

## Oshogatsu in Olympia

(January 23, 2016)

On January 23, Oshogatsu in Olympia was held in Olympia, Washington, to celebrate the Japanese New Year.

Inside the main hall, visitors were treated to taiko, shamisen, kabuki performances, and kimono fittings that captured the spirit of Japanese New Year, as well as booths presenting tea ceremony, flower arranging, calligraphy, and other elements of traditional culture.



A ceremony in the afternoon, attended by the Mayor of Olympia and the Olympia-Kato Sister-City Association, featured mochitsuki (rice cake pounding) and the reveal of a kimono sent from Kato, Hyogo, while the Yelm P.O.P.S Choir sang a New Year's song to mark the joyous occasion.



The Consulate-General of Japan, a co-sponsor, had a booth where we distributed various informational materials, including *Niponica* magazine, which

introduces the splendor of Japan's culture, JNTO pamphlets promoting tourism, and a selection of pamphlets about Japanese cuisine and sake. The booth also introduced JET, government scholarships, and other programs, allowed visitors to see and try on traditional armor, and provided the chance to explore Japan's latest technology through "Paro" the therapeutic harp seal robot.

Although the morning was a little rainy, we lucked out with the afternoon weather and around 2,000 visitors were able to enjoy the opportunity to learn more about Japan.