

First-Ever LGBTQ Dogo Walk

On September 14, the "LGBTQ Dogo Walk" was held for the first time in the Dogo area to deepen ties between sexual minorities and the local community. People of all ages, from children to adults, walked in the hope of spreading understanding of sexual diversity. Participants started at Ishite-ji Temple and walked through the Dogo Park ground and the shopping district to the west side of the Dogo Onsen Main Building. More than 80 people waved and made their presence known amid many tourists around Dogo Onsen.

There was also an awards ceremony for a T-shirt design contest. The grand prize went to a second-year student at Dogo Junior High School. The student said, "I chose a colorful design with the hope that the world will become a dazzlingly bright and joyful place." The design will be used for next year's official Dogo Walk T-shirt.

The chairperson of the event said, "I hope people will know that there could be people like us right next to them. It can be difficult, but we want to live normal lives in the town we love."

(September 15, Ehime Shimbun)

Expecting the Young to Interact with Africa

On September 9, Keiji Hamada, Ambassador to Mozambique, delivered a speech at Ehime University, attended by about 80 people including high school students. Expressing his gratitude for the friendship between Mozambique and Ehime, he called on the younger generation in particular, to contribute to strengthening ties with Africa. Hamada pointed out, "Collaboration with African countries, which are rich in natural resources and account for one-quarter of UN member states, is important for increasing Japan's presence in international politics." He stated that the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD), held in Japan in August, was significant amid the world's declining interest in Africa due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine and conflicts in the Middle East. He noted that Mozambique has some of the world's largest natural gas reserves and has begun exporting gas to Japan.

On the same day, Hamada met with Governor Tokihiro Nakamura at the prefectural office to convey his gratitude for the efforts for exchange with Mozambique. Afterwards, he spoke to the press about the "Hometown Project". After the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) designated four Japanese cities, including Imabari, as "hometowns" for exchange hubs with African countries, misinformation such as "increasing immigration" has been spreading on social media. He commented, "It's extremely unfortunate that false information is circulating." Imabari City has been designated a hometown for Mozambique. Since late August, the four cities have received a stream of inquiries and complaints via phone and email. Hamada reiterated the project's purpose as "not to issue visas or increase permanent residence, but to promote exchange." The Ehime prefecture

has held exchange events with Mozambique in the prefecture and at the Osaka-Kansai Expo site.
(September 10, Ehime Shimbun)

The Hopes for the Next Generation - Chairman of Toyota

The FC Imabari high school Satoyama campus invited Mr. Akio Toyoda, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Toyota Motor Corporation, as a lecturer for a special lesson on September 5. He talked about his experience as a president and his hopes for the youth, and answered the questions from the students.

The high school invites leaders from various fields as special lecturers to let the students know diverse ways of life and thinking to open up future possibilities for the students.

Mr. Toyoda introduced the episode that he had been called “*kekkansha* (defective car)” when the Toyota Motor Corporation had had a quality issue when he was in Jr. high school. He reflected that that had given him an opportunity to understand that he could not escape from the name of “Toyota” and he started seriously thinking about motor vehicles.

He was asked about the way of thinking in meeting obstacles like a recall, and answered that the responsible person must bear the brunt of the problem, not run away, not deceive, not lie, and be accountable. Although it is not easy for anyone to take the brunt of criticism, somebody needs to. It is a leader’s responsibility.

Asked about the way to recover from difficult life events, he answered that nobody can live alone. He respects the relationships of supporting and thanking each other. He believes that “thank you” is a magic word. Saying “thank you” with a smile can influence the people around you in a good way.

Shunsuke Umezawa, a first year student, said that he was glad to listen to not only the success stories from the top person of a mega company but also his fails and having been in difficult situations. He wants to remember what he learned today when he becomes an entrepreneur in the future.
(September 6, Yomiuri Shimbun Online)

The population over 100 in the Prefecture

Ehime prefecture announced that the number of persons aged over 100 years old became 1,563 (+21 in comparison with last year) as of September 1. It has been increasing for six consecutive years. It was 178 males (+4), and 1,385 females (+17). The oldest in the prefecture is Ms. Unoyo Manabe born in January 1915, aged 110 years old.

By the region, there are 447 in Matsuyama city the most, followed by 226 in Imabari city, and 144 in Saijo city. The least is 7 in Matsuno cho. Ikata cho is the only one that does not have an over 100-year-old male.

The number of persons over 100 years old in Ehime exceeded 100 in 1994, became more than 1,000 in 2016, and 1,500 in 2023. According to the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, the life expectancy in 2024 in Japan is 81.09 years old

for a male, and 87.13 years old for a female.

Longevity status was announced by the prefecture to celebrate the respect for the aged day which was September 15. The longevity and nursing department in the prefecture said that they would put efforts to make a society where the elderly can live in peace.

(September 5, Ehime Shimbun Online)

Mandarin Pirates to Help Children Pursue Dreams

The Ehime Mandarin Pirates (MP) of the Shikoku Island League Plus will launch the "Children's Future Project," as part of the semi-professional baseball team's 20th anniversary. It will encourage elementary school students to pursue their dreams for the future. The children can volunteer for game operations and have some fun physical activities with the players, both inside and outside the stadium. The first year of the program will begin this November, and over ten months they are aiming to hold 50 activities for elementary school students across the prefecture. In connection with sports, five activities will be organized: "Play, Work, Talk, Eat, and Clean." In addition to traditional baseball clinics, they intend to hold activities, such as cleaning and eating school lunch with the baseball players. The MP President commented, "We've done some things in the past, but they weren't consistent. We would like to expand children's potential and provide them with opportunities to picture their dreams for their future."

The team is seeking companies and organizations to support the project. For inquiries, please contact Hoshi Kikaku at 089-956-3555.

On September 21, the Shikoku Island League Plus held the second game of the championship in a three-game series, to decide the annual champion between MP, who was the champion of the second half of the season, and Tokushima, who was the champion of the first half. MP, who had already won on the first day, won a 7-6 walk-off victory over Tokushima, clinching their fourth overall championship for the second year in a row.

(September 4, 22, Ehime Shimbun)

Sea Route Between Onomichi and Imabari

The regular shipping lane between Onomichi, Hiroshima and Imabari, Ehime had been terminated for 26 years, but will return for only 9 days in October. The demand for the ship on this route which allows passengers to transport their bicycles has been getting higher, since the Shimanami-Kaido connecting these two cities is getting more popular. Two round trips over the weekend and on the holiday in October will be run.

The regular run between those two cities was terminated on May 1, 1999, since the demand had fallen due to the opening of the Setouchi Shimanami Kaido Bridges.

Many cyclists all over the world visit the Shimanami Kaido. A council consisting of the two cities and two shipping companies was launched and sees the possibility of

a scheduled run for carrying bicycles. And it was decided that the trail be operated in October. The result of the trial will be used to consider the return of regular service.

The operation will be limited to the weekends and the holiday in October only at this time. There will be two operating companies, the Setouchi Cruising of Onomichi and the Shimanami Co., Ltd. of Imabari. The fare between the pier in front of Onomichi station and Imabari port will be ¥5,000. It will be valid for two consecutive days for unlimited rides, and includes a carry-on bicycle.

(September 1, Asahi Shimbun Digital)