

MURORAN TIMES



January 1, 2009 No.231

Muroran City Office 1-2 Saiwai-cho, Muroran,
Hokkaido 051-8511 JAPAN <0143-22-1111>

News and Topics



Study Tour in Thailand Suspended

Muroran Institute of Technology (Muroran IT) decided to suspend “2008 Study Tour in Thailand”, because of the political unrest in Thailand. Muroran IT made a sister relationship with King Mongkut’s Institute of Technology Ladkrabang and Chiang Mai University in 2005. Since then, there has been a study tour every year. Usually about ten people join in it and the participants have had precious experiences such as cultural exchange.

This year five students were supposed to participate in the tour, which was intended to be from December 23rd to January 9th. They had planned to pay a visit to the sister universities for cultural exchange, visit temples and ruins, drop in a village in the mountainside, visit a Japanese-Siamese company and other activities. After reviewing the situation, Muroran IT is going to discuss about the tour again.

Incidentally, a group of seven people, including the President of Chiang Mai University, who was supposed to visit Muroran IT on December 1st for the first time, could not come, because of the closure of the Thai International Airport. In addition, the “International Conference on Materials Processing Technology”, which was expected to be held from December 6th to 11th, was postponed until March next year.

むろらん こうぎょう だいがく タイ 国内の せいじ じょうきょう
室蘭工業大学では、タイ国内の政治状況が
ふあんてい しまいこう がくせい はけん
不安定なため、タイの姉妹校へ学生を派遣するツ
アーを中止しました。

Guide Book for Civic Activities Completed

A booklet named “Guide Book For Civic Activities in Muroran”(A5, 90 pages) was completed. The Muroran Civic Activity Center made 1,200 copies. The booklet contains the introduction of civic activities by 67 groups registered at the center, the introduction of support systems and some counselors, questions and answers about the civic activities, and so on. The center wants more and more people to join in the activities there. Therefore, the center made the booklet targeting those who are interested in doing something, but haven’t come because of lack of information, and those who are hesitate to join.

The copies are available at the center and Ranto District Office (Municipal Service Center) in JR Higashi-Muroran Station.

むろらんちいき しみんかつどう
室蘭地域の市民活動をわかりやすくまとめたり、
かつどうだんたい しょうかい かんせい
活動団体を紹介したガイドブックが完成しました。

Junior High School

Students Visit Knoxville



Muroran City has been sending local junior high school students to Knoxville, Tenn. US for friendship exchange every year, and this year 12 students were sent from October 27 to November 5.

They had friendly exchanges with Knoxville students, visited Tennessee University and enjoyed Halloween parties during their visit, staying with host families.

The City Office had a briefing meeting after they returned home and all the students who were sent attended.

At the meeting, they expressed their impressions of their visit such as, “I realized the differences of culture between Japan and America.”, “I felt much regret for my poor English.” or “My host family entertained me very warmly as a member of their true family.”

The City Office plans to publish the students’ presentation as “Knoxville Report ’08” in the near future.

アメリカの姉妹都市であるテネシー州ノックスビルに
派遣された中学生12人の帰国報告会が開催され
ました。

Information and Invitations

Robot Soccer Contest



[Date] January 10(Sat), 11(Sun) 10:00a.m. –
[More Information] Muroran Institute of
Technology (Tel: 0143-46-5124)

Gardening Photograph Panel Exhibition

[Date] January 13(Tue) – 30(Fri) 9:00a.m. -
5:00p.m * January 30 is 4:00p.m.

[Place] Historical Muroran JR Station
[More Information] City Planning Division,
Park Section, Muroran
City Office (Tel: 0143-25-2603)

Fire Fighters New Year Parade of Fire

Brigades

[Date] January 11(Sun) 11:00a.m. -
[Place] *Ranran* Bridge (Nakajima-cho)
[Contents] Marching and Songs by the young
steeplejacks group, Draining water with fire
fighting vehicle
[More Information] Fire fighting headquarters
Administration Section (Tel: 0143-41-4131)

Illumination Factory at Muroran IT

Muroran Institute of Technology (Muroran IT)
will be decorated with 20,000 colorful lights
and 100 Ice candles for 2 days. The event
team plans to serve hot drinks.
[Date] January 24(Sat), 25(Sun) 5:00p.m. –
10:00p.m. * Note: January 26(Mon) – 30(Tue)
only the illumination will be lit.
[More Information] Muroran Institute of
Technology studio events: (Tel: 090-5592-9139)



Courses at the youth training center

• Hand-made noodle class

[Date] January 10(Sat) 10:00a.m. ~ 1:00p.m.
[Admission Fee] 2000 yen
[Application] by telephone until January 7

• Eco-candle making class

[Date] January 17(Sat) 10:00a.m. ~ 11:30a.m.
[Admission Fee] 500 yen
[Application] by telephone until January 14
[Limit] each class is limited to the first 10
people * by lottery if number of applicants
exceeds 10
[More Information] Youth Training Center (Tel:
0143-47-5824)

Noboribetsu Hot Spring Festival

[Date] February 3(Tue), 4(Wed)
[Place] *Noboribetsu* Hot Spring Park
[More Information] *Noboribetsu* Sightseeing
Association (Tel: 0143-84-3311)



LETTERS

from Visitors to Muroran



(1) Thank You So Much for Your Hospitality

Jerry and I can't begin to thank your beautiful
city for its gracious hospitality and wonderfully
warm welcome you gave our ship during our
Asian Cruise this fall. We sailed for 31 days on
the Grand Princess and docked at your pier on
September 27, 2008.

Never in all our years of traveling and sailing
have we been greeted more warmly by local
residents. We especially appreciated the English
greeters stationed all along the bus route. They
were full of smiles and very helpful. One young
woman went so far out of her way as to walk us
to an ATM several blocks away and ensure we
received our money.

The young children singing at the Welcome
Center were also delightful and brought a tear

to our eyes as they sang one of John Denver's popular songs, "Take Me Home ... West Virginia", as Jerry is from West Virginia.

What a pleasant surprise and delightful time we had in your city and country. Your gracious welcome reflects so favorably on your city and your country.

WE WILL BE BACK.

Thank you again.



Susan and Jerry

(2) Hello, City of Murooran!

My husband and I visited your City on Sunday, September 28, 2008 while on a cruise aboard the Diamond Princess.

We were very impressed with the dockside greeting by all of the young people, the complimentary bus service, the help and friendliness of your citizens for the time we spent in town, and the farewell performance of your very talented dancers. Such a performance was an experience we had never enjoyed while on a cruise ship before!

Your City did an outstanding job of making the passengers and crew of the Diamond Princess feel welcome in your lovely City!

Debbie and Greg Bourque
Calgary, Alberta
Canada

Japanese Cooking 205

Tofu, Pork ,and Vegetable Soup, Kenchin-style けんちん汁

- Ingredients (serve four) -

Cotton-seived tofu cake (150 g)		1/2
Pork loin (thinly sliced)	150 g	
Fresh shiitake mushrooms	4	
Carrot	50 g	
Boiled bamboo shoots	50 g	
Konnyaku	50g	
Trefoil	1 bunch	
Vegetable oil	2 tablespoons	

《Soup》

- broth 600 cc
- salt 1 teaspoon
- soy sauce 2 teaspoons

《starch-water mixture》

- cornstarch 2 tablespoons
- water 2 tablespoons



Fresh ginger juice 1 teaspoon

Seven-spice pepper to taste

Directions

- (1) Crumble tofu coarsely by hand.
- (2) Cut pork into bite-sized pieces.
 Slice shiitake mushrooms caps, carrot, and bamboo shoots into 4cm strips.
 Slice konnyaku into thin rectangular slabs.
 Cut trefoil into 3 cm lengths.
- (3) Heat oil in a pot, and cook pork, koyyaku, and tofu quickly.
 Add carrot, bamboo shoots, and shtir-fry.
- (4) Add broth, salt, and soy sauce to season.
 Add trefoil.
- (5) Thicken soup with the starch-water mixture, and add ginger juice.
- (6) Transfer to soup bowls, and sprinkle with seven-spice pepper, if you like.

About Japan

Shougatsu

For the Japanese *shougatsu* serves to punctuate life with an annual beginning and end. *Shougatsu* is a time when government offices, private companies, schools, and everyone else takes a few days off to celebrate the arrival of a new year. The Japanese word for January, *Ichigatsu* (first moon), reflects *shougatsu*'s original significance as the beginning of the lunar year, a time when families paid their respects to their ancestors and prayed for successful crops. Nowadays, however, the first



week of January is generally referred to as shougatsu and is celebrated as simply the start of the new year.

Come late December, and Japanese homes are abuzz with activity as housewives clean the house and garden, set traditional pine ornaments called *kado-matsu* outside the front door to welcome ancestral spirits, and prepare holiday foods such as *o-sechi-ryouri*, *zoumi*, and *mochi*. Just prior to the new year's arrival is the big urban exodus – a period of several days during which every transportation artery is clogged with people leaving the city to return to their ancestral village or to take a vacation trip. On New Year's Eve it is common to eat soba noodles to symbolize long life and continuity across the years. Many people also sit awake far into the night on New Year's Eve with their family members to share the joy of having spent the outgoing year in good health, as they listen to shrine or temple bells ringing (*joya no kane**) just before the arrival of the New Year.

Many special events take place during the first week of the new year, and especially during the first three days. The two most typical are the first visit to a shrine or temple where people gather to pray for good fortune during the year ahead, and the formal New Year's calls paid on relatives, company superiors, and anyone else to whom you have become indebted during the past year. It is also during this week that Japanese women, most of whom ordinarily wear Western clothing, take the trouble to put their hair up and wear traditional *kimono*. New Year's calls have to some extent been replaced by *nengajou* (New Year's cards), an indispensable part of *shougatsu* if only because receiving large numbers of *nengajou* is an indication of high social status. *Otoshidama* - small gifts of money from parents and relatives - is a treat for the children.

Relations between 12 Signs of the Zodiac and Years

The calendar, introduced into Japan from China in ancient times, had 12 signs of the zodiac. In ancient China these 12 zodiac signs were used to denote the Directions, Hours and Years. The Japanese invented their own 12

zodiac symbols, using 12 symbolic animals, to facilitate calendar reading.

The zodiac symbols, represented by animals, revolve in the order of rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, sheep, monkey, rooster, dog and boar – a cycle of 12 years. Of these symbolic animals, only the dragon is an imaginary creature.

Today in Japan, the Christian Era system and Japanese Era system are in concurrent use, for example, A.D.2005 and the 17th year of *Heisei*. Nowadays, for the Japanese, the traditional zodiac symbols are a conversation item. The year 2008 is, for instance, the year of the rat. This means the following year will be the year of the ox. Japanese people will celebrate the beginning of the year 2009 by drawing ox on New Year's greeting cards (*nengajou*).

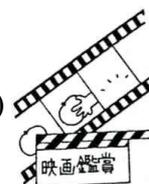
When asked "In what year were you born?" Japanese will answer, for example, "In the year of the rabbit," or "In the year of the monkey," according to the 12 zodiac symbols.



Cinema Guide

Muroran Gekijo (Higashi-machi)

- 1.K-20怪人二十面相伝 (Japanese)
- 2.映画たまごっち (Japanese cartoon)
- 3.252～生存者あり (Japanese)
- 4.WALL・E



About the Muroran Times

The Muroran Times is designed to bring information about local events to the international community of Muroran. Staff: MuroITani Yoichi, Ishizawa Yuko, Yamashita Mayumi, Tagashira Kazui, Nomura Ikuko, Nakamura Mari, English advisor: Jane Takizawa.