

## Greetings from the Association President



Chiba-Wisconsin Association  
**President Yuzaburo Mogi**

I would like to extend my best wishes to everyone with the publication of the first CWA NEWS of 2024.

To begin, I would like to express my deepest condolences for those who lost their lives in the Noto Peninsula Earthquake of 2024, and my deepest sympathies to those who were affected by the disaster. As aftershocks are continuing in the affected areas, I pray for their safety and for a swift process of rebuilding and recovery.

I would also like to express my deepest appreciation for your continued support and understanding with regards to the exchange activities of the CWA.

Following the establishment of sister state relations between Chiba Prefecture and the State of Wisconsin in 1990, this Association was founded in 2004, making this year its 20th of serving as point of contact for our exchange on the Chiba side.

Since then, to build on the friendly relations established by the Prefecture, we have continued to widen and deepen our circle of community-based exchange by expanding into a wide variety of activities in the private sector.

Although the 2009 H1N1 pandemic and the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake interrupted the sending and receiving of our respective Friendship Delegations, through the great efforts of all involved, we were able to resume our regular exchange.

Last year, we had planned to host a Goodwill Delegation from Wisconsin, which had been suspended since the outbreak of Covid-19, but their visit ultimately had to be canceled, which we deeply regret.

This year, we are planning to dispatch a Goodwill Delegation to Wisconsin and are also preparing to hold an Exchange Event to commemorate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the CWA. We hope that it will be an enjoyable gathering and that many of our members will attend.

In addition, we are looking to steadily implement further exchange programs.

It is my hope that we can continue to further expand our circle of exchange and deepen our mutual friendship in order to make the wonderful qualities of Chiba Prefecture and its citizens known to the people of Wisconsin.

In closing, I would like to express my sincere appreciation for the continued support and cooperation of our Association's board members, regular members, and all others involved in our exchange programs.

## Spreading Their Wings Around the World

As the CWA celebrates its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Mr. Satoshi Katano and Mr. Frederick Isaac Lauer, who have both been involved with the CWA in years past, gave updates on their current activities; and Ms. Misa Akutsu, who joined the CWA as a new member last year, spoke about her current state of mind.



### **Satoshi Katano, shinobue player**

Hello everyone, my name is Satoshi Katano and I was sent to Wisconsin in 2005. I am a shinobue (traditional Japanese bamboo flute) player whose roots are in the “Sawara-bayashi” festival music of Katori City in Chiba Prefecture.

At the time I was dispatched to Wisconsin, I was 22 years old, had just graduated from university, and had not yet begun my career as a shinobue player. I was invited to play the shinobue in the US, something that until then I had only seen as a dream, something I would never actually have the chance to do. I thought that an opportunity like that would not come again, so I made my decision immediately. While my stay in Wisconsin was short, it would change my life forever.

My first overseas experience had a rocky start. After we transferred flights in Minneapolis, the drums for the performance that we had in our luggage were accidentally sent to the wrong airport! We managed to get them back in time for the first performance, but looking back now, I can't imagine how much effort the staff must have put in to make that happen... The musical team accompanying me consisted of three boys who were in high school at the time. I have fond memories of how I admonished them for their mischievous behavior, sometimes pretending not to see them (haha), and at other times standing tall as the only adult in the group in order to keep the team together.

One thing that really left a personal impact on me was meeting my host family. The kids in particular took the initiative to try to communicate with me, thinking of words that I could understand, even though I couldn't speak English at all. I really appreciated that! They were so cute at the time, but they've grown up so much since then. I still keep in contact with them over social media.

Even though I couldn't understand English, I was shocked that people everywhere we went seemed to enjoy our performances. It gave me confidence that I could communicate with people through my performance even if I didn't understand their language. After returning to Japan, I made a flute CD to express my gratitude to my host family, which became my first step as a professional shinobue player.

My dispatch to Wisconsin provided me with scenery and culture that I could never have seen in Japan, and above all, many experiences that I would not have been able to have on a normal trip. I was a young man in my first year as a working adult at the time,

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but over the years since then, I have gained a fair number of experiences as a professional shinobue player, all thanks to that first dispatch to Wisconsin.

One of my dreams is to revisit Wisconsin someday and to perform there again, since I've (probably) improved a bit since last time.



Wisconsin, September 2005



Wisconsin, September 2005



Dusseldorf, Germany, May 2016



Abbey Road, London, July 2023



\*A photo of the author and his wife

## **Kamui Kids Co-Founder of (Former ALT) Frederick Isaac Lauer**

Bridging Togane and Yamagata: The Evolution of Kamui Kids

Dear Chiba Wisconsin Association Community

Sometimes I have trouble believing that I am almost 40 years old. I have even more trouble comprehending the amount of time that has passed between when I started living in Chiba, to where I am now. 15 years ago, I would have never imagined I'd be married with two children, still living in Japan, and working in a field entirely distinct from most of my other professional leanings.

In preparation for this article, I found myself reflecting on my transformative years as an Assistant Language Teacher in Togane, Chiba, from 2009 to 2014. I often see a connection between those formative experiences and the inception of the organization I co-founded in Yamagata: Kamui Kids.

In Togane, my involvement with the high school's alpine climbing club was a pivotal moment that reawakened my passion for the outdoors and reminded me of the joy and wonder I felt in nature as a child. Climbing in the Minami Alps with fellow students and teachers was always a harrowing experience, full of beauty and challenges. My adventures in the mountains of Japan largely shaped my decision to study Systems Ecology in graduate school in Montana. And, my time in school was instrumental in shaping my vision for Kamui Kids. It highlighted the importance of outdoor activities in fostering a sense of adventure, resilience, and a deep connection with the environment. The joy and learning that came from those climbing expeditions and the further enrichment in graduate school laid the groundwork for my commitment to offering similar transformative experiences to children.

Here in Yamagata the rich, natural environment offers the perfect setting for Kamui Kids. Here, we've created a space where children can immerse themselves in nature, engaging in activities that range from climbing trees, catching all manner of mini beasts, and exploring rivers to participating in multicultural events and communal cooking. These experiences are designed not just for fun but to instill a sense of wonder, curiosity, and respect for the natural world all while building community.

Our mission at Kamui Kids extends beyond outdoor play; it's about creating a learning environment where children are encouraged to take risks, pursue their interests, and direct their days with minimal adult interference. This philosophy of self-directed,

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experiential learning was inspired by my direct observation of the detriments of some of our contemporary education systems. I have personally witnessed the impact of engaging students in activities beyond the traditional classroom setting, especially in the way it can foster wonder.

At Kamui Kids, we allow children the freedom to explore their surroundings and learn from the rich tapestry of life around them. Our shared experiences, from living together short-term in share-houses, to camping adventures, reinforce the importance of community, collaboration, and shared growth. And we believe our work is crucial in building a foundation for children to thrive as confident, compassionate, and curious individuals. By accepting children exactly as they are, we are committed to creating a future where everyone has the opportunity to live an authentic, and meaningful life.

As we continue to grow and evolve at Kamui Kids, the spirit of exploration, discovery, and community that I cherished in Togane remains at the heart of our work. We are working to transform childhood and inspire future generations to embrace the outdoors and self-directed education, to follow their passions, and to engage with the world around them in meaningful ways.

Thank you for this opportunity to share a bit about my work with you! The sense of community I felt strongly both in Togane, and during my membership and work with the CWA, all played a pivotal role in shaping the passions I hold today. Even though I'm many kilometers away, I still hold Chiba close in heart, and I always will.

For more information, or to support our efforts, please visit [www.kamuikids.org](http://www.kamuikids.org) and add us on instagram at [www.instagram.com/kamui.kids](https://www.instagram.com/kamui.kids). We always look forward to welcoming new members to our community! If you are interested in supporting our efforts through a donation please contact me at [fred@kamuikids.org](mailto:fred@kamuikids.org).

With Gratitude,

Frederick Isaac Lauer

Co-Founder of Kamui Kids

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**Ms. Mika Akutsu**

Greetings, Chiba-Wisconsin Association members.

I am currently working as a psychiatrist in Chiba Prefecture and researching cognitive behavioral therapy as a graduate student in the Department of Cognitive Behavioral Physiology of Chiba University's Graduate School of Medicine. I have been a member of the CWA since the Food Culture Exchange Event on November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2023. Although I have only been a part of the Association for a short time, I have already had a great experience and met a lot of people.

The reason I decided to become a member was because I will be attending the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee as a graduate exchange student for a year, beginning in August 2024. Despite having almost no overseas experience to date, with the huge hurdle of taking my 8-year-old daughter along with me on a year-long study abroad program before me, I decided to take a desperate chance and attend the event.

At the event, my family and I had a really good time talking with the members in English, making sushi rolls, and trying roast turkey and mashed potatoes. My daughter enjoyed this first experience with a sparkle in her eyes. We were able to make friends with a UW-Milwaukee graduate and were introduced to some people currently living in Milwaukee, which was very encouraging.

In addition to this personal opportunity, I also learned that the State of Wisconsin and Chiba Prefecture have had a sister state relationship for more than 30 years, and have greatly deepened their friendship through this process, which I feel honored to be a part of. Now, not only will I be able to enjoy my study abroad experience, but I believe that I will be able to make use of the things I've learned in university and in my daily life, such as traditions, medicine, and food culture to give back to Chiba Prefecture.

I heard that Covid-19 has caused difficulties for the relationship between Chiba and Wisconsin, and it's possible that something similar may happen again in the future. However, I feel strengthened by the knowledge that there is a part of the world that has established such good relations with my home. I hope to make this an invaluable year for my husband and I, as well as for our daughter, and to return to Chiba Prefecture to share Wisconsin's charms with you. Thank you for your continued support!

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Food Culture Exchange Event, November 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023



Peggy's Cove, Nova Scotia, Canada, October 2023



## **CWA Announcements**

The Board of Directors Meeting, General Meeting, and 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Exchange Event for fiscal year 2024 are scheduled as follows.

Members will be notified of the details of the General Meeting and other events by email.

FY2024 Board of Directors Meeting  
Saturday, June 22<sup>nd</sup> at Hotel Port Plaza Chiba

FY2024 General Meeting and 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Exchange Event  
Saturday, June 22<sup>nd</sup> at Hotel Port Plaza Chiba  
General Meeting: from 4 p.m.  
20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Exchange Event: from 5 p.m.

### **[Obituary]**

It is with deep regret that we announce the passing of Mr. Kazuya Hayashi on November 26<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

We would like to express our gratitude to him for his contributions and pray that he rest in peace.

### **[Editor's Note]**

In advance of the CWA's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary next fiscal year, we asked young people who have been involved with the CWA to appear in this issue and speak about their involvement, their current work, and their thoughts about the future. The CWA will continue to watch over their future endeavors and work to widen our circle of exchange.

### **[Published by the Chiba-Wisconsin Association]**

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