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Jan., Apr., Jul., and Oct. issue

Naka Ward promotes the Naka Ward Multicultural Coexistence Promotion Action Plan to help non-Japanese residents build ties in the local community. This newsletter is published by Naka Ward in English and Chinese to provide foreign nationals with useful information on topics such as municipal administration, social programs and rules for everyday living.



Illustration: Anna

## Living My Own Way in This Community

Cosmopolitan Naka Ward is home to people from various places around the world who come from different cultures and have different roots. Even though there are differences in cultures and customs, many people seem to share the same thoughts and feelings about their daily lives.

You may find some hints for your daily life from what our interviewees have said (see p.2-3).

\* Nickname in Japanese (p.1).



Sam (Philippines)

### What surprised you about Japan?

For physical education, everyone changes clothes in the same classroom.

### What made you happy lately?

Spending Christmas with my family. In my home country, we eat pasta, and bread with jam.

### What is your favorite Japanese word?

愛 (love). I like both the kanji character and the meaning.



Ou-chan (China)

### What surprised you about Japan?

Bottled tea in Japan is unsweetened. Back home, such tea is sweet.

### What have you enjoyed lately?

Walking my dog, "Shacho (President)."

### What is your favorite word?

笑う (to laugh). When you laugh, it makes one approachable and easier to talk to.



Gurung-san (Nepal)

### What surprised you about Japan?

In addition to light foods and small items, convenience stores have everything, including ATMs.

### What is your favorite Japanese word?

The various words for greetings, such as こんにちは (Good afternoon), こんばんは (Good Evening) and おはようございます (Good Morning). In Nepal, there's only one—Namaste.



Erick (Brazil)

### What surprised you about Japan?

It is so safe in Japan that you can leave your cell phone unattended in a restaurant and it will still be there when you return to your seat.

### What is your favorite Japanese word?

美しい (beautiful). When naming my daughters, we researched kanji and included this in their names.



Anna (United States)

### What made you happy lately?

A study group session at a friend's house—we ate gyoza together. Also, after reviewing some difficult kanji one morning, I was happy to see several of those kanji in real life when I went for a walk.

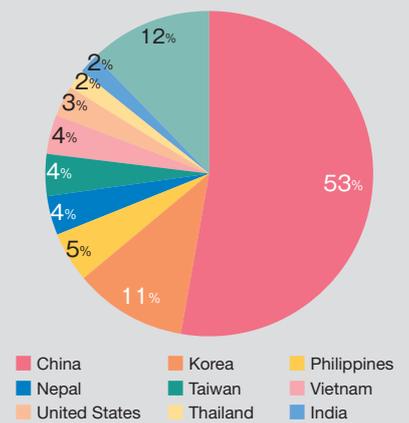
### What is your favorite kanji?

雨 (rain). It was the first kanji I learned after opening my Japanese dictionary for the first time.

One in 10 Naka Ward residents are foreign nationals. They come from various countries and regions.

### Population of foreign nationals

in Naka Ward: 17,301 (as of January 31, 2024)



From the Yokohama Statistical Information Portal

## My Future Dream is to be an English Teacher

Samantha Santiago Purificacion-san  
(from Philippines)

### Coming to Japan in the third year of junior high

For my future, I came to Japan to live with my mother and started attending a local junior high school. I couldn't speak Japanese so I was placed in an International Support Class (1) and “ひまわり (Himawari)” (2), where I studied with other foreign kids. My grade for my first *kokugo* (Japanese) test was terrible. So I decided I would master Japanese because I hate losing! I learned Japanese by using and speaking what I learned in my International Support Class and YouTube videos. When I took the high school entrance exam, I used the system for Special Admission for Prefectural Foreign Residents, etc. (3), even though I found the Japanese language difficult.

When I first arrived in Japan, I tried speaking to my classmates in English, but their responses were in Japanese—making me feel there was a language barrier. That's how I started dreaming of teaching English in Japan. Although I'm anxious about my future, I'm gaining experience and studying to achieve this dream.

## Enjoying quality time with local activities

When I was in high school, I studied in the free space at Naka International Lounge (6). A staff member approached me and I started volunteering as a translator and interpreter for local events. I would like to improve my English abilities. I also want to interact with people with ties to other countries and do something for everyone.

Now that I'm a university student, I also volunteer as a learning support worker. Teaching is also a way to learn with others. At Naka International Lounge, I can enjoy my time and ask for advice about my worries.



### To students who come to Japan as junior high students

I just want to say, study without giving up. It may be difficult right now, but I hope you do your best now so that you can do what you want as an adult.

## I Want to Spread My Father's Cooking across Japan

Xin Yi Wang-san  
(from China)

### Just enjoy my life

I've lived in Japan since I was seven. I didn't go to school at first. I enjoyed playing in front of my father's restaurant, talking to the customers and the staff at neighboring stores about various things. I entered a Japanese elementary school from in the 4th grade. Although my Japanese was not good enough, I played games like tag with my classmates. In any case, I think it's OK as long as it's fun. I also joined the International Support Class (1) at my school, where I had many Chinese friends.



When I was in the 6th grade, one day my father unexpectedly showed up for the parent-child meeting with my teacher, and he found out that I wasn't studying well. He got very angry. Even though my father was very busy at

work, he started getting up every morning at 4 a.m. to study with me, so my academic performance improved dramatically. I am grateful that my father did not give up on me.

### “小青椒 (Xiao Qing Jiao),” a restaurant serving authentic Sichuan cuisine

I planned to go to China after graduating high school, but I changed my mind after my father asked me if I wanted to work with him at the restaurant. My father makes Sichuan dishes with authentic flavors, but he also tries to create new dishes that combine both Japanese and Chinese flavors. I want many people to experience my father's taste.

### What I think is good about living here

Since there are many foreign nationals living in Naka Ward, I can be myself. Even at school, you're just one of the students. We're not different just because we have different nationalities or origins.

The best thing about living here is being able to think and act on my own. I think you can try whatever you want as long as it doesn't cause trouble for others. You may have worries and stress, but it may not actually be that big of a deal. Just think about things in a simple way and try to do what you want to do.

## Opening My Own Restaurant

Ram Raja Gurung-san  
(from Nepal)

### The road to opening “ナマステポカラ (Namaste Pokhara)”

It's hard to find work in Nepal even if you've graduated from university, so I came to Japan 17 years ago. From that time, I started thinking that it would be nice to have my own restaurant.

In Nepal, the food is mainly dishes such as curry soups, beans, vegetables and rice. We don't eat much naan. Since Nepalese cuisine wasn't well-known in Japan at the time, I learned about Indian cooking at a restaurant in Tokyo. I needed to gain various kinds of knowledge to open my own restaurant.

After a while, I found a good location near Hinode-cho Station, where I opened my place.

The food is adjusted to Japanese tastes. Since this area now has a growing number of Nepalese students, I also started offering authentic Nepalese dishes.



### Japanese is difficult

I studied Japanese for about three months before coming to Japan, but Japanese is still hard for me. When I worked at the restaurant in Tokyo, it was both fun and educational talking with customers and chatting in Japanese and English with the part-time students who worked as staff.

### My family's arrival

Japan is considered to be a “dream country” in Nepal. My family wanted to live in Japan with me, so they came afterward. After arriving, my elementary school-aged child had difficulties at first and disliked going to school. My wife accompanied him to school daily for about a month, and then he was fine after that. He now sometimes interprets Japanese for me.

### What I want others to know about living in Japan

Some things that are acceptable back home are not acceptable here in Japan. For example, the way of putting out garbage (4) is different. It's also frowned upon to make noise on the train, at home or at night.

# I Want to Contribute to Japanese Society, Not Just Live Here

**Erick Magario-san**  
(from Brazil)

## The reason I came to Japan

I came to Japan eight years ago for work. Because I'm a third generation Brazilian of Japanese descent, I was exposed to both cultures since I was small. I especially like Japan's culture of respecting others, Japanese cuisine and hot springs. I live with my wife and two children, both of whom were born in Japan. My oldest attends an international school. I would like to continue living in Japan because it is safe and has good services. I want to not only live here, but also contribute to Japanese society.

## Joining the Fire Corps

I joined the Fire Corps (5) in 2022 after seeing a recruitment poster at a shrine. Even back in Brazil, I was a Boy Scout and helped out at local events because I loved helping people. Fire

Corps activities, such as water cannon training and events at Yamashita Park, are fun. The other members I work with have a wealth of experience and hold a variety of occupations. One of the great things about joining the Fire Corps was being able to gain knowledge by listening to various stories about life in Naka Ward and about its history and buildings. The uniforms are cool and, most of all, I'm happy to be able to support the lives of Naka Ward residents.

## Upholding one's own culture

The cultural differences between our own country and Japan can sometimes be confusing, but it is important to understand and try to integrate into Japanese culture. Also, the culture of your home country and local region should not be forgotten. I believe that Japan can be an even better society if we can communicate our own cultures to Japan to create a diverse culture.



# Applying My Experiences in Japan Back Home

**Anna Schnell-san**  
(from the United States)

## 10 months of study at IUC

I came to Japan last August to attend the Inter-University Center for Japanese Language Studies (IUC). I've been interested in Japanese pop culture since I was very young. I started studying Japanese on my own because I wanted to be able to read manga in Japanese. At IUC, I'm learning the Japanese language, Japanese popular culture and business manners. I am not really a fan of big cities, but I have come to like Yokohama because of spots like the *sen*to (public bath) in Isezaki-cho.

## Memorable volunteer activities

When I first arrived, I mistakenly went to the Naka International Lounge (6) instead of the ward office. My encounter with the lounge staff at that time led me to volunteer at the "Naka Ward Multi-cultural Festival." I love drawing pictures. Pictures can communicate without words. At the "Naka Ward Multi-cultural Festival," I ran a booth for portraits. It was fun to get closer to

people from different countries. It was especially moving to be able to interact with more than one person with disabilities at the event and to see the joy on their faces and in their voices. I haven't had as many opportunities to do this in the States. It is a memory I will cherish. In Japan, I often see physically challenged people doing things independently. Barrier-free public facilities in Japan are wonderful. I also work as a translator for a support group for the disabled. I hope to continue to use my Japanese skills to volunteer after I return to the States.



## After returning home

After returning to the States, I would like to work as a translator of Japanese pop culture works such as manga. There are always conflicts between different countries around the world. However, I believe that such conflicts can be prevented by finding connections. Having experienced life in Japan, I would like to become a bridge between Japan and the United States by accurately translating into English and explaining Japanese culture.



Illustration: Anna

### Tell Me More!

## About the groups and information mentioned in the interviews

### (1) International Support Class

International Support Class is located at public schools where there are a certain number of students with overseas ties who require Japanese language instruction. This class also provide guidance for Japanese language, school subjects and adjusting to life in Japan.

### (2) "ひまわり (Himawari)" (Japanese Language & Cultural Learning Support Center)

For children who have just arrived in Japan, Himawari offers intensive Japanese language instruction, guidance for adjusting to school, and guidance in the native language for children and their parents. Preschool classes are also available. Those who wish to attend should first consult with their child's school.

### (3) Special Admission for Prefectural Foreign Residents, etc.

This is one type of entrance examination for public high schools in Kanagawa Prefecture. The approved specified NPO Multicultural Education Network Kanagawa (ME-net) provides entrance examination information for public high schools in multiple languages.



### (4) Putting out garbage

Separate garbage following the rules and place it out for collection on the designated day. Always put out garbage on the collection day before 8 a.m.



### (5) Fire Corps

The Fire Corps consist of people who normally have their own jobs or studies but also serve as disaster prevention leaders in their communities. When a disaster strikes, the Fire Corps work to protect their communities by helping those nearby and, carrying out firefighting activities.



(in Japanese)

**International Service Staff**  
Naka Ward Office (2nd floor)  
English 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. Chinese 8:45 a.m. - 3:45 p.m.

International Service Staff provide assistance with matters such as guidance on Naka Ward Office activities, interpretation at various ward office counters and support for filling out certificate applications. Stop by if you would like assistance.

### Change in operating days for Naka Ward Community Activity Center and Naka International Lounge

Operating hours changed from April 1!

#### Naka Ward Community Activity Center

Monday-Friday 9:00 a.m.-9:00 p.m.  
Saturday and 2nd/4th Sunday, 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

#### Naka International Lounge

Monday-Saturday and 2nd/4th Sunday, 9:15 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

Closed: 1st/3rd/5th Sunday, national holidays, Dec. 29-Jan. 3

### (6) Naka International Lounge

Provides consultations and information for foreign residents in multiple languages. Japanese language classes are also offered. English- and Chinese-speaking staff are available each day. Please feel free to stop by.

TEL: 045-210-0667 Email: nakalounge@yoke.or.jp





# Sharing Favorite Spots

## Go for a Visit

A pleasant spring day is perfect for a walk! For this issue, we asked interviewees their favorite spots in and around Naka Ward. So why not go for a visit on your own or with family or friends?

For shopping or for a place where children can play, go to Sakuragi-cho or Minato Mirai★



Photo from the Naka Ward Photo Contest "Nakaku inel"



I really like the park near my home (Chitose Park) and its rocket 🚀



Yamashita Park — you can see the ocean, flowers, ships and even the sunrise 🌅

Photo from the Naka Ward Photo Contest "Nakaku inel"



Nogeyama Zoo is fun and free for both children and adults!

I go for walks with my dog at Negishi Forest Park 🌳

I love Sankeien Garden because it has so much greenery 🌿



I love to sit in a fast food store in Isezaki Mall and watch people and dogs walking by 🐕



Photo from the Naka Ward Photo Contest "Nakaku inel"



Photo from the Naka Ward Photo Contest "Nakaku inel"

## Thoughts of a Foreign Resident Life and Culture in Japan



## Sincere Communities in Japan



Although I had been living in Japan for several years, there were few Japanese people that I had a deep relationship with. Once my child arrived in Japan, I would talk with my child's teacher and some of the other mothers at school, and I talk the most about my child's kendo club. The club was started by local Japanese mothers and kendo instructors.

Before joining the club, I had a stereotype in my mind from TV dramas, so I was worried whether the instructor and Japanese mothers would accept foreigners. Although my heart pounded when I contacted the club, I immediately received a reply welcoming to us to join.

My child has been practicing kendo several times a week since then, but all the instructors genuinely care for the children regardless of nationality. The mothers also treat me with sincerity. When we first

joined, they explained the precautions and rules, and prepared a kendo uniform for my child. On days when I am busy with my work and cannot accompany my child to practice, the instructors and other mothers provide help. For busy parents, the instructors have even helped by picking up and dropping off children.

One instructor said, "When I was young, we were busy with work and childcare, but now that I'm retired, I'm very happy to be able to help young parents in the community."

Hearing these words, I felt warmth and happiness like I had never felt since coming to Japan.

(Naka International Lounge Chinese Language Staff)

## Good to Know! About Japanese Culture

## おにぎり Onigiri (Rice Ball)

An introduction to seasonal events and Japanese culture in terms of food, clothing and housing.



Photo from the Naka Ward Photo Contest "Nakaku inel"

Onigiri is a common Japanese food that is said to have originated in the first century. There are four types today: triangular, round, flattened round or cylindrical. There is also a new, popular style of onigiri called onigirazu, which can be eaten like a sandwich and contains any fillings you would like to add for unlimited flavor variations.

### <How to make a round tuna mayonnaise onigiri>

- (1) Open a can of tuna and drain off the oil. Place the tuna on top of two paper towels to further absorb any remaining oil.
- (2) Take the drained tuna from (1) and add an equivalent amount of mayonnaise, then mix well. (Add pepper to taste if you like.)
- (3) Half-fill a rice bowl with cooked rice, pressing down in the middle with your fingers to create a well. Add an appropriate amount of the tuna mixture from (2), then lightly add a layer of rice to cover it.
- (4) Place another rice bowl upside down on the first and gently shake them together several times to create a perfectly round rice ball. (Instead of another rice bowl, you can place a large piece of plastic wrap in the rice bowl at the beginning of (3) so it hangs over the edge of the bowl. After adding the ingredients from (3), you can bring the edges of the wrap together and form the rice ball in your hands. Freshly cooked rice is hot, so be careful.)
- (5) Finally, lightly sprinkle the rice ball with salt and slip it into a sheet of *nori* seaweed.



We are always looking for locations to distribute *Naka Ward Town News*. If you have many foreign visitors to your shop, clinic, organization, etc. and would like to make this newsletter available to them, please contact us at 045-224-8123 to arrange delivery. The next issue will be published on July 1.