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Steve Utsey Emerald

# Cranes, karate, culture: This is Japan Night 2002

■ This year, the Japanese Student Organization combines a taste of Japanese culture with compassion for America

By Mason West  
Oregon Daily Emerald

Japan may be a little short of 5,000 miles away, but on Sunday, members of the Japanese Student Organization will bring some of the country's culture to the EMU Ballroom for the Japan Night celebration.

JSO co-president Rei Mastrogiovanni said Japan Night has two main goals: build friendships between the students who volunteer to put the event together, and expose the campus to Japanese culture.

"Japanese people already know all this stuff," he said.

This is Mastrogiovanni's second year organizing Japan Night, and he said he is working to make the event less formal and more interactive.

"I want people to mingle. The success of last year's event was that they could move around," Mastrogiovanni said.

Japan Night events start at 7 p.m. with a bento dinner. The meal includes rice, miso soup, potato salad

and potstickers with pork or tofu. During the meal, the stage will be occupied by a comedy skit based on a Japanese television program, a karate demonstration and a slide show.

Mastrogiovanni said he wants to keep the stage events light-hearted to debunk the stereotype of Japan as a stoic society. The slide show, he said, won't just show temples, but also cigarette vending machines, cups of ramen noodles and all the other daily aspects of Japanese life.

The karate demonstration will have formal elements including form and weapons demonstrations, but University junior Jonathan Wang, one of the demonstrators, said the main skit will be more action-packed.

"I grew up with Jackie Chan, and I want to make (the skit) more exciting," he said.

Kaz Akaoka, a second year post baccalaureate student, was influenced by the older Bruce Lee films when he was growing up, which inspired him to start studying karate during his time at college in Japan 20 years ago. Later he coached a high school karate club.

Akaoka and Wang both have black belts, but Lane Community College sophomore Yasu Yukiyoishi

is just beginning his karate studies. Yukiyoishi said he was asked to participate by Akaoka after they met in a karate class at LCC.


Mastrogiovanni said the typical crowd of 300 to 350 people includes students from the University and LCC. But this year, an additional 50 international students are planning to make the trip from Southern Oregon University to attend Japan Night, he said.

A different element of this year's Japan Night will involve the audience in a Japanese tradition, as a goodwill gesture to the victims of Sept. 11. Members of JSO will instruct the audience on how to make origami cranes, and each person will make at least two. JSO will make additional cranes as needed until there are 1,000, and then they will be strung on threads like a wind streamer and sent to a still-undecided location in New York City.

Sophomore Miesa Honda said Japanese myth states a crane lives for 1,000 years, so giving someone 1,000 cranes is a gesture of long life. Also, because the 1,000 cranes are not made by one person, the gift

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