

Email Newsletter from Mayor of Okayama City (77) December 22nd, 2016 Issue

【Okayama is getting lively, so will it be in the next year】

Hello, I'm Mr. Omori, Mayor of Okayama.

The title of today's newsletter is a Senryu (Japanese style short poetry, similar to Haiku) created by a woman in Secretary Division. Words are simple but it expresses well lively atmosphere in Okayama. These days I am delighted to hear city staffs' saying "There is a certain change in the air in Okayama City".

Looking back on this year, it was packed with various events. There were the Inter-High School Championships in summer, a large modern art exhibition-Okayama Art Summit, and the 2nd Okayama Marathon in autumn, and three big conventions (National Conference on Urban Problems, Japan-China-South Korea Trilateral Local Government Exchange Conference, and National Summit on Promoting Long Term Care Insurance).

On top of that, our first "Okayama Art Summit" had 234 thousands visitors, which was much more than our initial anticipation. It was absolutely fruitful that the summit carried lots of fun and fresh excitement to many children.

In addition, more visitors to Okayama and citizens' active participation were brought by the Spring Destination Campaign, large conventions hosted by business groups and Okayama Fagiano FC's great leap.

(Following is for your reference:

- Number of visitors to the top of the Okayama Castle in the first half of this FY: Up 23.8% from the last FY

- Number of visitors to Korakuen Garden in the first half of this FY: Up 17.3% from the last FY
- Number of conventions held in the first half of this FY: Up 26.5% from the last FY)

In contrast to happy news like above, we have to admit that many challenges still exist in...

- Children on waiting lists

Further needs for childcare may be anticipated by securing nursery institutions and reviewing child care fees, but it is essential as the base to support the success of women.

- Education issues

We will certainly cope with issues such as junior high students' sluggish academic ability which ranks between 40-50th among prefectures and the double violent behavior rate compared to the national average.

- Archive the Compact City

Under a further aging society, we must steadily proceed with a transportation network which is united by enhanced public transportations and secured daily transportation. And we will also focus on planning an enjoyable community to walk around.

Other than the above, challenges to tackle with are accumulating in order to activate local businesses and the central part of the city, to plan a better society for women, and to improve the health and welfare field. I will continue to do my best cooperating with citizens in 2017-the last year of my term of office.

In closing, I wish all of you a healthy and glorious new year. I very much look forward to your continuous support and encouragement for City of Okayama's brighter future.