

Email Newsletter from Mayor of Okayama (117) July 5, 2019 Issue

【Smiles on the “road” - pedestrians’ paradise!】

Hello, I’m Masao Omori, Mayor of Okayama.

I went to “Hokoten!” or a pedestrians’ paradise along Nishigawa Canal Walk Avenue in the city center on the 23<sup>rd</sup> last month.

This time, children are the main target at “Children’s Hokoten!”. Many families enjoyed touching beetles, sprinkling the road with water, various workshops such as woodworking, stages of dance and songs, and food stands which lined up in the park and along the avenue.

The most impressive thing was that the area where children could draw on the road. They freely drew what they felt like drawing on it with chalks on which they usually can’t draw. Their parents were affectionately watching over them. I thought this is what “Hokoten” is supposed to be.

“Hokoten!” has originally started as a pilot program conducted mainly by the government in order to gather more people to Nishigawa area abundant with water and greenery. Nowadays, store owners around Nishigawa, volunteers, and various organizations regularly hold the festivals 5 times a year focusing on gourmet, sports, music, and other themes in addition for children.

More people are visiting this festival year by year. I feel that this is surely settling in as a downtown event.

The next “Hokoten!” will be held on September 29<sup>th</sup>. What will be the theme of it?