

International Students Try Tobe Ware Making

To allow international students to experience Ehime's traditional industry, a Tobe-yaki pottery making workshop was held on May 31st at the Tobe-yaki Pottery Museum in Tobe Town. Ten students from Ehime University deepened their friendship with artisans through pottery wheel use and painting. The Tobe Lions Club has been holding this event since 2001. This year, international students from nine countries, including Sweden and Zimbabwe, participated.

For most of the international students, it was their first time touching a potter's wheel. While struggling with the centrifugal force and the amount of force to apply to the rotating clay, they received advice while making bowls and plates. There were also moments of laughter as clay spun at high speed after a failed shaping attempt, creating a friendly atmosphere. For painting, they drew animals, plants, and anime characters as they pleased.

A student in the Faculty of Education from Brazil, tried his hand at painting the traditional arabesque pattern. "The process of molding the clay on the potter's wheel was difficult, but I'm happy to have created a one-of-a-kind piece. The spiral pattern of Tobe ware is beautiful, and I'm looking forward to seeing the finished product," he said with a smile. An employee of Kiyoshi Kiln who taught her how to use the potter's wheel, said, "Craftsmanship has the power to overcome language barriers. I hope people will feel the charm of Tobe ware that resides in everyday life." (June 6, Ehime Shimbun)

Enjoying Summer, Smiles Bloom

The annual Saturday Night Market began on June 13th in Matsuyama City's central shopping districts, including Okaido and Gintengai. Approximately 200 stalls offering food, drinks, and games lined the venue, which stretched over 1 kilometer, allowing families and young people to fully enjoy this summer tradition.

As the sun began to set, the crowd gradually increased, with people strolling around with cotton candy and shaved ice in hand. Children enjoyed shooting games and lotteries.

A company employee from Matsuyama City who visited with his family, said, "I

came here with my parents when I was little, and I have fond memories. I brought my son here because I wanted him to experience the same thing." His eldest son smiled and said, "I couldn't catch any goldfish, but the shaved ice and fried chicken were delicious."

According to the Saturday Night Market Office, the market is believed to have originated during the post-war reconstruction period when shops extended their hours until late on Saturdays, when there were more customers. This year, it will be held every Saturday from around 1 p.m. to 9 p.m. until July 25th. More than 60,000 people are expected to visit each Saturday. (June 14, Ehime Shinbun)

Orangutan Pair Makes First Public Appearance

On June 6th, the Ehime Prefectural Tobe Zoo in Tobe Town, held an unveiling ceremony for a pair of Bornean orangutans, "Hayato" (male, 16 years old) and "Jennifer" (female, 15 years old), who came from Indonesia. Thirty visitors, selected by lottery, welcomed the two orangutans, who were publicly displayed together for the first time.

The zoo was the first zoo in Japan to enter into an international joint breeding project with the Indonesian government.

At the ceremony, Governor Tokihiro Nakamura emphasized the significance of the project, stating, "80% of orangutans have disappeared in the last 100 years." The Director of Forestry at the Indonesian Embassy in Japan, said, "We hope the two will have many offspring and contribute to conservation efforts," expressing his hope that they would become a symbol of friendship between the two countries.

The visitors were selected from over 1,000 applicants. The two orangutans were greeted with warm applause as they entered their respective enclosures. Hayato came very close to the fence and glanced at Jennifer, as if to say, "Nice to meet you." Meanwhile, Jennifer, who loves high places, moved freely near the ceiling. When the celebratory cake was served, the two orangutans came close for just a moment as Jennifer picked up her favorite fruit, eliciting cheers from the spectators.

After the ceremony, a crowd gathered in front of the enclosures, intently watching the two orangutans' every move. People busily snapped photos, trying to capture shots of the two together. An 8-year-old girl, a third-grader at Hisaeda Elementary School in Matsuyama City, who had brought a drawing of congratulations, smiled and said, "Jennifer has such cute, round eyes," while her 10-year-old sister, a fifth-grader, said, "I hope they become good friends."

(June 7. Ehime Shinbun)

NPO to Take Over Medical Assistance for Foreigners

The Matsuyama International Center (MIC)'s volunteer registration system for international people began around 2010. As of the end of this March, 239 volunteers from Matsuyama and neighboring areas were registered. They provide a wide range of support, including tourist guiding, driver's license renewal, and shopping assistance for foreigners.

They have also accompanied foreigners to medical institutions since the beginning, translating, filling out questionnaires and assisting with payment. However, due to concerns that accompanying patients into examination rooms could lead to misdiagnosis, volunteers were not supposed to enter the examination room.

On the other hand, some volunteers expressed concerns such as, "It's crucial to be there for patients in the examination room, where they feel the most anxious. We're not able to help when it matters most." They continued to grapple with this dilemma."

Yui Ehime was established in 2022 with the aim of building a network between international and Japanese people in Ehime, headed by Ruth Vergin, a former professor of Ehime University. Several members with experience as MIC volunteers, who wanted to accompany patients to examinations, formed a medical support group in February 2025. They meet about once a month to learn about support methods based on case studies, and have responded to over 20 requests since last autumn. They will continue to collaborate with MIC.

In April, a handover briefing was held in the city, attended by about 10 people, including registered MIC volunteers. Ms. Vergin explained that they plan to have clients sign a disclaimer document. She said, "We are navigators who provide support and guidance. Even if we can't do everything perfectly, it's definitely better to have us there."

The medical support group also holds workshops for nursing students, introducing how to use translation apps, easy Japanese, and gestures. They have also produced a video for foreigners explaining the process of seeing a doctor.

Ms. Vergin said, "When you get sick, you feel vulnerable. People from abroad face language and religious challenges, which can increase their anxiety even further. We want to provide support that makes them feel they are not alone." She is recruiting participants, saying, "Even just joining a study group would be a good start."

For inquiries, please contact the group via email
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