

## Fukushima Dreams – a quarterly publication of Fukushima City — SEPTEMBER 2020

Thank you for picking up this quarters' "Fukushima Dreams – a quarterly publication of Fukushima City".

In this issue, we hope that you will learn more about, and be moved by the various charms that Fukushima City has to offer.

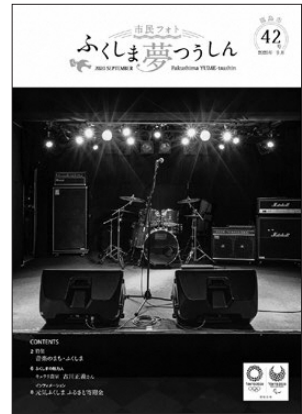
With a population of around 290,000 people, Fukushima is surrounded by the beauty of nature. Due to its location, the city has a characteristic basin climate, and is a famous fruit production area: producing many varieties through the seasons, including cherries, peaches, Asian pears, grapes and apples.

We hope that through this edition, you'll come to appreciate even a little of what Fukushima City has to offer.

### P. 2, 3

#### ① Fukushima, the city of music

Composer of some 5,000 songs throughout his life, national icon and Fukushima City-native Yuji Koseki left behind an abundance of melodies that continue to shine their light upon us and encourage us to march forward. Currently, Fukushima is demonstrating a lot of excitement as the city harnesses the power of Mr. Koseki in its development. In this issue, we introduce you to the initiatives that are being talked about around town and the people supporting and taking the lead on the music scene.



#### ② Yuji Koseki Machinaka Seishun Museum

With its retro exterior, the Yuji Koseki Machinaka Seishun Museum (literally meaning the museum in the city center commemorating Yuji Koseki's younger days) draws the attention of passersby. Here you can find items that were not formerly displayed to the general public, such as 8mm film of Fukushima that Mr. Koseki took himself, the sign from his family's kimono shop, and other valuable reference materials related to Mr. Koseki. Every effort has been made so that the interior of the museum offers visitors an idea of the atmosphere of Fukushima in days gone by, and Mr. Koseki's soothing melodies resonate throughout the building. Compare the content of the serial drama based on Mr. Koseki to the actual facts, search for your local school's song from among the numerous school songs he composed, hear the guide tell stories not found in the written explanations provided, or enjoy the museum in any number of other ways. Please drop by on your walk around the town and experience the charm of Fukushima, the city of music.



#### ③ Yuji Koseki Memorial Hall

The exterior of the building is characterized by its appearance invoking thoughts of Koseki's famous song, "Tongari Boshi," meaning "pointy hat." There are a myriad of remnants recounting Koseki's achievements on display here including a timeline of Koseki's life and courtship with his wife as well as letters they wrote, along with musical scores written by Koseki. In the upper portion of the display case on the second floor, neon modeled after Koseki's musical notes has been installed to dance before the eyes of those who visit.

#### ④ Enjoy the city of music even more!

These are some products that will help you get to know Mr. Koseki better! Why not increase your fun in the city of music, Fukushima with souvenirs associated with Yuji Koseki?

#### ⑤ Ride the Yuji Koseki melody bus!

Operation of a sightseeing bus is about to start! The bus plays Koseki's melodies while sharing his story and taking you to places like the Yuji Koseki Memorial Hall, Koseki street, and other areas associated with him. Please take advantage of this opportunity when you explore the town!

### P. 4, 5

#### ① The people propping up and bolstering Fukushima's music culture

#### ② Enjoy being showered in music at live music venues

The live music venues, Fukushima Outline (referred to as "Outline" herein) and Fukushima Player's Café in Fukushima City are run by Ryoko Abe. Her first encounter with music goes back to her junior high school days. A friend living in her neighborhood played guitar and that sparked her interest in bands. That same friend invited her to Outline for the first time when she was in high school, and Ms. Abe says that left a big impression on her. "It's hard to explain in words, but the venue filled with people were responding to the music radiating from the stage and enjoying themselves with their entire bodies." This experience led to more frequent visits, and eventually she herself formed a band and took the stage. "Concerts at that time were produced by someone who rented out the hall, planned the event themselves, and gathered the other bands to perform together. Doing that made me realize how interesting it is to work behind the scenes and inspired me to seek that as a career path." However, her family was against the idea and she went on to attend a vocational school in the medical field located in Sendai. She refused to give up on her dream of working in the music industry and worked part-time at Outline while attending school. "When U-ONEMUSIC expanded, they asked if I would consider working for them full-time. As long as they wanted me, I was happy to work there, so I joined the company."



#### Exchanging enthusiastic encouragement is what gives people the energy to keep pushing forward

Ms. Abe enjoys how music connects people to one another and broadens the circle of friends. She grins as she says this and realizes she has been doing this now for 20 years. "A live performance offers a performance, atmosphere, and energy that can only be experienced in that moment, and a live music venue is the place that offers that emotional experience. Even on stage that's only 30 cm high, the people standing on it see a view that is completely unique to them. The performers are always giving their best, whether they are pros or amateurs. The audio engineer and the audience are all serious about their roles. The exchange of calls of enthusiastic encouragement becomes the energy that pushes us forward, and eventually I think that will become the energy of Fukushima." That is why Ms. Abe says she has continued to focus her energy on continuing to provide an environment where you can always shower yourself in good music and where bands

can perform to their hearts' desire even in a more rural area. "These accumulated efforts are what helped us overcome the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami and become the soil that nurtures artists from Fukushima City. I think this is also what has led to Fukushima City-based bands winning the semi-final at the ARABAKI ROCK FEST for three consecutive years since 2017."

**More people are enjoying playing instruments regardless of the novel coronavirus pandemic.**

And then along came the coronavirus pandemic. Under these incredibly tough circumstances, something really surprised Ms. Abe. "There were actually a large number of people who wanted musical instruments during the period people were encouraged to stay home. There was an overwhelming demand for acoustic guitars. It reassured me that Fukushima is truly the city of music." Currently, Outline is planning events that young people just starting out in their careers can aim to be a part of, in addition to streaming live performances. "The music scene needs people like myself who work behind the scenes, so while I hope that the number of people who will take over also increases, I also want to continue infusing energy into Fukushima, the city of music."

**③ I want to bring happiness to my beloved hometown through music**

④ When I was in high school, Outline was the first place I performed solo. Fukushima has an established music scene, and I always feel inspired by the musicians teeming in originality. When I moved to Tokyo, my lifestyle moved away from music, but when I came back to Fukushima and stopped by Outline on a whim, Ms. Abe asked if I would try performing again, and that was the opportunity that led me to get involved with music again. Fukushima, where the people are warm and time passes slowly, is where I can most be myself. Living away gave me a renewed sense of the importance of my hometown and I started writing songs related to Fukushima. I sing with the hope to make anyone who hear my music just a little happier and more positive, as if I'm paying everyone back for their support. I want to continue treasuring the opportunities music has brought me in my future endeavors.

**P. 6, 7**

① The mention of Fukushima City evokes thoughts of one of the top fruit-growing regions in Japan, but it is also known for its delicious vegetables. In particular, cucumbers are not only produced in large volumes, but a combination of cultivating methods, such as forcing, open field, rain cover, and retarding, are used to make this a rare area in Japan able to ship cucumbers practically year-round from February to November. In this issue, we spoke with Masayoshi Furukawa, a farmer particular about variety and fertilizer, who continues to produce delicious cucumbers.

**② Rich in groundwater, the Okabe district is perfect for growing cucumbers**

The greenhouse of Mr. Furukawa, who has always specialized in cucumbers, is located in the Okabe district sitting along the right bank of the Abukuma River, which cuts through Fukushima City north to south. There are a large number of greenhouses surrounding his that belong to neighboring cucumber farmers. When asked what the secret to growing delicious cucumbers is, he answered, "Variety, fertilizer, and water are all important, but variety is the most important. I am very particular about variety. I grow 'Green Lax 2' from April to June and 'Excellent Fushinari 353' from August to November every year. Both have soft skin and a good flavor and texture. Plant good varieties, allow them to take root, use organic fertilizer, give them plenty of water, and they will grow into delicious cucumbers."

One of the tricks to making roots grow well is grafting. Grafting a cucumber to a pumpkin will make it more resistant to soilborne diseases and prevents continuous cropping failure. "We can harvest twice a year with just a small area. I think that's why I've been able to survive by growing only cucumbers." The cucumbers that absorb the groundwater with their strong roots grow into tasty, long cucumbers. "I use a generous amount of organic fertilizer; cut up straw in particular. I use an extremely large volume. When straw rots it generates underground heat and also serves as fertilizer. The soil becomes flaky making it easier for the roots to take and water to drain. Straw is really amazing."

**Particular about hard to grow but delicious varieties**

When asked what his most joyous moments are in this line of work, Mr. Furukawa answers, "When someone praises my cucumbers and says they are delicious. Many farmers choose to grow disease-resistant varieties, but I am particular about growing good tasting varieties, so those words really motivate me." The other moment of joy is when the planted cucumbers really grow upwards. Surprisingly, he finds harvesting difficult. "A computer takes care of watering and temperature adjustments, but harvesting doesn't work that way. It has to be done twice a day at 4 a.m. and 3 p.m. My daughter assists with the afternoon harvest, which is really helpful."

**High quality Fukushima JGAP-certified cucumbers**

Finishing his 18th year of farming, Mr. Furukawa is making various efforts to enhance production in Fukushima. For example, studying fertilizers, conducting market research, using machine selection to improve quality, and promoting JGAP certification. "Actually, I received my individual JGAP certification so all of the cucumbers I produce from now on will be JGAP-certified." Because cucumbers consists mostly of water, they are a perfect vegetable for rehydrating on a hot summer day. We hope you will ride out the remaining hot summer days eating high-quality Fukushima cucumbers.



**P8**

**① Energizing Fukushima with hometown donations (Hometown Tax)**

Hometown Tax is a system that enables people to donate to their hometown or localities they want to support. Fukushima City is using the Hometown Tax to make it into a lively hometown through the 12 different support menus listed below. We look forward to your support.

**② We have a variety of thank you gifts to offer, such as seasonal fruit grown in Fukushima City!**

**③ On the cover**

**The stage at live music venue, Outline**

Many different artists have expressed their own style of music on this stage. No matter how big the changes we face in any age may be, music is always there to support people and provide them with the positive energy to move forward.

