

**CONSULATE-GENERAL OF JAPAN AT HOUSTON**

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***The Shops at Houston Center to Host Tanabata Matsuri:
Experience the Festival of the Stars
July 3 & 7; 11:30 AM – 1:30 PM***

July 3 through 11, 2008, the Consulate-General of Japan at Houston will present the Japanese festival *Tanabata* through origami, wish-cards, and traditional decorations in the atrium of The Shops at Houston Center.

Come celebrate Tanabata by writing wishes called Tanzaku and hanging them on bamboo which is the traditional Japanese way to celebrate the Star Festival. The Shops at Houston Center's bamboo planters will be transformed by traditional Japanese Tanabata decorations including origami and paper lanterns. Long strands of origami birds will hang over the area to symbolize the stars of the Milky Way.

The Japanese Consulate invites you to come down on the 3rd and 7th to make your own wish cards which will be left in the mall throughout the week.

Tanabata celebrates Orihime – the Weaving Princess and the star *Vega* – daughter of the Tentei, the King of the Universe, and Hikoboshi – the Cow Herder Star, *Altair*. Orihime spent her days weaving beautiful cloth for the King on the bank of the Milky Way, but grew sad that she could never fall in love with anyone. Tentei arranged for her to meet Hikoboshi who lived on the other side of the river. The two fell instantly in love with each other and were shortly married. However, once married, Orihime neglected her cloth-making for Tentei and Hikoboshi's cows strayed all over the heavens. In anger, Tentei separated the two lovers across the Milky Way and forbade them to meet. Orihime, overcome with sadness, asked her father to let them meet again. Moved by his daughters' tears, Tentei allowed the two to meet on the seventh day of the seventh month if they both worked hard for the rest of the year. The first time they tried to meet they found they could not cross the river because there was no bridge. Orihime cried so much that a flock of magpies came and promised to make a bridge with their wings so that she could cross the river. Tanabata reminds us that wishes can come true – at least once a year.

The Consulate-General's Cultural Affairs section will be joined by members of Showing Japan who work to introduce Japanese culture to the Houston community. Dressing in festival "*Happi*" coats and summer-style kimono called "*Yukata*" helpful people will be on site to explain the history of Tanabata, and assist people to make their own tanzaku. The tanzaku will hang on the bamboo decorations in the mall for the week of Tanabata ending July 11th.

This event is sponsored by The Consulate-General of Japan at Houston in cooperation with the Shops at Houston Center and Crescent Real Estate Equities Company.

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