

An Introduction to the Tanabata Festival

This year the Tanabata season is upon us. On the first Saturday of July in the afternoon, the Fujigaoka Community Center Tanabata Festival will begin. Ever since the festivities began in 1990, we continue to have great support from the community, and welcome them and others who will be patronizing our 19th festival in 2008. Ever since the following day of last year's festival, senior groups in the area (13 in total from the Kamiyamoto and Yamoto Districts) have been preparing for this year's event. **This year, 6000 bamboo decorations are being prepared for 400 participants.** They are still happily building and preparing over 1,100 nostalgic toys for the Playtime Center. Grandfathers, grandmothers, fathers, and mothers alike will have a wonderful time creating hand-made origami toys like spinning wheels and bamboo dragonflies. Over in the Fun and Games Corner, everybody can have fun with their grandmothers and grandfathers playing old-time Japanese games like Otedama(bean bag juggle), Ohajiki(stone-flicking), Wanage(ring-toss), Ayatori(string-art), and Kentama(cup & ball).

The bamboo decoration preparation begins around 2 or 3 days before the Tanabata Festival. Since the first festival, Mr. Ishihara, with the help of fellow active seniors, have gathered and cut down 2-year-old bamboo stalks from nearby Moegino Park. Also, the first 400 people to arrive at the festival will be able to receive bamboo branches on a first-come-first-served basis and participate in the decoration process. In the evening, everybody in the Children's Club will decorate the west and east entrances of the Fujigaoka Community Center for the following day. **Over 140 people, both elderly and children clubs alike, will gather to manage the Tanabata Festival.**

On the following pages, photographs of past Tanabata festivals at the Fujigaoka Community Center illustrate what the events are like.

On July 7, 2008, as the festival runs from 10 AM to 12 PM inside the gymnasium, the refreshment stand in the garden will be open until 1 PM. Remember to bring your indoor shoes in bags before entering the gymnasium.





Mr. Ishihara's has graciously donated 2 large stalks of bamboo and 500 branch pieces for both the children and for decorative purposes.



Everyone in the children clubs prepare the jumbo bamboo decorations.



The 2 large stalks of bamboo are kept in storage until the night before the festival.



Finally, the day of the festival approaches.





Now, let's get together and make our own decorations!

The mountain of bamboo decorations prepared by everyone at the seniors' center throughout the year is a magnificent sight to behold. It's a world record!



In the Craft Corner, people can have fun with origami, bamboo dragonflies, and koma.



Learn from a great expert in the Origami Corner.





Do you dare try the beanbag juggle or stone-flicking games? They're tough, but fun to try!



Outside, there is a refreshment stand to enjoy.

