

Base prepares for annual Bon Odori Festival

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## BON ODORI

NAVAL AIR FACILITY ATSUGI, Japan – Bon Odori has arrived at Naval Air Facility (NAF) Atsugi once again. Pull out the yukatas, follow the sounds of the drums, and get ready for some great company, food, and entertainment.

Bon Odori is a Japanese festival held once a year to welcome back and entertain the spirits of ancestors long past. This year's celebration will be held on Aug. 20.

“Well Bon Odori is a traditional Japanese culture to entertain our ancestors' spirits. And to obtain Japanese culture on an American base is kind of unique, but it's been lasting more than 50 years now.” said Sumie Maruyama, a community relations specialist for the host nations relations office (HNRO).

Bon Odori will be preceded by the American Festival, both are open-base events.

The American Festival is scheduled to begin at 12:00 p.m. The festivities will include live entertainment from American Idol contestants from seasons 9 and 10 and a hot dog eating contest that was such a success from last year's event that it's coming back to NAF Atsugi.

“I think it's a great way for both the Americans and the Japanese to get a feel for each other's cultures during the American festival,” said Tami Meier, publicist for Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) marketing. “I know that the Japanese come on board to see a lot of things that are more of the American culture, the food, the entertainment and the whole block party feel. But in the evening, the Americans can really experience what it's like to be at a Bon Odori festival while they're here in Japan. They'll see the traditional dancing with the lanterns glowing in the evening. So it's kind of a trade off between cultures.”

Bon Odori will kick off at 5:00 p.m. with the opening ceremony. Later, the Bon Odori dancers will present their dances that were showcased at Yamato's Awa Odori and made them the main attraction at Furusato Yamato Natsu-matsuri.

The event will eventually end with the performance of the famous Japan Maritime Self Defense Force (JMSDF) Chidori-ren dancers in which Capt. Eric Gardner, commanding officer, Cmdr.

Christopher McCarthy, executive officer, and Master Chief Carlton Duncan, command master chief will be participating.

“Both Americans and the Japanese are excited because we were able to come together and enjoy the other’s cultures,” said Meier.

“Experience the differences but at the same time realize that we’re all the same and we’re all there and supporting each other. It’s just time to celebrate after such a hard year anyway.”

For more information please contact MWR at 264-3574 or HNRO at 264-3424.