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Happy New Year! In 2012, Fukushima prefecture will continue its steady movement toward revitalization like last year. Please take a look at the current scenery of Fukushima prefecture. You can also vie or download this newsletter in Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Portuguese, Tagalog and French versions on our website.

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## Scenery of Fukushima



**The winter season begins in Aizu  
(12.29.2011, Koriyama city)**

Snow has quietly settled on Mt. Bandai and ski resorts are packed with skiers and snowboarders. Swans from Siberia have stopped by Lake Inawashiro for the winter. Although this is a scene I have seen throughout my entire life, somehow I felt much relieved this time.



**Hatsumoude  
(New Year's visit to a shrine)  
(1.1.2012, Fukushima city)**

Citizens gathered at Inari shrine on the first day of 2012. On this day, people would set up shops as if this were a festival. There were shops with special featured products such as amazake (a kind of sweet mild sake) and taiyaki (fish-shaped cake filled with red bean paste). Along the roadside, lucky charms such as the Daruma doll (an ornament shaped like egg with a human face) were displayed as people believe the charms will bring happiness in life.



**Coming of Age Ceremony  
(1.8.2012, Fukushima city)**

The coming of age ceremony was held in Fukushima Kokutai Memorial Gymnasium where more than 2,300 people who just became the age of twenty were in attendance. The female attendees waiting outside the venue dressed up in furisode, (a traditional kimono for unmarried women) while the male attendees dressed up in suits. The attendees took a brief moment to greet the friends whom they have not met for a long time and the joy on their faces can be seen in this picture.



## Voice of Fukushima

### **Hasegawa Isako (Female, Koriyama city)**

I was in Paraguay when the earthquake struck. When I saw the news on T.V., I said to myself, "This is terrifying and to be honest, I did not think Fukushima can make it." In August, my husband and I returned to Koriyama after he finished his job. I feel very fortunate that our house was not severely damaged by the earthquake. However, as I was very concerned with the radiation issue, I followed the decontamination procedure and cleaned my garden and the exterior walls of my house. Even now, I still receive numerous Emails from my friends overseas who are worried and ask me what the situation is like in Fukushima. Although humans grow hatred toward each other because of wars, I still have faith in human nature. The message I want to convey to those who are not in Fukushima prefecture and those who are overseas is that life is back on track in Fukushima and I am happy to be here with my family.

**Sasaki Kazuhiko (Male, Sukagawa city)**

The population in Sukagawa city used to be approximately 80,000 citizens. However, when I did a comparison of the population between December 2010 and 2011, I realized there was a decrease of around 2,000 people. I believe this was caused by the effects of radiation. After the quake, I feel that most families with small children have moved out from the prefecture. As a volunteer teacher, I teach Japanese to foreign residents but after the earthquake, one of my students from Kazakhstan moved to Tokyo with his family. At this age, I am not overwhelmed with what is happening at the moment. However, for families with small children, the parents must be very worried and therefore, they try to avoid products from Fukushima. I believe the best way to revive Fukushima is to have people from overseas to come to the prefecture and witness the current situation firsthand.

**Lopez Ken (From Philippines, Male, Fukushima city)**

I live with my wife and three kids. After the earthquake, the water and gas services were down and as we were all very frightened by the news of the explosion of the power plants, we decided to evacuate to Tokyo on March 16<sup>th</sup>. We went back to the Philippines after a brief stay in Tokyo. As I had to return to work, I left my kids with my parents and came back to Fukushima with my wife in May. Although I talk to my kids via Skype, the fact that I cannot meet them in person truly frustrates me. I am planning to bring my kids back to Fukushima in March because of some visa matters yet I am worried about radiation. Will my kids be able to run around outdoors? What are some of the foods to avoid? How long can they stay in an environment like this? I am agonized yet nothing can be done to ease my anxiety.

**Suh Kyungmi (From U.S.A., Female, Iwaki city)**

Our house was completely damaged by the earthquake so right after the quake, I stayed at an evacuation centre with my son and later moved to a friend's place. As my husband was working in America at that time, our family was not able to reunite until March 18<sup>th</sup>. Although we have found a new place to stay, we are having a very difficult time adjusting to the new environment. Our family is planning to move to Kagoshima this summer as my husband has landed a new job there. It has already been 10 months since the earthquake and every day on the news, all I hear is "reconstruction", "radiation", and "decontamination". In the beginning, I was in great panic so I had no time to think about other things but honestly, I am tired of hearing these similar stories every day. What I really need right now is to find a way to heal my soul.

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