

Fascinating Artistic Azabu (28)

A Sophisticated and Exclusive "Home away from Home" in Azabu-dai Tokyo American Club



The Winter Garden is located at the entrance on the left side.
 The ceilings are quite high, at 11.5 meters, and this creates an impressively spacious and open atmosphere.

When you go along the Gaien-Higashi Dori Avenue in the direction of Tokyo Tower, with crowded Roppongi Crossing at your back, you'll reach Iigura-Katamachi. Then, you pass through Iigura-Katamachi, you can see the Azabu-dai Redevelopment Site under construction on the left, where high-rise buildings are hurriedly being constructed. When you turn the corner at the Russian Embassy on the right, you'll see Tokyo American Club (hereinafter called the "Club"). The stylish historic building looks beautiful on the high ground of Azabu-dai. The Club has a long history, and is members-only, so I visited with special permission.

Located in Azabu-dai, with a Long and Dramatic History

In the Edo Period, on a large area across from where this Club and the current Russian Embassy premises are, there was once a large Mansion that belonged to a "Daimyo", or feudal lord of the Mutsu Miharuru Domain, assessed at 50,000 koku. This was the spare residence of the Akita clan in Edo, with the title of the "Awa no Kami", (Governor of the Awa Province). In the Meiji Era the area around the mansion site was called "Azabu-mamianacho". In 1882, Count (and later Admiral) KAWAMURA Sumiyoshi (1836 to 1904) constructed a western-style mansion at Mamiana-Cho 4-Banchi of about 10,000m2. It was the first private house that Josiah Conder (*1) designed in Japan. He also designed the Ministry of the Navy building and the Rokumeikan Pavilion. In 1901, when Prince Michino-Miya, (later enthroned as Emperor Showa) was born, Count KAWAMURA was ordered to become the chief nurturer and raised the prince from when he was 70 days old to 3 years old at his mansion in Mamiana and also at his second house in Numazu (*2). Count KAWAMURA passed away in 1904 just before the Treaty of Portsmouth was signed in 1905 after the end of Russo-Japanese War. The following year the South Manchuria Railway Company was established. Around that time, the Tokyo branch of the South Manchuria Railway Company opened here. (*3). In 1954, The Tokyo American Club was established at this location.

In the adjacent lot, the Naval Meteorological Observatory was established in 1874 and the Tokyo Astronomical Observatory was constructed in 1886. Before these Observatories were moved to Mitaka in 1925, this place had been the center of astronomical observation in Japan. Now, the "Geodetic Datum Origin of Japan" is in this place.

Now, in the Reiwa Era, on this land where various episodes from Japan's modern history took place, the Club's magnificent building, with its 5 floors above ground and 3 basement floors, is located here.

"Home away from Home" as proposed by César Pelli

The Club building can be roughly divided into two sections. One is the adult-oriented formal section. This includes conference rooms, where business is conducted, and guest rooms, and the New York Ballroom,

etc. where parties are held. On the other side, in the family section, a variety of well-equipped facilities are provided for children to enjoy as well. On the top floor there is a pool, and on the other floors, there is a fitness gym, a basketball court, squash courts, a bowling alley and more. This is an outstanding place for sports and cultural exchange, and really stands out in this way from other social clubs in Japan. The business section and family section are connected to each other through the atrium. Surprisingly, no two rooms here are the same, with each of the rooms having been uniquely designed for a specific purpose.

Pelli Clarke & Partners, led by the American architect César Pelli (1926 to 2019), was put in charge of designing the Club. Pelli was once the Dean of the Faculty of Architecture, Yale University, and the company's headquarters is also located in the State of Connecticut. When the Club was under construction, their local staff members supervised the design and construction, and Takenaka Corporation built it.

In fact, Pelli is quite a famous architect in Japan, and was involved in the design of tall skyscrapers all over the world. Pelli participated in architectural projects that include Atago Green Hills in Minato City, Abeno Harukas in Osaka, NTT East Japan Headquarters, and Haneda Airport Terminal 2, to name just a few. His architectural projects overseas include the Petronas Twin Tower in Kuala Lumpur Malaysia, the Hong Kong International Finance Center in Hong Kong, Carnegie Hall Tower in New York, and many more. They are all famous architectural masterpieces that are highly regarded around the world. In 1991 the American Institute of Architects (AIA) named him as one of the 10 most influential living architects in the US. In 1995, he received an AIA Gold Medal, and, without a doubt, is a globally recognized architect.

Although he was certainly skilled at designing high-rise buildings, he took a very different approach when designing the Club's mid-rise building. He adopted the notion of a "Home away from Home" for expats, which is a warm and comfortable space on the inside, with a dignified profoundness outside and overall.

Although the Club is open to members only, it also plan events open to the general public as shown in page 4 of this community information paper. I hope you will be able to come and join one of these events.



Pool with glassed-in rooftop on the top floor



A bazaar, introduced in page 4 in this community information paper, was held in the New York Ballroom (banquet hall) on the Club's B2F floor.



A Guest room, where guests receive hospitality equivalent to first-class hotels



The 6 lane bowling alley is crowded with families on weekends.



KAWAMURA Sumiyoshi's Mansion located in Mamiana. The building itself remained there until the premises were sold to the Tokyo American Club in 1954. (Photos reprinted from "Josiah Conder, Architect of the Rokumeikan Pavilion" Exhibition Catalogue Enlarged and Revised Edition, published by Kenchiku Gaho Sha in 2009) The two-story Western-style House designed by Josiah Conder where Emperor Showa lived until he was 3 years old.



- *1 Referenced from "The Phenomena of Azabu" in "The AZABU No. 20"
https://www.city.minato.tokyo.jp/azabuchikusei/azabu/koho/documents/azabu_vol20.pdf
- *2 Referenced from "The Phenomena of Azabu" in "The AZABU No. 45"
<https://www.city.minato.tokyo.jp/azabuchikusei/azabu/koho/documents/azabu45e.pdf>
- *3 Referenced from "The Phenomena of Azabu" in "The AZABU No. 9"
https://www.city.minato.tokyo.jp/azabuchikusei/azabu/koho/documents/azabu_vol9.pdf

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麻布ひと

Azabu - A Human Story
Preserving Voices of Azabu
for the Future



Mr. SASAKI Yoshinao
(28 years old)
Negi (Senior Priest)
Sakurada Shrine



The "Goshuin" (Red Ink Stamp) of Sakurada Shrine. On the upper right of the paper, is the shrine crest (clockwise three comma-shaped figures in a circle) stamp.

A very community-oriented shrine, preserving the history of the town

"Jurojin" is the God of Health and Long Life, and is enshrined at the Sakurada Shrine (*:1). This shrine in Nishi-Azabu has an ancient and honorable origin. You can find it along the old TV Asahi Dori Street, on the "Tour of Minato Seven Deities of Good Luck" route, as described in No. 57 of this information paper. Mr. SASAKI Yoshinao serves as a "Negi" (*:2), a senior priest, of this Shrine. We asked him to tell us what he's been doing and how he feels about our town now and for the future.



Mr. SASAKI Yoshinao's father's death made him decide to become a priest!

Yoshinao was born in 1994 and graduated from the local Kogai Elementary School, just like his father and grandfather. Then, he entered Roppongi Junior High School. He was very interested in engines and vehicles, so he went on to be further educated at an industrial high school. When he was a senior high school student, he belonged to the school motor vehicle club and was deeply involved with the Honda Eco Mileage Challenge, which is a competition to see how many kilometers you can go using a Honda Super Cub engine with 1 liter of gasoline.

per Cub engine with 1 liter of gasoline.

"My grandmother told me that I was to be the heir to my family's shrine in my childhood. However, my father told me I could do whatever I liked until I was 30 years old". Since his childhood he had closely watched his father serving as the Guji (chief priest) (*:3), but he had not helped his father with any religious services at the shrine, and had only worked at the reception during the busy New Year period, etc. "I guess that my father would not let me help him until I had become a qualified Shinto priest".

However, his father passed away in the winter at the young age of 47, when Yoshinao was a second-grade student in senior high school. He only has one other sibling, a younger sister. This being the case, it would only be natural for him to take over his father's job. He entered the Shinto Culture Department of Kokugakuin University and came to help his mother (the Guji at that time) with Shinto services. In his first year as a university student, he qualified for the Shinto rank of "Chokkai" (*:4) and was then able to serve as a priest. After 10 years of Shinto services, now he has risen to the rank of "Meikai" (*:5), and can serve as the Guji (chief priest).

While doing his work, he found a wide range of activities to become involved with.

Yoshinao has been involved in a wide range of activities. On weekdays, he has been working for "Tokyo Jinjacho", the Tokyo Metropolitan Shrine Agency, and on weekends, he is busy with lectures and various events as a priest. "My wife has supported me a lot, and has always been very helpful".

A priest in the Jinjacho Minato Branch once advised him, "If you join this activity, you will come to know the town much better". He recognized this as a great opportunity, and became a member of Azabu No. 1 fire brigade team. There are a few fire stations around the Sakurada Shrine, and during serious disasters such as big earthquakes, large fires or floods, firefighting services for large buildings such as hospitals or commercial facilities are prioritized. In such cases, they might not be able to cover private houses as well. As such, he realized that it would be very useful to gather detailed information about town and street conditions as well as the status of residents, such as where the aged and infirm live etc.

Yoshinao told us, "Our firefighting operation is extremely efficient. There is no wasted time or movement, and this is essentially the same for our ceremonies at the shrine". Every movement is fixed, and each motion is important. "It is very hard for me to memorize each motion for both firefighting and Shinto services", he laughed.



Although the surrounding streetscape has really changed over time, Sakurada Shrine has not. From the top, photos in 1959, in 2006 and in 2022.

*: Referenced from "Photographed Minato-ku Vol. 3 (Azabu Area Section)" issued by Minato City Board of Education in 1959 and 2006, collected by the Minato Local History Museum.

A local Shrine, very active in the surrounding community

Yoshinao cherishes the bonds between people. People in the nearby community were very supportive of him and his mother in the difficult time just after the sudden death of his father. This includes his relatives who were also Shinto priests, his father's friends and colleagues, and of course the priests at the same Branch. "They helped us a lot and were very encouraging. I am deeply grateful to all the members of the community for accepting a young person like myself".

Yoshinao tries hard to involve himself with many activities in the community, always keeping in mind how important it is to cooperate with other shrines.

Through the activities as a member of fire brigade he formed a connection to the people involved with parks where there disaster prevention equipment is located. Again, through his network of connections, he received an offer to become a



His father, Mr. SASAKI Osamu; his regalia in the photo is now worn by Yoshinao, who takes great care of it.

town-walking guide from Arisugawa-no-Miya Memorial Park, for the "Nishi-Azabu Old Kasumi-Cho Tour," which has been well received. The records in shrines provide a lot of history about the town if one wants to do the research and just speaking to the locals is also a great source of information and history, however, he thinks it's very important to thoroughly read the literature on Minato City's History, etc. After doing so he conducts a guided tour, adding his own interpretations to his explanations.

"When I become a chief priest of my Shrine, I think I will have become the 36th chief priest. Unfortunately, most of the documents were lost in fires during the war, and almost nothing is left. I learned the history based on what materials remain". He wants to elucidate the charms of the town through these town-walking tours.

"What I am responsible for has a long history, and is very old. My mission is to leave all the things I have inherited from my ancestors, including the history of all the "Ujiko" (parishioners) (*:6), worshippers and local people, to posterity".

He believes that he is firmly based in the local community. He hopes to get as close to the local people as possible, and does so through the walking tours and reading and researching the town's history. His work in this regard will never stop.

We were pleasantly surprised by Mr. SASAKI's willingness to provide his well-reasoned and easy to understand replies to our interview questions. He is only 28 years old, but he stays positive, thinking about the future of his town. He made a really good impression on us!

- *:1 Sakurada Shrine: It was established in 1180 outside of the present Kasumigaseki Sakurada Gate, as the Kazan Sakurada Myojin Shrine by the order of Minamoto-no-Yoritomo (the First Shogun in the Kamakura Shogunate). In 1624, it was relocated to where it is now. In 1189, Yoritomo donated 30 Kan (an ancient system of taxation based on the annual yield) of fields to the Shrine. In order to distinguish it from the other fields around it, cherry trees were planted along the edges of the fields owned by the shrine, and this is where the name "Sakurada" came from. (Referenced from the website of "Tokyo Jinjacho", the Tokyo Metropolitan Shrine Agency)
- *:2 Negi: A priest supporting "Guji" (the chief priest)
- *:3 Guji: A priest who serves the shrine and conducts ceremonies, prayer operations and general affairs
- *:4, *:5 "Chokkai" and "Meikai": Two levels of priesthood. There are five levels authorized by 'Jinja Honcho', the Association of Shinto Shrines: Chokkai -> Gonzeikai -> Seikai -> Meikai -> Jokai (the top level)
- *:6 Ujiko: People who protect the same Ujigami (local Shinto deity) in the same land
- *:2, *:3 and *:6 (Referenced from Meikyō Kokugo Jiten (Japanese-Language Dictionary))

● Research Support
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(Researched and written by TAKAYANAGI Yukiko, HORIKIRI Michiko and YAMAKI Ayako)



Yoshinao is an active member of the Fire Brigade.



He is also active as a navigator for town-walking tours.



“4,000 people in 22 years” What do these counts represent?



Mr. INABA Shuichi, the 4th Chairperson of the Azabu Hojinkai PIIA

In 1994 he became a member of the Azabu Hojinkai when he started running his own company, and has been a member for 28 years. We understood his passion for this association.

tion that supports company development and contributes to the local community”, in association with the Azabu Tax Office. The exchanges among a variety of different industries have blossomed, and there are many women members of this organization, including Chief Leaders. The high number of women in positions of responsibility is a notable feature of this association.

Some lectures and training courses to learn about tax system, non-members can also attend them to support the invigoration and sound development of local small and medium-sized companies.

Every year, they compile “Proposals for the Tax System” with member companies’ opinions and requests and it is then submitted to the Diet member of the House of Representative of the Tokyo 1st District, with the hope that it will influence the central government and the Diet.

They are also actively involved in volunteer activities that contribute to the community.



History of the Azabu Hojinkai

January 25, 1950	Former association of Azabu Hojinkai was established.
April 23, 1964	Merged with the Akasaka Hojinkai established on December 20, 1949 into the Azabu Hojinkai.
October 30, 1970	The Azabu Hojinkai was dissolved, and the “General Incorporated Association Azabu Hojinkai” was authorized on December 1.
February 20, 1971	The first “General Incorporated Association Azabu Hojinkai Bulletin” was issued. The bulletin was renamed to “AKA-YAMA-BU-KI” in 2002.
March 26, 1973	The 3A (or “SAN-EI”) Club was established as a youth group, consists of young or middle-aged executives from the member companies. The name is from the first letters of Azabu, Akasaka and Aoyama: “AAA”. This group holds “Study Sessions” by expert lecturers, “tax courses” for elementary students and “cross-industry exchange meetings” by the members themselves.
September 24, 1998	The “Tea Club” was established. This is a group for female members. The “Tea” in the name is supposed to refer a golf tee and also to “drink tea”. An oasis for working women. This club holds lectures and training sessions to promote friendship among the group. In addition, they work together with the Public Benefit Services Committee to support the community.
January 19, 2000	The blood donation activities began.
March 22, 2012	This association was authorized as a Public Interest Incorporated Association (PIIA)* and was officially registered in April.
September 14, 2013	The first “Azabu Tokimeki Party” was held at Roppongi Hills.
June 17, 2019	Mr. INABA Shuichi was appointed as the PIIA’s fourth Chairperson.

* Public Interest Incorporated Association: A corporation that conducts businesses with the main purpose of contributing to an unspecified number of people

Why do companies join this association? What is the association’s “framework”?

* The figures are up to the end of April 2022.

The main reason to join such a corporation is to acquire a deeper understanding of the tax system. However, the most attractive thing about it is to the chance to exchange information among the members, because a wide variety and sizes of companies and industries join the organization. This is basically a valuable opportunity for like-minded business people to share solutions to common problems. There are 1,819 members in the association. There are general corporations, but also medical companies, religious corporations, schools, NPOs, public interest corporations and more. In addition, individuals can join this inclusive organization as support members. The membership fee level is divided into four ranks depending on capitalization or amount invested. For companies with the capital of less than 10 million yen, the membership fee is 12,000 yen per year. This is quite reasonable for smaller companies, and as of now there are 501 of them. The number of members by branch is 594 for Azabu, 275 for Roppongi, 496 for Akasaka and 454 for Aoyama. There are enjoyable events held at each one that are designed to get know the people in the local community and learn about what they do.

The association has a variety of active sessions, including the Public Benefit Service Committee introduced here, the 3A Club and the Tea Club. In addition, there are also 8 circles/groups where members can enjoy interacting with each other.

The Seasonal Bulletin あかやまぶき (AKA-YAMA-BU-KI)

あか means red and やまぶき is Japanese Kerria with a yellow flower ,so あかやまぶき, or red kerria, is quite strange? The title of the Azabu Hojinkai’s bulletin is composed of parts of the names of the four branches, such as “AKAsaka”, “aoYAMA”, “azaBU” and “ropponKI”. Don’t you think it’s rather fancy and elegant? Also, the logo and its color are just as you might imagine.



The front page shows the figure that appears at the top of the interview page. However, there used to be a drawing of slopes and one of the embassy buildings of 50 or so countries in this area. This bulletin has information from the Azabu Tax Office and the Metropolitan Tax Office, and describes the activities of the Azabu Hojinkai PIIA. In addition to useful explanations about common taxation for individuals, it also includes an introduction to neighboring member companies. There is an essay series called the “Azabu Riddle Story” written by YAMAMOTO Herumi, which is easy to read and very interesting.



Written in Japanese

From “AKA-YAMA-BU-KI” Bulletin No. 264

These counts show the total number of people who have joined the Japanese Red Cross Society’s Blood Donation events held by the “Azabu Hojinkai(Azabu Corporation Association) Public Interest Incorporated Association”. This was achieved in the morning of April 11 this year at their 59th JRCS’ blood donation event. It is especially remarkable because as they had focused on safety during the COVID-19 pandemic. Did you know that the Azabu Hojinkai, that have been helping JRCS with their blood donation events since 2000? Surprisingly, they have a long history for 72 years! Also, they have been doing many other volunteer activities in close connection with the local community. On this page we are introducing the Azabu Hojinkai!



Ms. SHIGA Ritsuko, Chief Leader of the Public Benefit Service Committee

With her wonderful smile, she told us about their many activities.

Azabu Hojinkai also keep relationship to the community through as follows:

The Public Benefit Service Committee, the Tea Club and the 3A Club members are actively involved in these projects.

1: Blood Donation Activities

This project supports the Japanese Red Cross Society’s blood donation work, and it began with a proposal by Mr. SAITO, one of the four members of the “Community Contribution Committee”. Support for blood donations is held two or three times a year, in cooperation with Roppongi Hills and Tokyo Midtown. When the 59th blood donation event finished on April 11, 2022, the 22nd year of the project, they had accepted 4,060 people in total. This accomplishment is the result of hard work and commitment, without the benefit of a powerful advertising campaign.



The project started with the words of Mr. SAITO Takeo, an advisor. He attended 58 out of the 59 projects.

2: COVID-19 Medical Measures Support

In 2021, donations were made twice to Minato City. On March 18, 2021, a donation of 100,000 yen was given to the Minato City Medical Association, and on November 22, 2021, vegetable juice, etc. that was requested by staff members in vaccination venues and for home care patients was donated to the Minato Health Care Center.



From the left, Mr. ARIGA, the General Manager of Health and Welfare Support Dept., Ms. OHTA, the Manager of the Public Health and Disease Prevention Section at the Minato Health Care Center, Mr. TAKEI, the Mayor of Minato City, Mr. INABA, the Chairman of the Azabu Corporate Association, Ms. SHIGA, the Chairperson of the Public Benefit Service Committee, Mr. IKEDA, the Manager of the Azabu Branch

3: Tax Picture Postcard Competition

Every year, elementary school students living within the jurisdiction of the Azabu Tax Office take part in the competition. The winning pictures are selected by an expert on painting, the Mayor of Minato City, the Minato City Board of Education, and the Chief of Azabu Tax Office, et al., after careful consideration. Each of the winning pictures is printed on the next year’s calendar.



4: “Tax Course”: Thinking about taxes with children, planning for the future!

Every year, a Tax Course is offered at elementary schools to encourage students to have a clear understanding of taxes from childhood. After the course, they provide time for the participants to play Sugoroku (Japanese game similar to Snakes and Ladders), which also helps to deepen their understanding.



5: Gift Towels

Many towels collected from the members are then gifted to the Minato Council of Social Welfare.



6: Guide Dog Seminar

Basic knowledge of and guide dog information and support are offered to the visually impaired, as well as impressive and inspiring stories.



7: Sign Language One-day Training

An one-day training conducted by RIMI, a sign language performer who appeared in the Tokyo 2020 Paralympics Closing Session.

8: The “Azabu Tokimeki Party”

This party is held to help people look for a life partner, an idea proposed by one of this committee’s women.

The first party was held to express their passion to “create a wonderful meeting place for single people”, and eight new couples found each other. At the 11th party in Meiji Kinenkan on September 2019, nine couples were formed. In total, 89 new couples have been created, and many actually resulted in marriage. If they use Meiji Kinenkan for their wedding ceremony, then some wonderful services will be provided!



9 There are many other activities, including “Used Stamp Collecting”, “Attending the Minato Citizen’s Festival” and “Supporting Miyagi Prefecture for Earthquake Recovery”, and more.

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 - Mr. SAITO Takeo, President and CEO of Saito Printing Office (and Chairman of Higashi-Azabu Itchome Ii-Go Neighboring Association)
 - Ms. MONJI Yumi, Deputy Secretary General, Azabu Hojinkai PIIA
- References:
 - Website of the Azabu Hojinkai PIIA
 - “The 70th Anniversary Memorial Magazine 1950 – 2020” issued by Azabu Hojinkai PIIA
 - “AKA-YAMA-BU-KI” Bulletin No. 232, 242, 255, 261, 262, 264 and 265

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Our Field Trip

4
Adults and Children Looking and Learning Together!

They are neighbors, but a bit unfamiliar to us...

Visiting Tokyo American Club in Azabu-Dai

The members-only Tokyo American Club is located in Azabu-Dai. As a members-only club, it's not every day we have a chance to visit. However, aren't you curious about what they are doing? In fact, this club is open to the public for charity sales a few times a year. In this edition, we will tell you about the organization called "Connections" that conducts charity activities, and what happens at their charity sales.

What is "Connections", in Tokyo American Club?

Tokyo American Club is an international social club for members only, established May 23, 1928. Currently, there are about 3,800 members and more than 12,000 family members from more than 50 countries, mainly the US and Japan.



Ms. Olivia Smith, former president of Connections.

"Connections" is a non-profit organization, and part of Tokyo American Club. Based on the American Club Women's Association, this organization has been active for 70 years or more. "Initially, we began as a knitting circle. However, now we organize lectures and tours for members to learn about

Japanese culture, lectures regarding daily life in Japan, and provide emergency support such as shopping and medical services. We can also support the members who have just arrived in Japan with information on food and cooking, Japanese language courses, cultural exchange events, and more. In 2019 we decided to expand and accept many more members, so we changed the organization name to "Connections". At present, membership consists of 430 women and 70 men. 40% are Japanese nationals, so 60% are from a variety of other countries", Ms. Smith, the former president of Connections told us. She also created the idea for the new logo design.



Connections

With the mizuhiki motif, a decorative Japanese cord, the original design expresses the three Cs: Charity, Culture and Community.

When we asked some of the members how they came to join Connections, we got a wide variety of answers. These included pet support, learning about the charms of Tokyo, improving their English skills and charity activities. The respondents were all born in various places and spanned a wide variety of ages, yet all said, "We are very glad to have warm friendly relationships with families similar to ours with a common purpose here". This left a very positive impression on us.

Activities and Expectations for "Connections"

Connections focuses on charity activities in particular. When we asked the person in charge of charity activities, Ms. Rina RAFFINE, she told us most sincerely that "We would like to help as many people as possible, especially if they are having problems, even with small ac-



Ms. RAFFINE Rina is in charge of Charity Activities.



Connections members are like a family, with good teamwork and a high level of awareness.

activities. The subjects of these charitable activities generally include children, women, local issues such as supporting victims in disaster areas like Fukushima, anti-domestic violence measures, a volunteer-managed cafeteria for children, and responding to the needs of the times, such as animal protection, care for the homeless, etc. More specifically, we focus on problems that are not receiving adequate support from public institutions or administrative organizations in Japan. Even members who cannot speak Japanese can work as volunteers, and can connect with the local people through 'Connections'. This is also a very important point".

Then we asked Ms. Gabriel KERSHNER, who is also in charge of charity activities, about the charity sales. She told us, "We select the shops six months before the event. Volunteers in the Connection booth do sales and account operations on the day. Last year, during the 3-day event more than 1,000 visitors came, and there were more than 17 million yen in sales. We were then able to donate 20% of the total profit to support groups. At the International Sales held in November every year, 50 shops sell gifts and small articles for Christmas. The next International Sale will be in November this year and is open to the public. We would be very happy if as many people from Azabu as possible come to the venue".

In July 2021, Tokyo American Club opened the Event Hall to the public of Minato City for free

COVID-19 vaccinations, for their first and second shots. Connections members also took part in the operation as volunteers to help the community. 5 days a week, for two months, Connections members secured 150 health-care professionals and helped to manage their schedules, etc. Nearly 30,000 people were able to receive both their first and second vaccinations. Securing medical doctors in particular was very difficult. Connections members asked medical doctors in university hospitals, local medical practitioners and even dentists (all of whom don't usually get involved with vaccination operations) directly. Many of them sacrificed holiday time to participate. These health-care professionals provided an enormous amount of support locally under challenging circumstances. We developed great feelings of warmth and gratitude towards them.



Ms. Gabriel KERSHNER is also in charge of Charity Activities

After the interview, we also felt great affection towards the members of Connections, as fellow members of the local community, much closer than before. This was a wonderful encounter for us, and made us feel that we would like to help the community together with them, as good neighbors and friends.

Charity Sale "Decor!" Visit Report



In the gorgeous venue, products were on display everywhere, like a museum.



Antique maps are very popular.

These are actually pattern papers for dying fabrics, and there are many people who buy them. There are many people who buy these articles as souvenirs.

The instructions are written in English. It feels a bit like being in a market in foreign country.



Visitors looked at everything with great interest.

We visited the Charity Sale "Decor!" on April 10 and 11, 2022. Originally, this event was for foreign members to have a chance to buy Asian furniture as souvenirs. This time there were more than 20 shops selling modern Japanese drawings, antique maps, kitchen knives, ceramics, antiques, and more. The traditional Japanese items were very interesting and exciting even for regular Japanese people like us, not just the foreigners!

The people of Tsuchiyu Onsen Hot Spring had supported events before, and they really suffered after the Great East Japan Earthquake, so Connections members there made generous donations for reconstruction in cooperation with the members of other Committees. We wondered "Why are Kokeshi dolls here?" They told us that the texture of the wooden Kokeshi doll was nice and their old-fashioned and gentle Japanese look was very popular overseas as interior decorations. We could re-discover Japan as viewed from people from other countries.



Staff members of Connections played active roles.

The Next "International Sale"
"International Sale"
 Monday the 7th and Tuesday the 8th of November 2022. Open to the Public
 For details, confirm through the website.

You can use this shorter URL: www.tokyoamericanclub.org/connections
 (The details about the sale will be announced in September or later).

The Azabu Future Photo Studio

Origins in the Edo Period

Mohri Garden

Appearing amongst the buildings of Roppongi Hills, Mohri Garden has an abundance of water and greenery. Mohri Garden was created during the Roppongi 6-Chome Redevelopment Project by the Mori Building Company 19 years ago. However, if we have a look at the history of this area, we'll discover various episodes that go all the way back to the Edo Period.

The Mohri Family's Main Edo Mansion was once located here.

The current Mohri Garden location used to be a part of the main Edo mansion premises of the MOHRI Family, the lord of the Chofu Domain in the Edo Period (Present day Shimono-seki, Yamaguchi Prefecture). MOHRI Hidemoto, the Governor of Kai Province (present day Kofu, Yamanashi Prefecture) was the grandson of MOHRI Motonari. He came from a branch of the MOHRI family and was given this mansion and it's premises by the Shogun in 1640. This premises has a very long history up to 1864, when it was confiscated around the end of the Tokugawa Shogunate. Taking advantage of the terrain, the trapezoidal space on the side of the south slope was developed as residential land, and their mansion was built on the high ground, with a garden and pond under the plateau. We can surmise that there was an abundant spring there, because there was no stream or river flowing to the pond. From that time the surrounding area was called "Azabu Kita Higakubo-Cho".

There are two remarkable episodes that occurred around that time. Perhaps the most spectacular is the story related to the raid on KIRA's mansion by the 47 Ako Roshi, or lordless samurais of the Ako Domain, in 1702. At that time, some of the Ako Roshi samurais were under the head of Mohri the family, MOHRI Tsunamoto. Ten of them were sent to MOHRI's main Edo mansion in Higakubo, and they committed seppuku (ritual suicide) in the garden, as was their wish. Also, in 1849, NOGI Maresuke was born to NOGI Maresugu, a Chofu feudal retainer, in a samurai residence row house on the premises. He would go on to become an Army General. Maresuke's father had great respect for the Ako Roshi samurais, and visited their graves in Sengakuji Temple with his son Maresuke on the anniversary of their deaths. Later, in April 1919, this place was designated by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government as "General Nogi's Birth Place", a historical site. In March 1943, it was designated as a historical site for the second time, as the "Mansion Site of the Mohri Family, Governor

of Kai Province" (2 3).

This place became the Mansion Premises of a Judicial Leader in the Meiji Period.

Mr. MASUJIMA Rokuichiro was a jurist and one of the founders of the English Law School, which became Chuo University. He obtained this land as the premises for his mansion in 1887. Mr. MASUJIMA also had great reverence for the Ako Roshi and General Nogi. He actually encountered General Nogi during his later years in this place. He named the garden as "Hohki-En" and on one side of the pond he constructed the main mansion building. On the other side of the pond, he built the "Seikyuritsu Shoin" library, where a collection of Western jurisprudence books was kept. The buildings were arrayed around the pond as shown in an interesting drawing (4) from 1927. This Shoin library existed until the area was recently redeveloped, and the collection of books was transferred to the "Seikyudo Bunko" at the Supreme Court.

This place became the Nikka Whiskey Tokyo Distillery.

In 1951, the founder of Nikka Whiskey Distilling Co., Ltd. Mr. TAKETSURU Masataka acquired the MASUJIMA family's former mansion premises. Mr. TAKETSURU went to Scotland by himself to learn how to make great whiskey, and brought that knowledge with him back to Japan in the Taisho Period. He established his company in Yoichi-Cho on the Shakotan Peninsula in Hokkaido. However, in order to expand the business he constructed the distillery (5) here in Azabu as the base for his Kanto Area operation. Mr. TAKETSURU also had great reverence for this place because of its history with the Ako Roshi and General Nogi. He never allowed the pond to be filled in, as he believed that because of its long and distinguished history it must have a guardian spirit. In the pond, clusters of a kind of edible water lily called Junsai grew. ("Water shield", in English) They drilled a well on the premises that produced water clean enough to be able to use it for blending whiskey.

From the TV Asahi Era to Redevelopment

In 1977, TV Asahi Corporation owned this land. In this area,



Mohri Garden in April 2022: A landscape combining an urban space and nature like this is quite unique to Azabu.

the old towns including Azabu Kita Higakubo-Cho, had been integrated since 1960, and were re-named "Roppongi 6-Chome". Somei-Yoshino cherry trees (6) that were planted in the Nikka era had grown to an impressive size, and the land was opened to the local neighborhood residents in the spring every year for cherry blossom viewing. At the end of the Showa Period, people in the local community heard about the redevelopment plan for this area, and were very concerned that the pond and cherry trees might be removed. So, they started a petition, collected signatures and the garden and pond were saved. From then, the scenery we can now see was shaped.

Mohri Garden is very comfortable for visitors to walk around in the early summer. When you walk by the pond, you can almost hear the voices of the people who have lived there, voices from a rich history.



Beside the footpath in the garden, there is a notice board where the Ako Roshi episode is described.



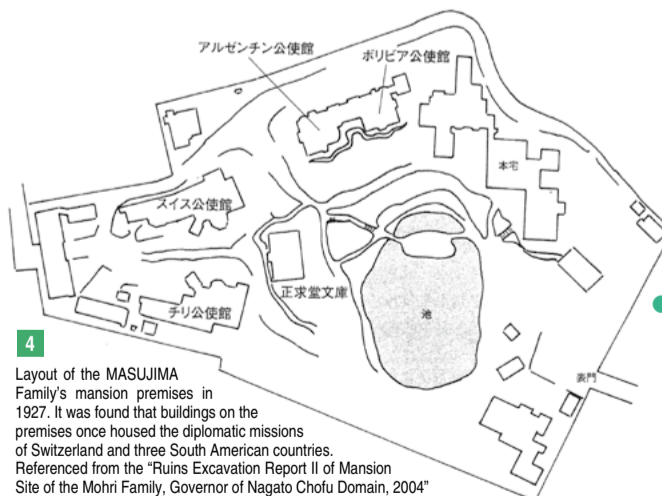
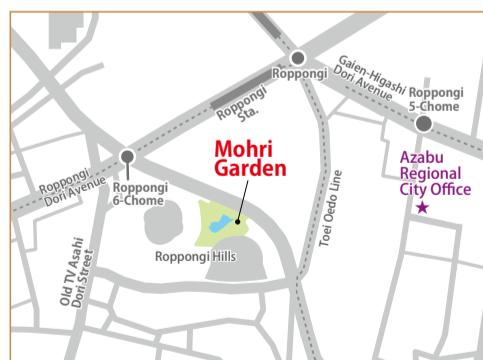
historical site for the second time, as the "Mansion Site of the Mohri Family, Governor



Nikka Whiskey Tokyo Distillery at the time of its completion in 1952 (Photo provided by Nikka Whiskey Distilling Co., Ltd.)



The pond in 1995 at the time when TV Asahi owned it, called "Nikka Pond". It's likely that many people still remember it. Referenced from the "Azabu Photo Studio Activity Records from FY2009 to 2014"



Layout of the MASUJIMA Family's mansion premises in 1927. It was found that buildings on the premises once housed the diplomatic missions of Switzerland and three South American countries. Referenced from the "Ruins Excavation Report II of Mansion Site of the Mohri Family, Governor of Nagato Chofu Domain, 2004"

- References:
 - "Azabu Ward History" (Tokyo City Azabu Ward Office 1941)
 - "The 15th Year of Genroku" written by SHIBUSAWA Seika, published by Kyoyo-sha in 1944
 - "Ruins Excavation Report II of Mansion Site of Mohri Family, Governor of Nagato Chofu Domain, 2004" published by the Minato City Board of Education Secretariat Roppongi 6-Chome Area Urban Redevelopment Association, and Minato City Archaeological Site Survey Secretariat
 - "Additional Issue of Minato City Modern History Azabu Roppongi" published by Minato Local History Museum in 2010
 - "Will of Massan, My Father" supervised by TAKETSURU Kohtarō, published by KADOKAWA in 2014

About the Azabu Future Photo Studio

The Azabu Regional City Office conducts activities that record the changes to the cityscape of Azabu, preserving and passing down its history in order to deepen sympathy and affection towards the town among its residents.

The pictures taken at fixed locations in the Azabu Area, the collection of old pictures, and the organization for the participation of citizens was done mostly by the "Azabu Future Photo Studio Association," a citizen participation organization. The members consist mainly of people living, working or studying in Azabu. The photos collected are presented as panels on the Minato City website and through exhibitions to make the history and culture of the town known to as many people as possible.

The Azabu Future Photo Studio is looking for old photographs!

If you have any old photographs of the Azabu region from the Meiji to the Showa eras, such as buildings, scenery or festivals, please contact the Azabu Regional City Office. For details, please contact the Community Policy Subsection, Collaboration Project Section, Azabu Regional City Office.

Inquiries: Tel.: 03-5114-8812



Walking the periphery of the Azabu area ②

For the second part of this project, walking along the perimeter of the Azabu area, we'll focus on the walk from Tengenji Bridge to Ichinohashi Bridge along the Furukawa River borderline. Nowadays, the Furukawa River represents the border between Azabu and the surrounding areas. However, there was a time this river was completely inside Azabu's borders. (About 2.3km)

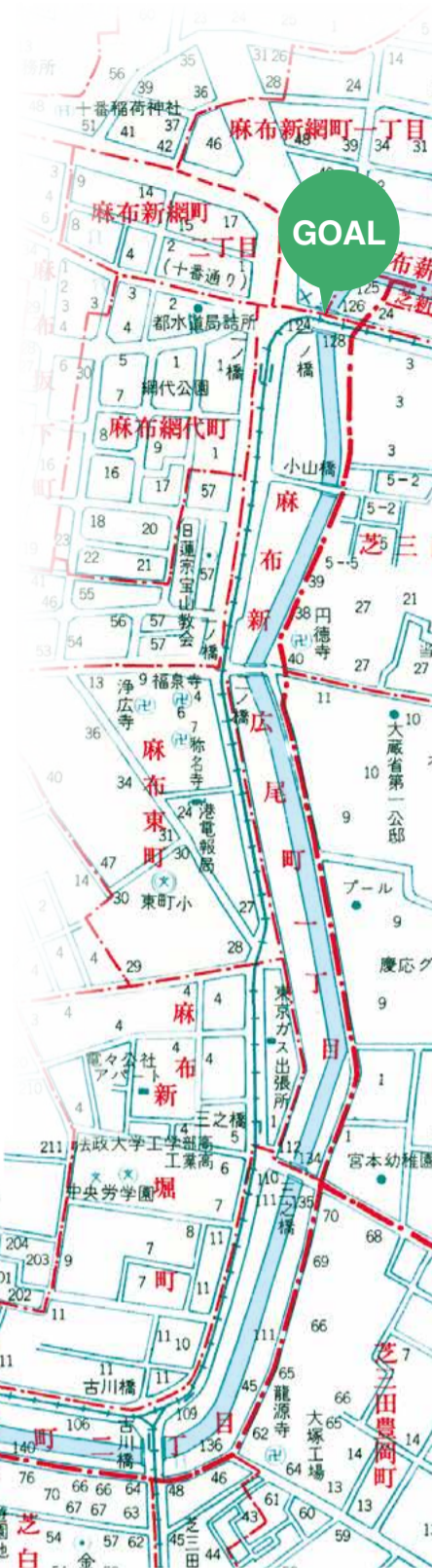
Furukawa River History

Around 1875, a person named AOYAMA Hachiro-Emon started cultivating a long and narrow piece of land stretching from Tengenji Bridge to Ichinohashi Bridge along both sides of the Furukawa River. He obtained a "Hachiro-Emon Shinden (New Rice Field)" land certificate*, and applied to the Governor of Tokyo Prefecture at the time to have a new town formally called "Hachiro-Emon" named after him. This was not uncommon around then. For example, in 1870 land was reclaimed for a railroad in Yokohama, and the area was named "Takashima-Cho" from "TAKASHIMA Kaemon, the landfill contractor. Based on this fact, Hachiro-Emon wanted to have the land he cultivated called "Hachiro-Emon" town. Ultimately, in 1911 this long and narrow strip of land was renamed "Shin-Hiroo-Cho". However, the name "Hachiro-Emon Shinden" seems to have remained for part of a village for some time after. We know this because the name is on a map prepared by the Geospatial Institute of the Home Ministry in 1887.

Takashima-cho got its name from TAKASHIMA Kaemon. Mr. TAKASHIMA was a very famous businessman who worked in a variety of fields, and also as a fortune-teller. He wrote a book about it called "Takashima Ekidan". However, it is believed that he entrusted the civil engineering landfill project mentioned above to his adopted heir, TAKASHIMA Kahei. Kahei submitted the "Request for Furukawa River Improvement Work Postponement" to Tokyo Prefecture in 1905. He owned about 6,000 tubos (about 19,800m²) of land in Shin-Hiroo-Cho at the end of the Meiji Period. The area was second largest compared to that of AOYAMA Hachiro-Emon and his family house of 7,000 tubos (23,100m²) in the same town. Kahei also seemed to have been involved in the development work along the Furukawa River.

AOYAMA Jiro was an art critic and famous master of antiques for SHIRASU Masako, a celebrated essayist. He was a descendant of Hachiro-Emon (The heir of AOYAMA Family carried the name of "Hachiro-Emon" from generation to generation). AOYAMA Jiro's critical biography is filled with interesting episodes from his childhood living in his parents' house at the corner of Ichinohashi Bridge, up to the time when he had to give up the land to make way for a new expressway.

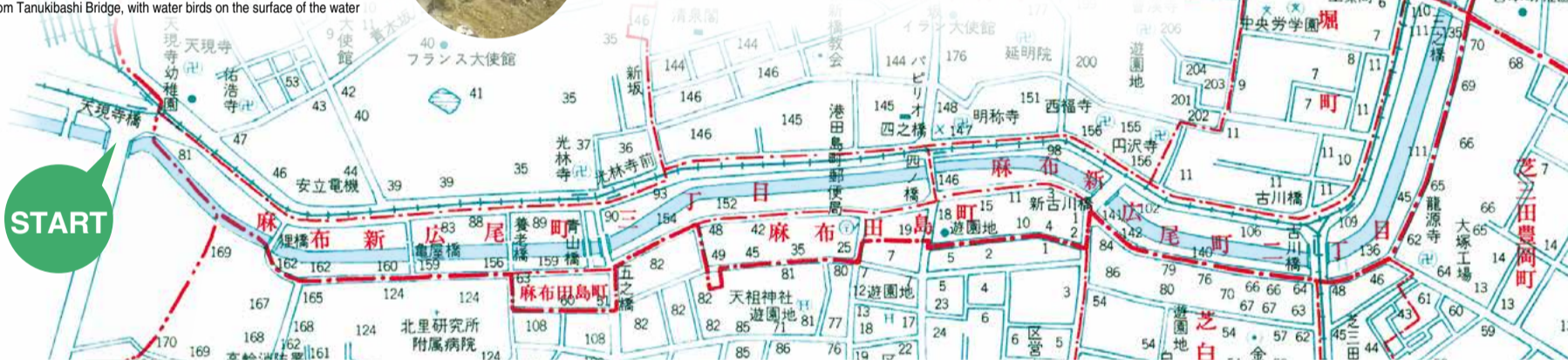
* Land Certificate given to the landowner by the Meiji Government



"Map in 1960" (Colors the Furukawa River course on the "Map attached to the Newly Supervised Minato City History")



View from Tanukibashi Bridge, with water birds on the surface of the water



START

A turtle is engraved on each car stop post on Kameyabashi Bridge



2



Rental facilities under the elevated expressway



"Twin Ichinohashi" Condominiums

Furukawa River Now

On the walking course this time there are 13 bridges; Tanukibashi Bridge, Kameyabashi Bridge ②, Yorobashi Bridge, Gonohashi Bridge, Shirokane-Koen-bashi Bridge, Shinohashi Bridge, Shin-Furukawabashi Bridge, Furukawabashi Bridge, Sannohashi Bridge, Minami-Azabu-1-chome Jido Yuenbashi Bridge, Ninohashi Bridge, Koyamabashi Bridge and Ichinohashi Bridge. Each one of them has a unique design.

You can look up at the sky between Tanukibashi Bridge and Kameyabashi Bridge. On the quiet river surface water birds can be seen ①.

Downstream from Kameyabashi Bridge there is an expressway over the river. At present, there is roadside construction under the elevated expressway. A wire-mesh fence encloses the area, and it is covered with sheets. Along the roadside, there is a water park and various spots to rest. The trees and plants there make the area a very relaxing place to be.

When you look towards the area on the other side of the Furukawa and Koyamabashi Bridges from The Azabu area you can see a big redevelopment project in progress. The landscape along the river is being transformed. There are still some buildings that were created during the period of rapid growth in the Showa Era however. One of them is on the shopping street under the elevated structure between Kameyabashi Bridge and Furukawabashi Bridge. This shopping street was made in 1965 for people who had shops there before the construction of the expressway. They are still being used now, and are rented out to businesses ③. Also, the "Twin Ichinohashi" condominium building located at 4-chome Azabu-Juban was constructed by the Japan Housing Corporation in 1959. It is one of the oldest and largest condominium buildings in Minato City ④. At that time most people lived in single-story wooden homes, and would likely have been amazed when this 11-story building appeared.

The Future of the Furukawa River

The long and narrow town of "Shin-Hiroo-Cho" that was once on both sides of the Furukawa River has long since disappeared, as changes in the address system etc. were implemented in the decade from 1965 to 1975 ⑤. This old town name is still written on the upper left of the City Bulletin Boards on the streets of Minato City, and you might have a chance to see one as you walk around "Shin-Hiroo-Cho".



It is Shirokane 5-chome 1-ban here. It was Azabu at one time, and is Shirokane now.



References:
 Request No. 611.A2.02 "Request about the land section for a village from Aoyama Hachiro-Emon, owner of Aza Hachiro-Emon Shinden in Azabu-Hiroo-Cho, Azabu Ward", collected by the Tokyo Archives
 Request No. 626.A4.13 "Request for Furukawa River Improvement Work Postponement", collected by the Tokyo Archives
 "The Business History of TAKASHIMA Kaemon, a Businessman with Political Contacts in Yokohama" written by MATSUDA Hiroyuki, published by Nihon Keizai Hyoronsha in 2012
 Tokyo Shi Oyobi Setsuzoku Gunbu Chiseki Daicho [Cadastral of Tokyo City and Adjacent Counties], 1912, issued by Tokyo Shi-ku Chosakai [Tokyo City Investigating Committee]
 "Story of AOYAMA Jiro" written by UNO Chiyo, published by Chuko Bunko in 2004
 "Metropolitan Expressway Public Corporation 30 years History" published by Metropolitan Expressway Public Corporation in 1989

(Researched and written by YAMAKI Ayako)



On May 15, 2022, the “Mina-Iro” event was held. This is from the Azabu regional operation project “Mina-Yoku” conducted by the Azabu Regional City Office.



What is “Mina-Iro”?

This is an art event, and the concept is “Turning Azabu into an Art Town”. The Azabu Regional City Office created the “Mina-Yoku” Azabu regional operation project.

Planning and Running “Mina-Iro”

The “Team Mina-Iro” did most of the planning, and is centered around three third-year students from the Design Science Department in the Faculty of Creative Engineering at Chiba Institute of Technology. The project was run by “Mina-Yoku” supporters and the Roppongi Ryuwakai, Youth Association in Ryudo-cho Neighborhood Association members.

Purpose of the Event

“Mina-Iro” was created for “Relieving Stress on Children caused by COVID-19 and Showing Love for Children in Azabu”.



Appealing Features

This event has three appealing features.

- 1 Children can take pictures of things found on their town walk according to the theme for the day. Giving them an abstract concept or theme to look for helps them find the charms of the town they might not normally recognize.
- 2 Children can paint anything they like on a large white paper. This helps children to think and express their images of the town in colors.
- 3 Children can experience the unusual, and use colorful paint without worrying about getting it on their clothes etc.



Scenes on the Day

On that day, 12 parent-child pairs walked around the town and took pictures. After that, they participated in the painting activity in Roppongi Nishi Park.

During their long and leisurely town walk, children found many interesting things. They often stopped and took note of things they would not usually notice. Having things to look for according to the theme ensured they were never bored! Before they began to paint, they changed into white T-shirts with the Mina-Iro logo. The kids and the student staff members all had a great time, and their T-shirts ended up almost as colorful as the paintings.

It was a very valuable time for all of us who enjoy working with children. They were very glad to be able to hold this event as part of a regional event. It was very successful, and positive reviews were received from participants and student staff members alike, a special day for all.



Be careful not to fall victim to Bank Transfer Fraud! There have been many cases of criminals impersonating Minato City staff members on the phone and doing Insurance Fee or Medical Fee Refund scams!

Minato City staff members will never ask you to go to an ATM for refund money.

An automatic phone recorder is an effective tool for preventing against bank transfer fraud, and one can be provided to you free of charge.

An automatic phone recorder sends a warning message to the caller before the phone ring tone is heard, and then records the phone call. In this way, almost all scam calls can be avoided. Voice recorders like this can be provided free of charge to households in Minato City with elderly members, etc. Don't hesitate to ask for one!

- * These systems are not compatible with some devices, such as emergency call devices, that are linked into telephone lines (excluding the Minato City Emergency Call System).
- * Telephone fees, etc. are paid by the user.

Inquiries: Living Safety Promotion Subsection, Disaster Prevention Section Tel: 3578-2271



Installation Image: May look different depending on the device.



“The Guidebook for Home Evacuation in an Emergency” is here!

There are more choices than just evacuation shelters!

Minato City has reduced the number of evacuees that can be accepted at evacuation shelters in order to control infections.

So, we all need to recognize the importance of “home evacuation,” or sheltering at home during an emergency. For this reason, the Azabu Regional City Office has prepared the “Guidebook for Home Evacuation in an Emergency” as a way of recommending home evacuation in emergencies in order to control infections. This guidebook outlines important details regarding safety at home during a disaster, telling us exactly what home evacuation means, what we should prepare, etc.

The guidebook is being distributed to each household in the Azabu area, and you can also pick one up at the Collaboration Project Section counter at the Azabu Regional City Office.

More details about the guidebook can be accessed through the Minato City website.



Evacuation shelters can become overcrowded.

You can read the guidebook by accessing our website using this QR code. Minato City website <http://www.city.minato.tokyo.jp/>

Guidebook for Home Evacuation in an Emergency

Search



Inquiries: Collaboration Project Subsection, Collaboration Project Section, Azabu Regional City Office Tel: 03-5114-8802



Information from the Azabu Regional City Office



2022 Minato Disaster Preparedness Drills at Azabu Site will be held. ~Let's think about sheltering at home~



Drawing lessons from past disasters, the Minato Disaster Preparedness Drills at Azabu Site will be held as a group event for the first time in three years, in order to prepare for disasters that may occur in the future, such as an earthquake directly under Tokyo. The drill will provide useful information on sheltering at home, which has become more important due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Date and time Sunday, November 13, 2022, 9:30 a.m. ~ 11:30 a.m. (scheduled)

Site Roppongi Junior High School (6-8-16 Roppongi, Minato City)



Main contents of drill

* Subject to changes with adjustments going forward.

- Earthquake simulation vehicle experience, VR disaster preparedness vehicle experience
- Disaster Preparedness in Action/Exhibition of security vehicles
- Experience being trapped in a smoke-filled room drill, initial fire-extinguishing drill,
- Class D fire pump handling and operation drill, block-breaking drill
- Recommendations for sheltering at home
- Exhibition on lifeline response during disasters, introduction to disaster recipes using stockpiled supplies, etc.



To be held simultaneously

"Bousai Quest": Learn about disaster preparedness while having fun

Experience drills at the site and take on the quiz!

Win souvenirs when you complete the quest!

Have fun playing a game while learning about sheltering at home during an emergency.

You must apply to participate.

Application period: Monday, October 17 – 5:00 p.m. Tuesday, November 8, 2022

Application method: Please provide the following information by phone or FAX:

- (1) Name, (2) Address, (3) Telephone number, (4) Ability to speak Japanese, (5) Other points of note.
 <TEL> 03-5472-3710 (Japanese and English. Calls are accepted from 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.)
 <FAX> 03-3583-3782 (Japanese and English)



**Going shopping?
Visit our local shopping streets.**

Please send us your comments or requests regarding

The Azabu



Please write your address, name, occupation (school name), telephone number, comment and/or request (in Japanese or English no word/character limit or specific format required), and deliver it directly, or mail or fax it to the Community Policy Subsection, Collaboration Project Section, Azabu Regional City Office, 5-16-45, Roppongi, Minato-ku, Tokyo (106-8515)

● Tel: 03-5114-8812 ● Fax: 03-3583-3782

You can also access this community information paper from the Minato City website.



ザ・AZABU

● Locations of the Newsletter: Roppongi 1-chome, Roppongi, Hiroo, Azabujuban and Akabanebashi subway stations, The Chi Bus, Minato Library, Azabu Library, Minami-azabu Iki-Iki Plaza, Nishi-azabu Iki-Iki Plaza, Iigura Iki-Iki Plaza, Azabu Civic Center, Azabu Regional City Office, etc.
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 HORIUCHI Akiko
 HORIKIRI Michiko
 BUTO Kana
 YAMAKI Ayako

Editor's Note

Sakurada Shrine is located almost in front of Roppongi Hills, and is known as a shrine associated with OKITA Soji. When you pass through the shrine's torii (gateway), you can walk through a tranquil quiet space that is quite apart from the hustle and bustle of Roppongi. You can also worship at the shrine at your leisure. Through my research this time, I became deeply impressed at the sincerity of a young Sakurada Shrine priest, Mr. SASAKI. He works to preserve the shrine and makes great contributions to the community through a variety of activities. I am sure that the Sakurada Shrine will continue to watch over the ever-changing town of Roppongi.
 (HORIKIRI Michiko)

The original article is written in Japanese.

"Minato Call" information service answers your questions about everyday life! Feel free to ask about services provided by City Hall, facility guides, event information, and more. Available from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm every day.

* This service is also available in English.

Minato Call

Tel: 03-5472-3710 Fax: 03-5777-8752
 Inquiry submission form: <https://www.city.minato.tokyo.jp/kouchou/kuse/kocho/iken/form-inquiry.html>