



Engaging with the community

In this issue of Mimitaro, we talked to Mr. Edward Iwaskow (resident of Otsu) who is a volunteer firefighter in Otsu.



I married my Japanese wife who studied abroad in Canada, came to Japan with an intension just to experience the country, but before I knew it, it has been 14 years. We run an English conversational school, do household chores and raise kids together. There are slight cultural differences in daily life that cause confusion, but I have successfully overcome these situations by understanding the differences. Moreover, what adds colour to my daily life is the relationship I have with my neighbours.

My neighbours are all very friendly who have been living in the community and helping each other out for half a century. Our family is also a part of this community and we take part in activities carried out in our neighbourhood. Among them, my favourite is the local sports day event. There are not many young residents in our neighbourhood so we are valuable members to our local team and do our best with the support we receive. Also, during regional clean-up, as I am tall, my neighbours are happy to have me in charge of cleaning high shelves, windows and slopes. In the midst of these activities, a neighbour approached me and asked, “Ed, you are young, fast at running, and seem strong. Do you want to join the volunteer fire department?” I was a volunteer firefighter in Canada for 4 years since I was 18 years old so I was delighted to become a member and am now in my tenth year as a member of my regional volunteer fire department.

Volunteer firefighters have their separate jobs, however, during disasters such as fires, earthquakes, and typhoons, we assist residents with evacuation guidance and rescue. For this reason, we are called to prepare for emergencies when there is a fire or risk of a disaster. Other duties include regularly patrolling the neighbourhood in a fire engine, training for forest fires, and visiting households in the district to inform residents of disaster prevention. Therefore, I am familiar not only with evacuation shelters, but the local area and residents in my neighbourhood as well.

Duties of a volunteer firefighter are slightly different between Canada and Japan. My hometown is a rural island in Canada, taking approximately 30 minutes for a firefighter to arrive by boat or helicopter. Therefore, in the case of fires, accidents, blackouts and water disasters, a volunteer firefighter rushes to the scene and works on the front lines. In Japan, a qualified firefighter is mainly in charge, while a volunteer firefighter offers support. During a fire, a volunteer firefighter is responsible for water supply and traffic guidance to help put out the fire and does not go into the fire. In both countries, however, the appealing factor of a volunteer firefighter is the cooperative spirit amongst team members.

After a fire has settled, the duty of a volunteer firefighter is also to patrol on-site for 24 hours so it does not catch fire again. Team members patrol the site and spend time gathered in a circle together. During this time, residents in the neighbourhood kindly offer instant noodles and cookies for the service we provide. The moment of understanding amongst many people after a fire is safely put out is exceptional. We are amazed when we receive the paper in early dawn and see the article about the fire published in the morning paper.

Other than being a member of the volunteer fire department, I am also a member of the community association and PTA. Although voluntary, I feel the operation of these activities is difficult to manage as it is a heavy burden on members since we cannot easily refuse even if we are busy. It is also tough because all groups carry on the same events and activities despite the decrease in number of members compared to the past. This brings us to the problematic situation where “We all don’t want to do it, but can’t change it because it is how it has always been done.” Japan has a culture to bear difficult or unpleasant situations, a culture to continue without making changes, with a good aspect of tradition being passed down through generations, but depending on the situation, it is also important to be flexible to change.

As a member of my community that I love, I would like to continue to support each other and live a happy life.



Livelihood support for those affected by COVID-19

The national and prefectural governments have various support measures for those affected by COVID-19. Below is a partial list of support measures from inquiries received at Shiga Foreign Residents Information Center. For details, please refer to the Ministry of Health Labour and Welfare pamphlet and list of support measures provided by the Shiga Prefectural Government.

•Guide for livelihood support (MHLW) (as of July 16, 2020)



•Residents of Shiga •business operators (Shiga Pref. Government) (as of August 20, 2020)



① Special Benefit for Single Parent Low Income Households “Teishotoku hitori oya setai rinji-kyufukin”

Eligibility for basic payment	Those who correspond to any of the following: ① Those receiving child support allowance (jido-fuyou-teate) for the month of June, 2020. ② Those receiving public pension and the full payment of child support allowance (jido-fuyou-teate) for June, 2020 was suspended. ③ Household income has drastically changed due to the effects of COVID-19 and income is the same standard as households receiving child support allowance (jido-fuyou-teate). ※Benefit payment for the month of June for those who apply has been transferred in August to households corresponding to ①. Application required for ② and ③.
Additional payment	Those corresponding to ① and ② above may apply for one-time additional payment. (Household finances drastically changed due to the effects of COVID-19, and income has declined.)
Payment	Basic payment : 50,000yen/household, additional 30,000yen/child for additional children. Additional payment : 50,000 yen/household
Application	“Single parent special benefit” (child support allowance division) in your city/town hall (Deadline February 28, 2021).

② Subsidy Program for Sustaining Business “Jizokuka-kyufukin” (for business operators)

Eligibility	Sales in one month declined by more than 50% compared to the same month the previous year due to the effects of COVID-19.
Payment	2 million yen for corporations, 1 million yen for individual business owners. ※maximum payment is the amount of decrease in sales compared to total sales last year.
Application	“Sustainable Cash Benefit” online application https://www.jizokuka-kyufu.jp (deadline January 15, 2021)

③ Out-of-Work Support Fund and Cash Handout “Kyugyou shienkin”

Eligibility	Those who meet the following 2 conditions: ① Employees of small-medium sized companies instructed to take absence from work between April 1 and September 30, 2020 by their business owner. ② Those who did not receive pay for leave mentioned above (kyugyou-teate).
Payment	80% of wage before out of work (monthly maximum payment of 330,000 yen).
Application	https://www.mhlw.go.jp/content/11600000/000646893.pdf (application form) https://www.mhlw.go.jp/content/11600000/000655251.pdf (application method by post)

④ Housing Security Benefit (rent directly paid to landlord)
“Jyukyokakuho kyufukin”



Eligibility	Within 2 years of leaving a job•business shutdown, or decrease in income due to suspension of work, with similar conditions to those that have left a job
Payment duration	3 months in principle (maximum of 9 months)
Payment	Amount equivalent to the rent is paid directly to the landlord from the municipality
Application	City hall for those living in a city, social welfare council for those living in a town
Details	https://www.mhlw.go.jp/content/000630855.pdf

★ Shiga prefecture is accepting temporary occupants in prefectural housing.



Eligibility	Those dismissed from the workplace due to the effects of COVID-19 and had no other option but to leave their home.
Duration	Maximum of 1 year
Application	Housing Division, Department of public works and transportation (TEL 077-528-4234)

★ If you have any concerns regarding your livelihood, please consult the welfare division or social welfare office in your city or town!

COVID-19 Doctor Visit/Consultation Guideline



Those with symptoms	
Symptoms	Contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Shortness of breath (difficulty breathing), tiredness (fatigue), high fever, etc. ※Symptoms vary from person to person. Consult immediately if you feel you have severe symptoms. ● Comparatively mild symptoms such as fever or cough ※Expectant mothers, seniors, those on dialysis, those with underlying medical conditions, taking immune-suppressing drugs or anti-cancer drugs should consult as soon as possible. Consult if symptoms persist for more than 4 days. 	<p>Weekdays: Primary care doctor ※prior phone call required</p> <hr/> <p>Weekends & holidays / night Consultation Center (consulted by nurse•public health nurse) Within Shiga (outside Otsu city) TEL 077-528-3621 Otsu Public Health Office TEL 077-526-5411 (everyday 8:40am ~ 8:00pm) TEL 080-2409-1856 (everyday 8:00pm ~ 8:40am following day)</p>
Those without symptoms, but feel concerned	
<p>Concerns such as prevention within household, region, workplace, etc. General consultation desk (consulted by nurse•public health nurse)</p> <p>Shiga Pref. Consultation Desk TEL 077-528-3637 (everyday 8:30am ~ 5:15pm) Otsu Public Health Office TEL 077-522-7228 (weekdays only 8:40am ~ 5:25pm)</p>	

※Please contact Shiga Foreign Residents Information Center for any language support. (TEL 077-523-5646)

Mimitaro Information

Census 2020

- A public census will be conducted to all residents in Japan as of October 1, 2020.
- A Census Taker will distribute the Census survey to your household beginning mid-September.
- It is required by law to reply and you will be contacted if you have not responded to the Census. Please respond.
- The Census Call Center is available in multiple languages. Please contact for any questions. (TEL: 0570-07-2020)
- Check the following site for details.

国勢調査2020

<https://www.kokusei2020.go.jp/>



Make Use for Contact Notifications!

★ COVID-19 Contact Confirming App COCOA

When the app is installed into your smartphone, you will be able to receive notices if you had a possibility of coming in contact with someone who tested positive with COVID-19 while your privacy is considered. You will be able to receive prompt support from the public health office, such as undergoing testing.



★ Moshi-Sapo Shiga

When you scan the QR code displayed at facilities or event venues within Shiga prefecture, you will receive a warning message from the prefectural government if an infected person who used the same venue at the same time and day as you had was identified.

Shop wisely with My-no. Point Program!

If you obtain a My-number card and reserve•apply for the My-number Point Program (“Myna-pointo”), you will receive a maximum of 5000 yen worth of points (25% grant rate) for purchases or charges made on your selected cashless service.

- You will be granted up to 1000 yen worth of additional points if you make purchases or charges within the prefecture.

Application deadline: March 31, 2021

INQ My Number General Inquiries Free Dial

TEL 0120-95-0178

TEL 0120-0178-26 (English, Chinese, Korean, Spanish, Portuguese)



Training courses



★ Shiga Prefecture Care Giver Training

A training course will be held for foreigners to learn the necessary skills in order to work in a workplace for caregiving in Shiga prefecture.

When: November 1, 2020 ~ March 20, 2021

Venue: Day Service Center Tenmaya (Higashiomi)

Content: Beginner training as a caregiver

Eligibility: Foreign residents in the prefecture hoping to work in caregiving.

* Course fee is free (textbook fee applies)

INQ NPO Karaku TEL 0748-36-2112

★ Employment Support Course for Long-term residents

Japanese language for work (Level 1)

- Higashiomi Notogawa Community Center
October 19, 2020 - February 10
- Hino Hinocho Ringyo Center
November 16 - March 12
- Moriyama Moriyama Station General Information Community Hall
November 4 - January 27

Application: HelloWork in each district

Grant-type scholarships

Make sure to check out information regarding scholarships for entry into university and technical schools ahead of time!

Grant-type scholarships that do not have to be repaid and entry-fee / tuition exemption / tuition reduction systems are available for households having financial difficulties.

INQ Japan Student Services Organization (JASSO)



Shiga Foreign Residents Information Center (within Shiga Intercultural Association for Globalization)

In addition to various everyday matters, we also provide legal consultations.

Tel: 077-523-5646

Fax: 077-510-0601

E-mail: mimitaro@s-i-a.or.jp

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