowns to visit relatives and others using the time off to travel for leisure.

Obon traditions include community *Bon Odori* (Bon dance) festivals to welcome the ancestral spirits, hanging a lantern in front of one's house to guide the spirits home, visiting and cleaning the family grave and offering food, fireworks, and floating lanterns on a river or lake to guide the spirits back to the afterlife. At home, people make decorative figurines of animals using cucumbers and eggplants. *Shoryo-uma* are "spirit horses" made with cucumbers to bring the ancestral spirits home quickly, and *shoryo-ushi* are "spirit oxen" made with eggplants to send the spirits back to the spirit world slowly.



Traditional shoryo-uma and shoryo-ushi to welcome and send off ancestral spirits (left) and a whimsical variation as a place for the spirits to rest (right)

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“MetLife Foundation and The Nippon Foundation: ‘Better Life Better Place’ for the Elderly and Children” Program Opens New Facilities

Home hospice for older persons in Kagoshima and Children’s 3rd Place in Kiyose



MetLife Insurance K.K. (“MetLife Japan”) and The Nippon Foundation recently held ceremonies to mark the opening of MetLife Foundation Home Hospice Anma-no-Ie in Kagoshima City, Kagoshima Prefecture, on July 26, and MetLife Foundation Piccolo-no-Uchi Tanpopo, on May 22 in Kiyose City in Tokyo. Anma-no-Ie is the program’s second home hospice, offering people a final home where they can live out their days securely in a familiar, home-like atmosphere. Piccolo-no-Uchi Tanpopo is the program’s second Children’s 3rd Place, where children can spend their after-school hours in an environment that gives them self-esteem and skills that will allow them to become independent in the future.

[Full Article](#)

Seminar on Fully Autonomous Shipping Held

With more than 450 remote and in-person participants, increasing momentum toward general introduction



A seminar to provide the latest information related to fully autonomous shipping was held at The Nippon Foundation's head office in Tokyo on July 20. The seminar included a keynote address by an expert in autonomous shipping, a panel discussion on the potential for its implementation, and the announcement of the second stage of the MEGURI2040 Fully Autonomous Ship Program being carried out by The Nippon Foundation.

[Full Article](#)

'Tooth Memorial' Held for 50 Years in Saga Prefecture Transcends Time

Bringing smiles to children through Tooth Fairy project



The Tooth Fairy project is being carried out jointly by the Japan Dental Association and The Nippon Foundation, using discarded gold and silver used in dental procedures and collected by dentists across Japan, and converting it into cash that is used for various activities that contribute to society. Last summer, the project received a large donation of 6,574,666 yen from the Ogi-Taku Dental Association, who had half of a bucket of metal that they had collected and exchanged into cash for the donation.

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Yohei Sasakawa Blog

Chairman of The Nippon Foundation



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