
Keeping in Touch with Friends and Family

Contributed by John Cheshire

How can we maintain our relationships with friends back home?

When we come to Japan, most of us leave behind friends and family. Unfortunately, we often get caught up with our lives in Japan, and our old friends get put on the back burner. Today, I'd like to take a look at a few ways that have helped me keep in touch with my people back home.

1. Skype

I think that most people are already familiar with Skype, but it cannot be ignored. Between video chats with my family on Christmas day to talking with my best friends about the latest happenings, it has kept me in touch better than any other tool. Skype is a voice over IP phone system that provides cheap international calls from your computer to land line and cell phone numbers in your home country. It also lets you talk for free to other people who have Skype. If that wasn't enough, with SkypeIn, you are able to get a phone number in your home country that will ring on your computer in Japan! Wow!{jumi [/adsensearticle.php]}

2. Picasa

Picasa is an image organizing program from Google. It lets you separate all those digital camera pics that you've taken into easy to manage folders, but the real functionality comes with it's ability to attach your images to an email and send them easily. This is very important for someone like me, because if it's not easy, I probably won't get around to doing it. It also gives you 250 MB's of storage space to upload images to web albums that you can send to friends and family.

3. Facebook

I was introduced to facebook by a friend not too long ago. It's a fairly normal social networking type site, but it seems much more laid back than Myspace. The good part about facebook is that I can just post a story on my profile and all my friends will automatically see it. That way, I don't have to write an e-mail to everyone, but I can still let my friends know how I've been.