Japanese culture on display at Seabrook Festival

Annual event to take place July 17 at Buddhist Temple

Legend has it that in ancient Japan, a town’s boundaries were set by how far the sound of the taiko drum could be heard.

Those towns must have been enormous.

Taiko, meaning “big drum,” is renowned for its huge sound, often described as “pounding” or “roaring.” But that big sound is often tempered by other musical elements such as brass bells, conch shells, or by the musicians tapping their drumsticks together.

The sound, originally intended to drive away evil spirits and strengthen warriors, is often combined with distinctive movements that have their roots in the martial arts, making for a dramatic performance.

Area residents will have the opportunity to see unique taiko drummers as well as Japanese folk dancers performing the “odori,” or “dance of joy,” to honor those who are now deceased, at the 65th annual Obon Memorial Folk Dance Festival on Saturday, July 17. The Festival is held at the Seabrook Buddhist Temple on Northville Road off State Highway 77. It is open to the public with free admission and parking.

Obon is one of the most important traditions for Japanese people. A Buddhist event, it is the period of praying for the repose of the souls of one’s ancestors. People believe that their ancestors’ spirits come back to their homes to be reunited with their family during Obon.

(Continued on next page)
Boys & Girls Club performs Cultural Dance Program at Center

The Boys & Girls Club of Vineland, in cooperation with Visions of Hope, presented a dance recital at the Carl Arthur Recreation Center in Vineland to showcase the work of its Cultural Dance Program, supported by the Cumberland County Cultural & Heritage Commission.

The young dancers performed hip hop and liturgical dance sequences and were dressed in patriotic red, white and blue outfits in commemoration of Flag Day.

Dance instructor Brenda Ferren was also on hand to guide the youth throughout the show and performed a piece of her own at the end of the recital.

For more information on the dance program, call (856) 896-0244.

Drummers, dancers highlight Obon Festival

(Continued from page one)

so it is a significant family gathering time.

A Japanese-American contingent of about 500 families relocated to Seabrook after the end of World War II, many working on the Seabrook farms or food processing plants. Seabrook is considered to be the largest resettlement of Japanese after the war.

The Seabrook Educational and Cultural Center, in the Upper Deerfield Municipal Building on Route 77, will be open from noon to 4 p.m. on the day of the Festival.

Taiko drumming will be performed by the Seabrook Buddhist Temple’s Dharma School and the Hoh Daiko Drummers, both local groups. Special guests will be the Soh Daiko Drummers of New York and the Nen Daiko Drummers of Washington, D.C.

The folk dancers are from the local population as well as New York and Washington, D.C. They encourage audience members to join in the performance and imitate the steps.

Those attending the festival should bring folding or lawn chairs. For more information, call the Buddhist Temple at 856-451-341 or the Seabrook Center at 856-451-8393.