

The Year of the Dog kicks off at 22nd annual Mochitsuki celebration

Mochitsuki — the Japanese New Year celebration — returned to Portland State University (PSU) in downtown Portland for its 22nd annual event. The day of festivities opened promptly at 11:00am as eager participants poured through the front doors of PSU's Smith Memorial Student Union (SMSU). The gathering, welcoming the Year of the Dog, took place Sunday, January 28.

Soon after walking past the first-floor hallways at Portland State's SMSU, visitors encountered a number of food options in the dining area. The Konko Church of Portland gave away free *mochi* samples, the Nichiren Buddhist Temple sold spam musubi, the Oregon Buddhist Temple served chili over rice, en Taiko offered ramune and other drinks, and Oyatsupan Bakers featured Japanese baked goods, among several other options.

In addition to mochi available for sale all day, children's mochi-pounding sessions were held as part of the Mochitsuki Community Fair, which also featured performances by A-Key Kyo and Dance Leo, calligraphy with Sekko Kai, kendo and tea-ceremony demonstrations, photo opportunities with Hello Kitty, and more.

On the second floor, participants found several rooms of activities. At the Portland Taiko table, there was an interactive taiko video game; the Japan America Society of Oregon offered a quiz, coloring, and information; MiyakoCon featured a *yukata* dress-up station and photobooth; the JET Program Alumni Association held a Suikawari (watermelon-splitting) activity; the Kumoricon booth had information and a craft station at which youth were assisted in making a pair of clip-on cat ears; and much more.

The performance stage, held in the building's third-floor ballroom, featured entertainment nearly all afternoon long. Oregon Koto-kai opened the first set with beautiful *koto* music, which was followed by storyteller Alton Chung, the Sahomi Tachibana Dancers, storytelling Robert Kikuchi-Yngojo, and Takohachi taiko,



MAKING MOCHI. Mochitsuki — the Japanese New Year celebration — returned to Portland State University in downtown Portland for its 22nd annual event. The gathering, welcoming the Year of the Dog, took place Sunday, January 28, and featured calligraphy (top left photo), toys and games (top right photo), children's mochi-pounding sessions (bottom right photo), Hello Kitty (bottom left photo), performances on two stages, a yukata dress-up station, an interactive taiko video game, food demonstrations, and much more. (AR Photos/Jan Landis)

Set two started with remarks by consul general of Portland Kojiro Uchiyama. A reading and enactment of the book *Thank You Very Mochi!* preceded an *obon* dance workshop and a performance by Portland Taiko. The closing set of the day included singer-songwriter Joe Kye, violinist

Tomoki Martens, and Unit Souzou.

Also on the third floor were food demonstrations, calligraphy, and *ikebana*,

as well as booths set up by Ikoi No Kai, the Portland-Sapporo Sister City Association, the Oregon Nikkei Endowment, the Institute for Asian Studies at PSU, the Portland chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), and many others offering games, information, crafts, toys, greeting cards, and gifts.

It was an activity-packed day for attendees of Mochitsuki 2018. The celebration featured endless tasty food options, activities galore, numerous photo opportunities, and fun for all ages. To learn about next year's event, call (503) 224-1458 or visit <www.mochipdx.org>.

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