



JAPAN INFORMATION  
AND CULTURE CENTER  
在米国日本大使館広報文化センター

# TEACHING TUESDAY

## YONEKAWA MIZUKABURI

The Yonekawa Mizukaburi (米川の水かぶり Yonekawa Water Pouring Festival), is a strange, amusing event that takes place every year in Miyagi Prefecture. A tradition with a history of over 800 years, the festival was originally a ritual to ward off fire in the upcoming year.

Still performed on the first day of the horse in February, men gather early in the morning to put on hats, coats, and sandals made of straw and pain their faces with soot from a furnace. After offering a prayer the god of fire prevention, they begin to run through the town, yelling and shouting. Meanwhile, residents prepare water buckets to give to the men as they pass by. The men will throw the water on the houses in the area to help protect them from fire. As the men run by, town residents will also try to pluck pieces of straw from the costumes. If they get a piece of straw, it is considered a lucky charm to ward of disaster.

The Yonekawa Mizukaburi has been designated an Important Intangible Folk Cultural Properties of Japan, and this unusual festival is definitely one-of-a-kind must-see event.