

Children's museum exhibit, events to offer glimpse into culture

DEREK BEIGH
dbeigh@pantagraph.com

NORMAL — A slice of Asia is coming to uptown Normal.

From traditional features including Shinto shrines and bamboo forests to modern developments including bento cuisine, karaoke and photo booths, Japanese culture in many forms will be on display this summer at the Children's Discovery Museum, 101 E. Beaufort St.

"All age groups will find something of value," said Exhibits Manager Brad Stefl of "Hello from Japan!," which opens Friday night. "Parents and older kids will appreciate the history and information about different aspects of Japanese culture, and the younger kids will enjoy the bright colors and all the activities. ... It's a good balance."

The museum will celebrate opening night with a special



FOR THE PANTAGRAPH

This photo provided by Aoommiephotography.com shows the entrance of the "Hello from Japan!" exhibit during a previous tour stop. The exhibit will be open at Normal's Children's Discovery Museum from Friday to Sept. 11.

event 6 to 9 p.m. including sushi tasting, Japanese-style drumming from Chicago-based Rhythm Revolution, a Japanese harpist and mascot-inspired face painting from local artist Mickey Lower, also known as "The Zoo Lady."

No tickets are required, but Stefl said the museum is taking advance registration online, by phone and in person. Admission for Friday night will be \$4 for members and \$11 for non-members.

After opening, the exhibit will

be open whenever the museum is open through Sept. 11. Summer hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday; 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Thursday; and 1 to 5 p.m. Sunday. Admission is free for children 2 years old or younger and \$7 for everyone else.

The museum will host the exhibit free of charge thanks to the Freeman Foundation, a Hawaii-based organization that paid five American museums to create exhibits on Asian culture that are touring the United States through 2018. "Hello from Japan!" was made by the Children's Museum of Manhattan.

CDM also received a \$15,000 grant from Freeman and a \$4,000 grant from the Illinois Prairie Community Foundation, which will help pay for shipping the exhibit and associated activities.

Members of the local Japanese community will host weekly activities such as calligraphy, kirigami paper cutting, kite-making, origami and windsock-making.

Please see **Museum**, Page A2

Museum

From A1

The museum will host "Asahikawa Days" Aug. 26 and 27 in partnership with the Bloomington-Normal Asahikawa Sister City Committee. The committee, which has been organizing cultural exchanges between the communities for 54 years, will "have some activities specifically focused on our sister city," said Committee Chair Harriett Steinbach.

"As soon as we heard about (the exhibit), we were excited and supportive," Steinbach said. "We're always excited

If You Go

What: "Hello from Japan" exhibit

Where: Children's Discovery Museum, 101 E. Beaufort St., Normal

When: Grand opening 6-9 p.m. Friday; open during museum hours through Sept. 11

about promotion and facilitation of understanding the culture of Japan in Bloomington-Normal, and a we're excited the museum is doing that. ... A lot of youth are go-

ing to see it, and we have a potential to have a great benefit."

Staff will also host a final blowout when the exhibit closes.

"We'll have a kendo demonstration, which is the Japanese name for sword-fighting," Stefl said. "Every (activity) we have left, we'll bring out, and it'll be the last opportunity for everybody to experience the exhibit one last time before we pack it up and ship it on down the road."

Stefl said he hopes the exhibit and associated events will appeal to long-time museum patrons — "we did not open a new gallery this year,

so this is a nice way to have something new for our long-term visitors," he said — and newcomers alike.

"Any time that we can get an exhibit that really opens things up from a cultural perspective, that's something we're interested in. ... Hopefully kids are going to leave here with a better understanding of Japanese culture, how it affects American culture and how American culture has influenced Japanese culture," Stefl said. "And it's just going to be a ton of fun."

Follow Derek Beigh on Twitter: @pg_beigh