

Miyazaki's Yuru-kyara

The Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games will be remembered as a great event where the strongest athletes from all over the world gathered to make history. The mascots for the Games, Miraitowa and Someity, were designed with checkered and Sakura patterns, and as well as promoting the Games they also exist to help promote Japanese culture. It's not just large-scale events that have mascots, either – many regions throughout Japan also have their own mascots, often called *yuru-kyara*, (short for *yurui kyarakutā* – literally light-hearted characters) who appear at various events to promote that region and its local products. In this month's *Living In Miyazaki*, we'd like to introduce a few of Miyazaki's local *yuru-kyara*.

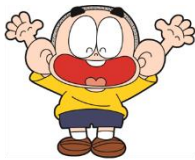
The Miyazaki-ken

The Miyazaki-ken, the symbol characters of Miyazaki Prefecture, are three dogs that were discovered as mascots on November 11th, 2011. Because the ancient name for this region was Himuka, their names are **Hi**-kun, **Mu**-chan and **Ka**-kun. They each wear costumes that promote local produce or something connected with Miyazaki (a *Hyuga natsu*, a Phoenix Palm tree and a local *Jidori* chicken).



For more information, check out their website at <<https://ouendan.kanko-miyazaki.jp>>

Bonchi-kun



都城市PRキャラクターぼんちくん

PR Character and head of the PR Department for the City of Miyakonojo, Bonchi-kun is a 2nd year elementary school student who speaks fluent Miyakonjo-ben. He is particularly good at performing *rajio taisō* – light exercises to music, narrated in Miyakonjo-ben. His Facebook page has a lot of fun content and is written in hiragana to make it easy to read:

<<https://www.facebook.com/bonchikun/>>

Hyōsuke

Originating from the Hyuga Hyottoko natsu matsuri – a festival held in Hyuga every August, Hyōsuke dances comically with his pouting expression, red kimono and dyed handkerchief wrapped around his head.



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Nichinanja-sama



日南市観光イメージキャラクター
にちなんちゃ様

A sightseeing promotion character for the City of Nichinan, Nichinanja-sama is a rather unique *tono-sama* (local lord), with his trademark sakura topknot and big round belly. He wears a Hawaiian shirt patterned with Jacaranda flowers, and turns up at interesting events asking "*Nanja, nanja?*" ("What's going on?")

Have a look around at various *yuru-kyara* and see what you can learn about the regions they're from!

If you have any questions, comments or suggestions regarding this column, please contact the Miyazaki International Foundation (MIF):

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Also, if you ever have any questions or concerns about daily life in Miyazaki, please feel free to get in touch with the Miyazaki Support Center for Foreign Residents:

TEL : 0985-41-5901 FAX : 0985-41-5902 Email support@mif.or.jp