

Announcing a Customer Harassment Policy

It was learned on July 13 that the Takashimaya Department Store has published its basic policy regarding customer harassment on its website. According to Takashimaya, it is rare for retail businesses, which deal with a large number of customers, to publicly announce its policy on customer harassment. It seems to be the first time for a major department store to do so. To protect their employees, the store clearly states that if they determine that customer harassment has occurred, they may stop serving the person and ban the customer from the store. Acts that they deem to be customer harassment include "denying the personality of the employees or making discriminatory remarks," "posting personal information on social media," and "demand for groveling." They point out that there have been some cases in which the thoughtless words and actions of a very small number of customers have harmed the work environment. They don't provide detailed examples of past cases.

In 2022, the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare created a customer harassment manual for businesses, emphasizing the need for companies to formulate basic policies on customer harassment on their own. However, it appears that only a few businesses, such as railways and airlines, have published their policies for the public to see. One department store source said, "We have formulated countermeasures internally, but we are not sure how customers will react to them, so we have not made them public." Takashimaya said, "We aim to show the public that we are firmly committed to dealing with customer harassment. We believe it leads to building trust with customers." (July 14, Ehime Shimbun)

American Taiko Drumming Group Performs in Celebration of the Full Reopening of the Dogo Onsen Main Building

A commemorative event was held on July 5th in the courtyard of the Asuka-no-Yu annex in Dogo-yunomachi (Matsuyama City), ahead of the full reopening of Dogo Onsen Main Building on July 11th. The event featured a powerful performance by Fushicho (Phoenix) Daiko, a Japanese taiko drumming group based in Arizona, USA.

Esther Vandecar, the group's leader, first came to Japan in 1983 as an English teacher and taught at junior high schools in Matsuyama City for about 10 years. Inspired by professional taiko performances, she learned the techniques from taiko groups inside and outside the prefecture, and after returning to the US, she

founded Fushicho Daiko in Arizona in 1992. The group has continued to perform at local events.

Although the older Ms. Vandecar could not participate this time, 14 members of the group came to Japan. On the 5th, the members, dressed in matching happi (kimono-style jacket), energized the audience with their synchronized performance and emphatic shouts of "sei!" and "ha!".

(July 6, Ehime Shimbun Online)

Michelin Unveiled its MICHELIN Key honorees

Nihon Michelin Tire Co., Ltd. announced the accommodations in Japan selected by their own evaluation method. At the highest rank, 3 Michelin keys, providing an extraordinary stay, six facilities including the Palace Hotel Tokyo, Gora Kadan at Hakone in Kanagawa, and Hotel the Mitsui Kyoto were listed.

There are five criteria. 1. destination-worthy locations; 2. architecture and interior design; 3. quality of service, maintenance and comfort; 4. the unique essence of the hotel; 5. consistency between price paid and experience.

17 accommodations were ranked as 2 Michelin keys, an exceptional stay, and 85 as 1 Michelin key, a very special stay. There is another category "Selected" which is recognized as "Superb" but not enough to award a key. 135 were evaluated as "Selected".

In Ehime, the Setouchi Retreat by Onko Chishin in Matsuyama was given 1 Michelin key and Kiya Ryokan in Uwajima was recognized as Selected.

(July 4, Ehime Shimbun Online)

Mobile Terminals Installed at Matsuyama Airport

"Biocarts", mobile terminals for taking foreign travelers' photographs and fingerprints while they wait in line at immigration, were installed at Matsuyama Airport. The time to go through the immigration process can be shortened to two-thirds the time and it is expected to improve the convenience of foreign visitors.

In usual practice, visitors present their passports and immigration cards at the counter, and then inspectors take photographs and fingerprints. The biocarts can help them finish the procedures before approaching the counter. The prefecture applied for the installment to the Ministry of Justice for smooth inspection at Matsuyama Airport in February, and the Immigration Services

Agency has installed four machines.

(July 3, Ehime Shimbun Online)

New Banknotes Arrive in Ehime

The issuance of new 10,000, 5,000, and 1,000 yen banknotes began on July 3rd. In the prefecture, the Matsuyama branch of the Bank of Japan distributed a total of 16.7 billion yen to various financial institutions, which were then delivered to the branches. At the Iyo Bank head office in Matsuyama City, about 15 people lined up before the bank opened at 9 a.m. to get their hands on the newly designed notes.

This is the first design update since 2004. The 10,000 yen banknote features Shibusawa Eiichi, an entrepreneur known as the father of Japanese capitalism; the 5,000 yen banknote features Tsuda Umeko, who devoted herself to promoting higher education for modern women; and the 1,000 yen banknote features Kitasato Shibasaburo, a bacteriologist who developed a treatment for tetanus. The banknotes feature the latest anti-counterfeiting technology, including the world's first "3D hologram", which makes the portraits appear to change direction. The numerals indicating the face value of the banknotes have also been enlarged.

(July 3, Ehime Shimbun Online)

Ehime University Registered as Heart Transplant Facility, First in Shikoku

On June 28, it was announced that Ehime University has been newly added as a facility that could perform heart transplants from brain-dead donors. This brings the total number of heart transplant facilities nationwide to 12, with Ehime University being the first in Shikoku.

According to the Japan Organ Transplant Network, to become a transplant facility, an institution must be selected by the Joint Committee of the Japan Society for Transplantation of the Japan Medical Association, and then registered by the Japan Organ Transplant Network. The network registered Ehime University on March 21st. The university is currently in the process of implementing a transplant system and submitting documents, and they will begin operations once preparations are completed.

(June 28, Ehime Shimbun Online)

To Make Mitsuhamama a Town with Rakugo

To enliven the Mitsuhamama area in Matsuyama with laughter, a 32-year-old rakugo performer is aiming to create a base for enjoying rakugo. Rakugo is traditional Japanese comic storytelling. He is eager to spread the appeal of rakugo in Ehime, where he spent his youth. Katsura Soraji, from Ishikawa Prefecture, graduated from Ehime University. After he got a job, he was drawn to the fun of rakugo and became an apprentice to a famous rakugo performer. It is a tough world with hierarchical relationships and daily practice, but he says, "The most important thing is how customers enjoy it. I am happy when they tell me that I have improved."

In March, he was promoted to the higher rank of rakugo performers, and this prompted him to give back a favor to Ehime. He became connected to the Mitsuhamama area through friends, and in April, he performed rakugo for children at a temple in the district.

On June 16, he invited about 30 residents to a rakugo event at a historic building there, the former headquarters of Ishizaki Ship Company. He performed three pieces, mixing his witty stories with evocative facial expressions and gestures, to draw laughter from the audience. Some residents, who are making efforts to revitalize the area through various events, are also looking forward to his rakugo events. Soraji said "The residents of the Mitsuhamama area have close relationships, and the old culture remains there, which means this area has perfect chemistry for rakugo."

On August 18, Soraji will hold a performance to celebrate his promotion at Matsuyama City Community Center. He intends to continue to perform rakugo and create a base where people can enjoy rakugo on a regular basis.

(June 21, Ehime Shimbun)