

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ekoji Buddhist Temple Hosts Obon Japanese Summer Festival

Date: Saturday, 9 July, 2016, 5:00 – 9:00 pm

Location: 6500 Lakehaven Lane, Fairfax Station, VA

Families love to get together in the summer. For Buddhists, a summer celebration called Obon is a time to express gratitude to loved ones who have passed on before us.

At the Ekoji Buddhist Temple in Fairfax Station, Virginia, we welcome families from every background to experience the festive traditions of community dancing, Japanese drumming or taiko, and lighting a commemorative candle in our meditative garden. This year, the festival offers new activities making traditional crafts from recycled materials.

Everyone is encouraged to join the community dancing. The dances are based on the fable of a disciple of Buddha concerned about his deceased mother. He discovered she was in the realm of hungry ghosts. He prayed for her and she was released. He danced for joy, and thus dancing is a central part of Obon. To join in, festival goers follow the skilled and friendly dancers, who are dressed in Japanese traditional summer kimonos (*yukata*). The dances are simple movements and are accessible to people of all abilities.

Festival goers love the music of the Aloha Boys with their soothing Hawai'ian sounds and the Nen Daiko drummers with their heart-pounding rhythms. There are plenty of great tastes to sample including *yakisoba* (pan-fried noodles), rice dishes, spam *musubi*, sweet butter *mochi*, specialty tea drinks, and shave ice. In addition this year, the festival is offering creative activities for people of all ages:

Make a fan (*uchiwa*) or cloth towel (*tenugui*) to wave during the dancing.

Make a *taiko* (drum) player craft from recycled plastic caps and decorate *taiko* cupcakes.

Weave messages to your ancestors into a 10-foot tall vertical loom.

Learn how to make *kawaii* (cute) bentos, or elaborate lunch box creations popular on Pinterest.

At the end of the night, everyone is welcome to light a candle and have a moment in the peaceful garden.

The festival is from 5:00-9:00 p.m. rain or shine, at the Ekoji Buddhist Temple at 6500 Lakehaven Lane in Fairfax Station (near Burke Lake Road and Fairfax County Parkway). Admission is free, some activities have a fee.

For pre-event interviews:

- Ken Nakamura - Ekoji Trustee, Minister's Assistant, Religious Committee Head - 703-866-6186; nakamurakn@gmail.com
- Brant Horio - Festival organizer and Nen Daiko drummer - 703-201-9908; brant.horio@gmail.com

Possible interview topics include:

1. What is the meaning behind Obon and how participants commemorate ancestors
2. How to make the best spam musubi, butter mochi, *tsukemono* (Japanese pickles) or *kawaii* bentos
3. How to make a Obon-themed crafts from recycled materials
4. How to do a Bon dance - what the steps mean

Nen Daiko members are also available for live television or radio performances.

For more information, please visit <http://ekojobonfestival.weebly.com/> or call (703) 239-0500.

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