

## Web design firm and Japan temple team up on carp streamer offering to beat back virus

April 18, 2020 (Mainichi Japan)



Office Gluee! Co. President Gaku Kubono (second from left, holding a carp streamer) and Sohaku Matsushita, chief monk of Chokoji temple (second from right) are seen at the temple in Numazu, Shizuoka Prefecture, on April 16, 2020. (Mainichi/Hiroshi Ishikawa)

NUMAZU, Shizuoka -- Event cancellations due to the novel coronavirus have set the stage for an unlikely partnership between a temple and a web design firm to get a child-pleasing "koi" carp streamer into the air in this central Japanese city.

Local firm Office Gluee! Co. made the ritual offering of the 90-centimeter-long koi streamer to the Chokoji Zen temple on April 16. The streamers are traditionally flown in the weeks leading up to Children's Day on May 5. Those made by Office Gluee are known for their unique designs, and the one the company offered on April 16 was illustrated with a yokai -- monsters, demons and spirits from Japanese folklore -- called an amabie, said to ward off plagues. The offering was followed by a prayer ritual at the temple to drive away the novel coronavirus.



A carp streamer featuring an illustration of an amabie yokai is seen at Chokoji temple in Numazu, Shizuoka Prefecture, on April 16, 2020. (Mainichi/Hiroshi Ishikawa)

The streamer with a pink-faced amabie with twinkling eyes was originally set to be displayed at a carp streamer festival in Numazu that was eventually cancelled due to coronavirus concerns. Meanwhile Chokoji temple is well known for its annual "crying sumo" matches, in which infants compete in ritual weeping contests said to promote babies' well-being, but this too was called off this year. Office Gluee President Gaku Kubono, 49, decided to offer the carp streamer to the temple as both events were themed on wishing for children's good health.

The temple's chief monk Sohaku Matsushita, 71, offered the streamer to deities in a ritual where he recited sutras passed down at the temple for driving off epidemics while pounding a drum.

President Kubono commented on the offering, "We wished to offer something that only our company could make."

Matsushita said, "With no remedy for the coronavirus available yet, things are exactly the same as during the Edo period (1603-1868), when people relied only on the amabie for curing smallpox and cholera. I made the ritual offering in the hope that the coronavirus will come to an end as we join together as one."



(Japanese original by Hiroshi Ishikawa, Numazu Bureau)

Chokoji temple chief monk Sohaku Matsushita beats a drum as he offers prayers to drive away epidemics, at the temple in Numazu, Shizuoka Prefecture, on April 16, 2020. (Mainichi/Hiroshi Ishikawa)

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