

# Chikara Yaoki News

Shirakawa Daruma Investigation Team

Shirakawa Daruma Sohonpo

· 18 employees · Annual production of Daruma dolls: 100,000+

## A new wave of traditional crafts

### Shirakawa Daruma Sohonpo Shop: 300 years of challenges



Artisan painting

#### To see the happy faces of our customers

Eight years after the Great East Japan Earthquake, Shirakawa Daruma Sohonpo Shop in Shirakawa City, Fukushima Prefecture has continued to advance with new initiatives, despite challenges. Ms. Sachiko Watanabe believes that the daruma doll is an attention-drawing tool to support the regions affected by the disaster, while her son, a 14th generation craftsman, Takaaki Watanabe is striving to create new daruma products. I'm always looking forward to seeing what kind of ideas and kinds of Daruma dolls we can come up with.

(Nei Takahashi)

After the earthquake, the number of residents along the beach streets of Iwaki City decreased dramatically and the Daruma dolls were no longer sold.

The Shirakawa Daruma Sohonpo Shop uses soil

from outside Fukushima prefecture for the weight inside Daruma dolls, something they devised to avoid damaging their reputation, so people don't have to worry about radiation each time they pick one up.

The number of orders for this original product comes from people wanting to support the affected area and has been gradually increasing. With a variety of products employing the craftsmanship that goes

into the Daruma dolls, they now have an overwhelming volume of orders from a wide range of generations. This has led to an increase in production so much so, that they can barely keep up.

(Nei Takahashi)

#### Darumikuji (Daruma fortune), an official Olympic product

#### For all of the world's generations

The original product "Darumikuji" by Shirakawa Daruma Sohonpo Shop is a capsule-shaped toy containing a mini daruma and Omikujii (fortune). Their wide range of daruma-themed products are based around: lucky charms; fairy tales; deep-sea fish; and aquariums. This new campaign hopes

to inform overseas residents and young people in Japan about the Shirakawa Daruma. 200 Daruma dolls are displayed at commercial facilities in the metropolitan area, convenience stores, hotels, and sightseeing spots in Fukushima Prefecture.

Officially licensed products for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics are also popular. They are 8.5 cm high, come in two types; gold for 3,240 yen and white for 2,160 yen, which are available both online and at official shops nationwide.

(Nagisa Yuda)



Officially licensed by the Olympics: Shirakawa Daruma



Darumikuji

#### Features of the Shirakawa Daruma

Shirakawa Daruma has a history spanning 300 years. It is said that Daruma doll production started in the Edo era, when the domain's lord Matsudaira Sadanobu had the artist Buncho Tani draw an image of Daruma.



Good luck charms on the face

The biggest feature of the doll is the *Tsurukame Shochikubai* - symbols of good luck, which are depicted on the face (crane, tortoise, pine, bamboo, plum)." The eyebrows are cranes, the beard is tortoises, the pine and plum are the ears, and the bamboo is on the jawline of the beard.

Another unique aspect of the Shirakawa Daruma is that they are made using unglazed clay molds rather than typical wooden frames. It is said a ceramic tile maker started the tradition.

(Rina Kobiyama)

#### Let's paint a Daruma! workshop

At Shirakawa Daruma Sohonpo Shop, you can actually paint a Daruma doll. You can choose either a red or white one.

If you want to try painting one in the traditional way, pick red. If you want to make an original Daruma doll, pick a white one.

You can experience the craftsmanship in this workshop. Your Daruma doll will also be a perfect custom-made souvenir.

(Takumi Kaneda)



Reporters painting Darumas

#### About the workshop

- Place: 98 Hachiryujin, Shirakawa-City
- Hours: 10: 00 - 16: 30
- Regular holidays: No scheduled holidays
- Fee: 600 yen (tax included)
- Time required: About an hour
- Parking: Available
- Groups: A group up to 70 people is OK
- For reservations: Call 0248-21-8790

#### Shirakawa Daruma Sohonpo Shop

#### Interview with the Watanabes

#### Ms. Watanabe (left in the photo)

I'm overjoyed when customers come to see us at the annual Daruma Market. We exchange energetic, traditional Japanese words for the occasion that translate as "Happy to see you well this year" and "See you again next year." The strength of our new product line is in the design, artistry, and the planning ability of our craftsmen. In order to make a good Daruma doll, it not only takes dexterity but also a certain type of "boldness", like the ability to draw precise lines quickly.

#### Mr. Takaaki Watanabe (right in the photo)

Our family started making Daruma dolls 300 years ago and the challenge continues to this day. Our founder must have felt great resolve in saying "Okay, let's make darumas" and accepting the job of making them in such high volumes. I would like to continue to create more crafts that attract the eye of younger generations and people from overseas. Capsule toys such as "Darumikuji" are also turning out to be a good approach to attract a wide range of people across generations.

(All team members)



#### Reported by:



Thank you everyone for your cooperation and making time for us!

(From the right)

**Nei Takahashi** (Shirakawa Daini Junior High 2nd grade)

I feel great informing people of the Shirakawa Daruma this way.

**Rina Kobiyama** (Kagamiishi Daiichi Elementary 6th grade)

I learned a lot about the Shirakawa Daruma and it was fun.

**Takumi Kaneda** (Nishigo Kumakura Elementary 6th grade)

This time, through the painting experience, I was able to feel the skills and boldness of the craftsmen.

**Nagisa Yuda** (Shirakawa Misaka Elementary 6th grade)

I'm glad to know about painting the Daruma and other original products.