

# Fukushima Dreams – a quarterly publication of Fukushima City — APRIL 2025

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 280,000 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

## ①The More You See, Hear and Learn About It, the More You'll Love This Shopping Street! Kencho-dori Craft Mall Is a Hot Place to Shop!

②In recent years, Kencho-dori Shopping Street has undergone a renovation of its arcade, taking advantage of its unusual truss structure. The street has been transformed into a craft mall and has been renamed Kencho-dori Craft Mall. 2024 saw the renewal of a long-established stationery store, and the opening of a renovated building housing a flower shop, café, and boutique, all of which have made the area one of Fukushima City's must-see spots. Attracted by this collection of new and distinctive shops, more and more people from Tokyo and neighboring prefectures are visiting the area. In this issue, we interview Mr. Yoshihisa Yabuuchi, the proprietor of an optical shop in the New Yabuuchi Building on a corner of the street, who has put a lot of thought and effort into making Kencho-dori a more enjoyable place to visit.

## ③Yoshihisa Yabuuchi

### ④Carrying Out a Self-Renovation Project that Treats the Company Building as a Small Town

I am the fifth-generation proprietor of our family's shop, and this year we are celebrating our 150th anniversary. The story of how the New Yabuuchi Building and the Nonotori Building, which is diagonally opposite, took on their current form, goes back 24 years to the turn of the present century. When my parents were running the optical shop on the first floor of the New Yabuuchi Building, there were a snack bar and a beauty salon on the second floor, and a mahjong parlor and an esthetic salon on the third floor. After these tenants moved out, my father told me, "I'm leaving everything up to you." To be honest, renovating the building by ourselves was hard work, but I remember we had fun. We remodeled the former snack bar by putting up plaster walls and we used the space to open our own optical shop. However, it was difficult to get the renovation project off the ground, and I started to feel depressed. At that time, a friend who I thought of as a mentor said to me, "You think you should enjoy yourself when you're playing and work hard when you're working, but actually it's the other way around. You should work hard when you're playing and enjoy yourself when you're working." That advice was an eye-opener for me. After that, I started thinking, "Let's try building a miniature town inside the building." At least, that seemed like a positive way of thinking. If you want to attract tenants, you have to make the place cool, or they won't come. So, I decided it would be a good idea to renovate our building to make it look like a small town.

### If We Don't Get Serious About Creating Cool Scenery Now, This City Will Have No Future.

Soon after we renovated the New Yabuuchi Building, we were able to get two new shops to move in. Then, after the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011, several shops came and went, and while looking at the vacant floor space, I thought, "What would be fun for us to do?" and "What would be good to have in Fukushima City?" Also, I was fortunate in meeting a very reliable carpenter, and in 2014, a flower shop called Total Plants bloom came in. Then, in 2016, we welcomed the restaurant Shokudo Hitoto into the building. Last year, the flower shop moved across the street into the Nonotori Building, but we were able to attract Book & Café Kotou to replace it. I decided to purchase the Nonotori Building in 2023. Now that we have been renovating for a long time, I am beginning to see an ideal landscape taking shape in my mind. I thought that if we didn't seriously create a town where young people would think, "There is a cool place in Fukushima," or even "I want to open a business here," there would be no future for the city. This street used to be a major thoroughfare with streetcars running along it, and it used to be the most vibrant part of the city. I also wanted to be able to show that kind of scenery to my father once again.

### Negotiations with Prospective Tenants Are a Time for Discussing Dreams and Possibilities.

The first and second floors of the Nonotori Building consist of retail shops, the third floor houses a craftsmen's workshop, and the fourth floor serves as our workshop. In this workshop, we make things that are only available here, sell them in the building's carport, and trust our regular customers to bring along more customers. With this blueprint in mind, I had fun going out to talk with potential tenants. The hardest part was renovating the facilities, including the electricity and water systems. The building had originally housed a bank, so the structure was strong enough. The design of the store front was my own idea, and currently we have six tenants in the Nonotori Building.

### Walking Around a Storytelling Craft Mall with Lots of Specialty Stores

I have a feeling that in future this street will become a better and better place that attracts more and more people. The people who have taken over the family businesses in this area are all young, and the fact that the older generation is very understanding is also a big factor. We are now discussing what we can do together as a shopping street. In Fukushima City, you will find all kinds of people close at hand. At the Kencho-dori Craft Mall in particular, there are lots of specialty shops, and all of their proprietors have a deep knowledge of their own field and I am comfortable because they always answer any questions I ask. Also, the number of interesting shops is growing. After enjoying a meal, you can walk around the mall and browse or hang out at the bookstore, the café, the flower shop, the boutique, and the stationery shop. It's a lot of fun to explore. Please come along and see for yourself.

## ⑤OPTICAL YABUUCHI

At OPTICAL YABUUCHI, we offer glasses that have impressed us in every way, not only with regard to design and quality, but also in their approach to craftsmanship. One example is "10 eyevan". Based on the idea that "a beautiful tool is a collection of beautiful parts," these glasses are constructed out of 10 kinds of special parts. For example, hexagonal star head screws, pearl oyster nose pads, and silver temple tip counterweights are used to make these glasses look almost like jewelry. For the displays, we try to get a sense of what each maker wants to accomplish and we try to maximize the products' potential. There is a lot of old furniture in the shop, but we like to use old things in beautiful ways. We aim to be an optical shop that does not look like an optical shop.

P. 4, 5

## ①"Storygenic" Shops that Will Make You Want to Tell Everyone About the Places You Visit

### ②Books and Café Kotou

Books and Café Kotou is a bookshop that sells both new and used books. We carry books in a wide range of genres, including essays, novels, picture books, photography collections, and art-related books. We also stock titles from small publishers and privately published books called known as "zines" and "little press books," so you are sure to encounter books that you would not normally find. We also buy used books from private individuals, which helps to connect unwanted books with new owners. And in addition to books, we buy and sell traditional kokeshi dolls and locally made toys. There is a café inside the shop, so please feel free to stop by and have a look around.

### ③OOMACHI GALLERY

OOMACHI GALLERY is approaching its 8th year since its opening. To date, we have hosted exhibitions of works by a wide variety of artists, not limited to paintings, but also including woodcraft, ceramics, bags, and badges. In planning exhibitions, we try to avoid bias toward one particular genre, so that everyone will be pleased to encounter not only artists who are active in Fukushima Prefecture, but also leading artists they have never previously had a chance to see in Tohoku and who they will welcome, saying, "I never thought I would be able to see something like this in my own city." Simply being surrounded by a few of your favorite things can make your daily life a much richer and more enjoyable experience. We hope to be a place that can provide opportunities for people to feel a little more familiar with art. Most of the exhibitions are free of charge, so please come and visit us. (We only open when holding special events.)

### ④Shokudo Hitoto

We are a restaurant that serves simple set menus made with brown rice and vegetables and sweets. The rice, vegetables, and fruits we use are grown with great care and attention by their producers. In our cuisine, we utilize a wealth of ingredients that are soothing to the body, such as seasonings made slowly and carefully according to traditional methods. Our sweets are made mainly using ingredients from trusted producers, such as Kitakata wheat and tofu made from home-grown soybeans, and we carefully create taste combinations that allow our customers to deeply appreciate the original flavors of the ingredients. We hope you will take the time to enjoy our dishes here in the restaurant, a place where you can almost feel the breath of the people who made them and the local climate.

### ⑤Total Plants bloom

We select flowers by imagining the satisfaction of giving them and the joy on the faces of the people who receive them. In addition, flowers and greenery in daily life are an important part of interior design that enriches the spirit and makes life more enjoyable. With these things in mind, we propose floral arrangements, bouquets, and greenery that satisfy the needs of our customers. In August 2024, Total Plants bloom moved from the 2nd floor of the New Yabuuchi Building in Omachi to the 1st floor of the Nonotori Building in Uwamachi across the street.

### ⑥FULLER

FULLER opened in October 2024 as an alternative exhibition space. Based on the theme of "looking at the world in front of you, a scene from somewhere not there, and from sometime not now," we host monthly exhibitions and invite the creators of the exhibited works to participate. We also have a permanent installation where we propose a range of daily necessities. Popular items include pottery by ceramic artist Yuka Owada, incense by IYE, towels by The terrusse, and jewelry by MAYUMI MURASAWA and neutral. Our aim is to create a space that encourages visitors to take away fond memories, lingering scents and lasting impressions of their visit.

### ⑦café nei

Although it is not something we are particularly conscious of, we try to stand in the store in a natural and unpretentious manner. We want people to stop by for a cup of coffee or something to refresh themselves while thinking "We don't want to do anything in particular today, so why don't we have a glass of wine in the afternoon," or "Let's go buy some snacks and relax while eating them at home." We hope customers will drop in on a whim. Our most popular items include sandwiches with homemade ham, cucumber, and herb mayonnaise; and tarte flan—a smooth and refreshing cake made by pouring custard into a whole wheat tart base and baking it at a moderate temperature. All our cakes are simple preparations that make the most of the flavors of their ingredients. Although ours is a small café, on weekdays you can usually be seated relatively quickly. We also sell take-out drinks, sandwiches, and cakes, so please feel free to visit us casually.



## ⑧ LAPEL

LAPeL is a select shop for men's and women's clothing that sells both domestic and international brands. Previously located on Bunka-dori for 15 years, the shop recently moved to its current location following the opening of the Nonotori Building.

In addition to Japanese men's and women's brand clothing, bags, accessories, and shoes, we also handle foreign brands from the UK, France, Germany, and elsewhere. Under the theme of "multipurpose," we strive to create a shop that is constantly changing and evolving in keeping with the mood of the times and the people we encounter, and is stocked with everything from high-quality and functional clothing to fashionable brands and secondhand clothes, to give our customers a thoroughly enjoyable shopping experience.

## ⑨ \*Chayuka\*

We are a team of independent freelance wedding planners with no exclusive venue. We are based in Fukushima and neighboring prefectures, with a focus on "weddings that love the town where you were born". We help plan weddings that value the things, people, and food of our hometowns in locations where weddings are not usually held, such as cultural heritage sites, old houses, inns, cafés, pensions, camp sites, and other venues.

In this day and age when many couples choose not to have a wedding ceremony, we hope that the two people who have found us will share an experience that will enrich their future lives together through the planning and preparation of their wedding.

We also offer a shrine wedding plan that includes the wedding ceremony, wedding attire, photography, dressing, and hair and makeup. If you are contemplating a wedding ceremony, please come and visit us.

## ⑩ With nine establishments including a restaurant, a gallery, a bookstore, a select shop, a café, and a flower shop, Kencho-dori Craft Mall is a small town spread across two buildings that you will fall in love with even more when you learn that each of these places has its own background and story to tell. We hope you will spend some quality time here, chatting with the proprietors and enjoying the ambience.

## P. 6, 7

### ① Until about 30 years ago, Onodera Hyakkaten was located in the heart of the hot spring district of Iizaka Onsen, and was the family home of Hiroki Onodera. As he watched the familiar landscape of his childhood friend's family houses disappearing, he began to think that at the very least he wanted to preserve his own family house, which at that time was a former shop that had been left empty. During the COVID-19 pandemic, he made a major decision to renovate the building. Then in 2023, he reopened Onodera Hyakkaten there as a venue for exchanges that combines a café, coworking space, and welfare facility. We interviewed Mr. Onodera, who has achieved his long-cherished dream, about his memories of the old store, his thoughts on the new store, and the store's distinctive features.

### ② Hiroki Onodera

### ③ Cafe × Coworking Space × WelfareGather and have funBe happy!

### ④ A Variety Store Where Workers from All Over the Hot Spring District Used to Gather and Chat with Each Other

Onodera Hyakkaten is about a seven-minute walk from Iizaka Onsen Station on Fukushima Kotsu's Iizaka Line, and is located across the street from Iizaka Hotel Juraku. The original variety store was founded by Hiroki Onodera's great grandmother at the end of the Taisho era. When we asked him what he remembers about the old days from his childhood, he gave the following reply.

"We would deliver what these days are called amenities, such as towels and clothing, to the local ryokans. Most of our customers were employees working in the hot spring resort district. There used to be a lot of people from overseas working there, and we also sold cosmetics and women's clothing. When people gathered, all kinds of fun things would start to happen. Suddenly, these foreigners would start up English conversation classes and classes for making extra-sweet cakes from their home countries, and the neighbors would join in the fun and play games. Back then, the economy was good, and there were lots of people around. It was a carefree time."



### Realizing His Dream Outweighed the Hardships of Renovation During the Pandemic.

In the early 1990s, when the "bubble" economy burst and the Japanese economy quickly fell into a protracted recession, Hiroki Onodera's father, seeking a stable livelihood, closed Onodera Hyakkaten and started up Network Tyouzai, a pharmacy and nursing care service business. Some years later, the younger Onodera took over as president of the company. At that time, he was deeply concerned about the family home, which had been left empty. "My great-grandmother, grandfather and father had all run this store, which had been patronized by the local community for three generations. Rather than demolishing the building and turning the land into a vacant lot, I wondered if I could convert the house into a space where people could gather and interact as they had done in the past."

In 2021, he applied to attend the 3rd Machinaka Renovation School, which was organized by Fukushima Prefecture, and he was preparing to start renovation work when the Ukrainian crisis flared up. As a result of the tense situation, the price of construction materials soared, forcing him to delay the start of construction by six months to a year. During that time, he had a lot of difficulties with cash flow and hiring staff. However, Onodera recalls that the anticipation of realizing his dream outweighed the hardships he faced many times over.

### A Shop Where People Gather, with a Menu Created in Collaboration with an Employment Support Organization

The theme of the newly renovated shop is New Retro. "I deliberately used the old name, Onodera Hyakkaten, because I wanted people to remember the old days. But at the same time, I also wanted to convey a sense of freshness, so I wrote the shop's name in katakana rather than kanji characters. I was also conscious of the need to make the interior look good in photographs." In addition, as the company is also engaged in the nursing care business, Onodera also designed the shop to incorporate a welfare perspective. The cafe space on the first floor, which he hopes will always be part of the community, serves not only parfaits and drinks made with local fruits, but also gelato made in collaboration with an employment support organization. The co-working space on the second floor comprises a large space that can be used for private rooms and meetings, as well as a Japanese-style room. "The second floor is basically a flat space that we often use for events such as markets. We also provide bath pails and towels bearing our own original illustrations so that customers can go to the hot springs from here (laughs)."

### I Want to Make This Area More Wonderful and Enjoyable so that More People Will Start Their Own Businesses Here.

When we asked Onodera, who has now achieved his big dream, what his next goal was, he told us, "As more people gather in Iizaka and interesting connections form, I hope more people will say that they were able to start their own business thanks to Onodera Hyakkaten."

In recent years, Iizaka Onsen has seen the opening of fashionable cafés, shared kitchens, general merchandise stores, rental studios, and many other wonderful shops. Why not start your tour of the area at Onodera Hyakkaten?

## P. 8

### ① Fukushima Flower Corridor SHUXUYU Digital Rally

March 20 (Thursday)– August 31 (Sunday), 2025

### ② Flower Corridor Spots, Tourist Spots, Restaurants

Take a tour of Fukushima's three famous hot springs and collect stamps on your smartphone!  
Win fabulous prizes!

1,129 winners will be selected by lottery! + a second chance to win for five more people

Go around and win!

Fukushima Local Sake Prize

3,000 yen equivalent 300 winners

Fukushima Sweets Premium Prize

3,000 yen equivalent 300 winners

Fukushima Gourmet Prize

3,000 yen equivalent 429 winners

Stay in Fukushima and Win!

Those who collect at least one accommodation stamp

Fukushima Three Famous Hot Springs Prize

Accommodation subsidy voucher worth 10,000 yen 100 winners

Those who collect all three types of accommodation stamps

Fukushima Three Famous Hot Springs Accommodation Special Prize

Fukushima Enjoyment Set worth 20,000 yen 5 winners

### ③ How to Participate

Register via LINE

Scan the QR code and collect stamps!

Flower Corridor Spots and Sightseeing Spots

Collect a Flower Corridor/Sightseeing Stamp at each spot!

Restaurants

Collect a Dining Stamp when you pay after eating and drinking!

Three Famous Hot Spring Accommodation Facilities (Iizaka Onsen, Tsuchiyu Onsen, Takayu Onsen) Collect an Accommodation Stamp (Accommodation Ticket) in your guest room! Plus, get a Flower Corridor/Sightseeing Stamp!

To apply, collect four Flower Corridor/Sightseeing Stamps, or Dining Stamps!

\*You need to collect at least 2 of the 4 Flower Corridor/Sightseeing Stamps to apply.

If you have obtained an Accommodation Stamp during the application period, you will be entered into the draw to win for the Fukushima Three Famous Hot Springs Prize!

### ④ Machinaka Children's Day with Machinaka Theme Park

Date & time: May 5 (Monday, national holiday), 2025 from 10:00 to 16:00

Place: The area around Fukushima Station

### ⑤ There will be plenty of fun things for children to enjoy, including stage shows and a street-based highland train! On May 5th, please bring the whole family to the center of Fukushima City!

