



Fukushima Hope News

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With Gratitude

Kida Keiji, Fukushima Hope Project Representative Director



It has been over six years since the Fukushima Hope Project was founded in September 2012. We have been able to continue our recuperation efforts in Fukushima to this day - thanks to the support of many.

With seven years passing since the Great East Japan Earthquake, the circumstances surrounding our recuperation efforts have completely changed. As decontamination efforts helped lower the radioactive air dose levels, the initial panic and chaos of the disaster's aftermath have subsided. Recuperation efforts to retreat from contaminated areas are now being put to question and met with criticism. Such criticism asserts that by providing retreat camps for children we are giving out the message that Fukushima is a dangerous place. Although we have our own counterargument against such criticism and although we are well aware of the need for retreat camps, as an organization we have been faced with drastic changes and financial difficulties and have had to consider major changes at a fundamental level. Although the Fukushima Hope Project began in order to deal with the unprecedented results of the nuclear disaster, in order to continue long term, we realized that we needed to re-establish new goals, purposes and policies based on current circumstances. As a result of these discussions, the Project has had to come to a very difficult decision to end its operations as of March 2019.

Through the Project we have been connected to over 200 families together – families with whom we have lived through and endured the aftermath of the Great East Japan Earthquake. What a tremendous joy these connections have been! Those who have supported and funded this Project have been a source of courage and strength for us and have sustained us to where we are now. We give thanks to God who gave us a burden for this Project and blessed us with each connection. We also extend our heartfelt gratitude to those who we have been a part of this Project and have supported this Project. Thank-you!



Reporting on the Closure of the Fukushima Hope Project

Masaru Asaoka, Head of the Secretariat

The Fukushima Hope Project – a Project that began in 2012 through your prayers and supports– is coming to a close in March 2019. We want to extend our heartfelt gratitude to each person who supported this Project over all these years.

The Project began in response to the March 2011 Greater East Japan Earthquake - prompted by several churches in Fukushima that were greatly burdened with the distress of the disaster's aftermath. As the Project set out to "protect the mental and physical health of children and families in Fukushima Prefecture; to care for their spirit; and to provide hope for their future", it provided retreat camps; opportunities for families to network; and financial support for individual families to retreat. The following section outlines the different types of recuperation efforts we initiated:

1. "Hoyo" (Retreat) Camps

Central to the Project were the "hoyo" (retreat) camps. Altogether we have held 37 camps since our first camp in July 2012 at Iwaki Kinshuko, up to our most recent camp in Aizu last July. These camps have been held in a variety of locations such as: Aomori, Shizuoka, Okutama, Yamagata, Hokkaido, Okinawa, Niigata, Osaka, Michigan and more. Right now we are getting ready for our 38th camp in Karuizawa, Nagano. We would especially like to recognize the extra support that went into our camps in Osaka, Hokkaido, Okinoawa and Michigan. We are grateful for all the organizations that supported these camps by covering transportation costs or by hosting these camps. Through our retreat camps we have had over 458 families participate (with a total of 873 campers) with nearly 300 volunteers from across Japan.

2. "Hotto Time" for Parents and Kids , Hope Café

In 2013, we began "Hotto Time" in Fukushima City and Koriyama, as an opportunity for parents to interact with one another and to address their growing concerns. Hotto Time dealt with topics on food safety and children's health, with lecture guests by nutritionists and doctors. In 2017, Hotto Time, was replaced by the "Hope Café" with extended locations in Sukagawa and Miharu. The Hope Café became an opportunity for participants to network with one another through making collage-art.

3. Donations and Supports

Our Project has been entirely supported by the generous donations of many donors. We extend our sincere gratitude to churches and organizations that took part in our initial collaborative committee and to the churches, denominations, individuals, schools, and various organizations that have



donated to our Project – some on a monthly basis. There have also been churches and organizations that have held bazaars and charity concerts for our cause. We are also grateful for those who have made donations from overseas. In total, over the course of this Project, we have received donations amounting to \$360,000.

We are also grateful for the opportunities we have had to share information and bring awareness to Fukushima and to our Project through a variety of venues. These venues included: lectures, photo exhibitions, break-out sessions at the Japan Evangelism Conference, church services, local Christmas events, and concerts.

4. In Closing

When we launched this Project we were planning for a 5-year term. By God's grace we were able to continue it for 6 years. Our central purpose with this Project was to establish connections with children and families suffering from the nuclear disaster and to walk alongside these families. With 7 years passing since the Great East Japan Earthquake babies born at the time of the disaster are now in elementary school and the children who were in elementary or junior high school are now in high school, university or are now employed. Indeed, the children we met at the Hope Camps have grown up! Meanwhile, as time passes, the circumstances regarding the nuclear disaster have changed in complex ways. As Kida mentioned, our anxieties and concerns for the repercussion of the nuclear disaster on the health of the children continues. Public sentiment and circumstances regarding recuperation efforts have changed and in the midst of these changes, it is truly a bitter decision for us to have to end this Project.

That said, our efforts for Fukushima will not come to a complete end. We ask that you would please continue to remember Fukushima in your prayers. If and when the time for further recuperation efforts emerge, please lend us your hand.

*We will be sending out our final report in February. We are also in the process of putting together an archive of the Project's recuperation efforts.

Retreat Camp Reports

Family Day Camp in Inawashiro

- Cycling at Lake Inawashiro -

Date: May 26, 2018

Location: Konnan village (Fukushima)

Participants: 9 (6 adults and 3 children)



We held our first Day Camp at Lake Inawashiro. We were blessed with perfect weather, wonderful food, beautiful scenery and new friendships. The 16 km cycling course provided a great work-out and amazing scenic views. It also came with a guided tour so we were able to learn about the history in the area. Our cycling destination took us to Seishohin - boasted as being the most spectacular viewpoint in the Inawashiro and Mount Bandai area. Even our youngest rider in grade 1, finished the entire cycling course. Both adults and children alike enjoyed the day.



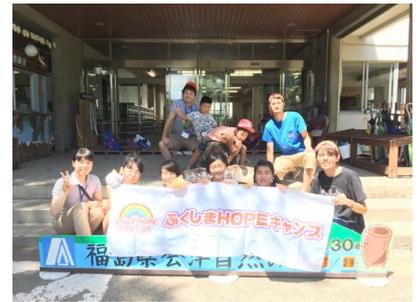
37th Retreat Camp in Aizu

- Aizu Nature Camp -

Date: July 28-29, 2018

Location: Aizu Nature House (Fukushima)

Participants: 6



We held a nature retreat camp at Aizu Nature House. Although we were concerned about a potential typhoon, we were blessed with great weather and were able to enjoy canoeing under clear blue skies. We also made keychains; explored the forests; enjoyed fireworks; and engaged in some sport activities. On Day 2 we were able to enjoy blueberry U-Picking at an orchard with over 10 different varieties.



Michigan Hope Tour Reunion (September 8th)

In 2013 and 2014 we hosted 2 retreat camps in Michigan with 20 junior high school participants. Because two of the volunteers from our Michigan camps -Maria and Katarina – were visiting Fukushima, we were able to host a reunion with our Michigan campers. The campers who were in junior high at the time of the camps, are now in highschool and university. We reminisced fond memories from the Michigan Camp and updated one another about our current happenings.



HOPE CAFÉ Reports (April-June 2018)



Our April-June Hope Cafes were held at 4 locations (Sukagawa Grace Christian Church, Fukushima Bible Church, Koriyama Christian Gospel Church, Koriyama Bible Baptist Church). Altogether we had 30 participants (14 adults, 16 children).

The adults created collages based on a color-theme and shared their collage-making process over refreshments. The children enjoyed story-time, a magic show, and their own collage-making time.

