

**January**

**February**

- 1 - New Year's Day
- 6 - Re-appointment Deadline (might differ by CO)
- 11 - Coming of Age Day

- 3 - Setsubun
- 11 - National Foundation Day
- 23 - Emperor's Birthday

# The Shiga Situation

## Year of the Ox

2020 has come and gone in the blink of an eye. This past year will likely always be equated with COVID-19. As the pandemic spread, many of us were working from home, and social distancing became the norm. Unfortunately, we've seen the JET community in Shiga shrink during this time, with an outpouring of JETs and a lack of new arrivals. This contracting period, the Shiga JET community will only gain one new participant, but the arrival date is yet TBD.



While we're still firmly in the midst of a worsening pandemic, there's a light on the horizon. The distribution of vaccines has begun and with that comes a hope that transmission rates will decrease. It's unlikely that things will go back to normal any time soon, but with progress being made, hopefully 2021 will be a better year for us all.

### Ring in the New Year

### Recontracting

In Japan it's common for people to gather at temples and Shrines on New Year's Day for their first visit of the new year. This year, however, with the recent rise in COVID-19 cases across Japan, many such places are asked people to postpone their visit. If you've never been to a big shrine for the New Year, there are usually a ton of people waiting closely together in line to pray. It's easy to imagine why that wasn't the best idea with the way things have been going recently.

The time to recontract is upon us again. Again this year, there is the option for a short-term contract because of the planned Tokyo Olympics. This means if you're not planning to recontract for a full year, you can instead stay on until mid-September to cover the period of time before next year's arrivals come to Japan. This option should also be available to 5th year JETs.

With the threat of large crowds passed, if you find yourself looking for something to do in the coming weeks, consider going to a local shrine. Don't forget to get your omikujii, which foretells of your fortune for the year - if it's not what you hoped for you can always tie it up and leave it behind.

If you haven't made up your mind about recontracting, give it some deep thought. There's still seven months to go on your current contract, and you're signing on for another year. Consider your personal and professional goals and think about how more time on JET figures into your plans. It's not a decision to be taken lightly.



### Oh, the Weather Inside is Frightful

It's gotten cold outside, which, in Shiga, means it's gotten cold inside too. As a recent adopter of heattech, I'm here to sing its praises. Rather than fork out a fistful of cash to keep your AC running warm, consider buying a pair or two of insulating layers.

Consider this, the heat you pay for will inevitably escape through your apartment's poorly insulated walls, but paying for some comfy slippers, a warm fleece and a nice and comfy puffy sweater can keep you warm all winter.

That being said, I definitely do run my heater from time to time. Some words of advice to anyone using an aircon unit to heat their home: clean your filter! If you haven't checked it recently, you might be surprised at how much dust can accumulate rather quickly and how much this decreases its efficiency.



### New Strain of Coronavirus

If you have been keeping up with the news recently, you'll know there have been reports of a new strain of the Coronavirus that has made its way to Japan. This new strain is said to be more virulent than previous strains. Unfortunately, this development coincides with rising case numbers in many parts of Japan.

NHK has reported that a new state of emergency may be declared in the Tokyo area, but that this time around schools will not close. With cases rising, the new strain and many of us likely feeling COVID fatigue, it's important that we stay vigilant and maintain proper preventative measures. Wear a mask, sanitize and wash your hands often and avoid the 3 Cs.



### Missed Issue

You may have noticed there was no November-December issue of the Shiga Situation. I was a bit consumed with SDC prep, and couldn't keep up with the constantly changing information that had been coming out at that time regarding new arrivals. I wish I had been more communicative and will strive to do better. Thanks for your understanding!



### New JET?

This year put BOEs in a tough situation. With JETs returning home and the new JETs not being able to come, the absence of an ALT was really felt at many schools. Since then, some COs have left the JET programme, and others have filled their vacancies with instructors from private companies. At least some of those positions should revert to JET in the following year. Because of this situation, we'll only have one new JET arriving in Shiga this contracting period. While across Japan new JETs have begun to arrive, departure dates have not been set for some countries, so we don't know when our new JET will arrive as of yet.



### Don't Be Afraid to Ask for Help

As the coronavirus pandemic drags on, you might want to someone to talk to. Prioritize your mental health and don't be afraid to reach out if you're feeling down.

Kevin - [kenchopa@gmail.com](mailto:kenchopa@gmail.com)

Emilie - [shigapa@gmail.com](mailto:shigapa@gmail.com)

[Web Mail - JET Counseling Service](#) (no limit)

Login Password: clairjet2020

[Skype - JET Counseling Service](#)

Login Password: clairjet2020

[AJET Peer Support Group](#): 050-5534-5566

Skype: AJETPSG

[TELL Counseling Services](#)

[International Mental Health Professionals Japan](#)



### Season's Greetings from AJET

Happy New Year Shiga! From Shiga AJET. 2020 was an interesting year and we hope that everyone was able to make the best out of the not so good. It has been difficult to host in person events, but hopefully we were able to incorporate online game nights to the fullest. To finish off 2020 and welcome 2021 Shiga AJET held a Zoom Enkai! so people could jump in and out from the comfort and warmth of their own home. Stay warm and healthy during cold days ahead! Happy New Year everyone!