



Gift for the Next 100 Years

Grief Camp Project for victims of The Tohoku Region Pacific Coast Earthquake

UPDATE Vol.6 (1)

November / December - 2011

International Camping Congress in Hong Kong

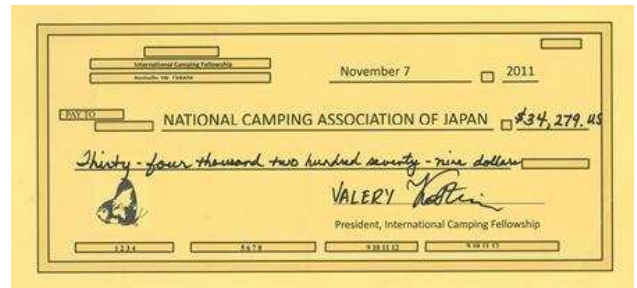
November 4-7, 2011

Every support encourages us

The 9th International Camping Congress (ICC) / 4th Asia Oceania Camping Congress (AOCC) was a rare opportunity for us to meet and convey our gratitude directly to our friends of the global camp community who showed much concern for the victims of the earthquake and offered many kinds of support. Every ICC is meaningful and fun-filled, but this ICC in Hong Kong became a very special one for us.

During the General Meeting of ICF, we received the list of the contributions for our Grief Camp Project. The amount of contribution exceeded US\$34,000. On the list, there are many names, not only of individuals but also of camps or organizations. Many camps asked for contributions also from their campers. The list itself is a piece of paper, but it seemed so heavy for me.

We received much other than that during the Congress. Liz and delegates from Russia, thank you for the contributions. Eric and Jorgi, thank you for your promise to me to come to Japan to support our camp. And everyone, thank you for the voices to cheer us! Every show of support encourages us a lot.



Grief Camp, a warm place filled with fun

At this meeting, Japanese delegates presented four sessions, and one of them was a presentation about Grief Camp Project.

Outline of the presentation

Japan has experienced many earthquakes, but this time we experienced a different aspect of the damage, *Invisible Loss*. Even after six months, more than 4,000 people are missing. Of course, it's very hard to find information about the loved one's death. But it's also so hard to accept the *Invisible Loss*, loss of the loved one without proof.

Through the communication with many people, we decided to introduce Grief Camp for the victims of the earthquake. And *El Tesoro de la Vida*, the Grief Camp of Camp Fire USA First Texas Council, became our great role model.

After the one week experience in *El Tesoro de la Vida*, I defined Grief Camp as a camp filled with fun, where every camper is guaranteed to have the right to show any kind of emotions. *El Tesoro de la Vida* was filled with much fun, and the warm and fun atmosphere helped the campers who felt very sad or got upset.

We have many challenges to have Grief Camp in Japan: The challenge of manpower, such as recruitment and retention of volunteers and therapists who really understand the camp. The challenge of money, because it's very hard to afford the expenses of the camp fee. The challenge of surroundings, to support the campers, a system like "Grief Care Center" requires.



These challenges are common for all over the world, but we Japanese have two more challenges. One is the challenge of expression of emotions. Although the key of Grief Camp is “to show any kind of emotions”, it is said that Japanese are generally shy to show emotions, so we have to find different ways of expression from that of *El Tesoro de la Vida*.

The other is the alternative for HUGGING. At *El Tesoro de la Vida*, HUGGING is very a very potent way to share feelings. But for Japanese, HUGGING isn't common at all, and most feel too shy to do it. I still wonder what can be an alternative behavior to give campers peace of mind.



Listen to the Voices of Victims

There were five delegates from the affected area. Chiho, a volunteer leader of Labo Camp in Sendai, spoke about her feelings in an educational session about Grief Camp. She spoke in a staccato fashion, word by word.

She said that she didn't have the courage to re-enter the activities of Labo Camp for a while. But at last, she gathered the courage to join during the summer vacation. She spent a wonderful time with camp friends and wants many of the suffering children to have such experiences.



Every member of the audience was moved to tears by her words, and she received a plenty of hugs.

On the way back to Tokyo, she told me that there was something she forgot to mention.

That is, to ask and listen to what the victims tell. She wanted to say, “If you have an opportunity to see someone, please ask about the earthquake and listen to what the person says”. Careless curiosity may hurt, but sincere thirst to know the person will never hurt the person.

I'm sure her message will be meaningful to the Grief Camp in making a warm place where every camper is guaranteed to have right to show any kind of emotions..

Our Grief Camp, in the planning stages

Now we are planning to have our first Grief Camp next spring.

Our partner, Asahi Shinbun Social Welfare Organization, will fund scholarships for the children who lost the parents. We plan to invite them to a series of camps. To create the best atmosphere for sharing, we want to have a number of camps with the same members throughout the year.

Although there are many challenges, we are secure of success of this project, and it will prove the benefit of international exchange of camp knowledge.

We ask you to...

- Provide information about previous grief camps
Research about the camps, articles about the camps, staff training materials, etc., are welcome.
- Donate to support the project
Donations are being accepted through the ICF website: <http://www.campingfellowship.org>

Contact : National Camping Association of Japan

Executive, Tatsuya Kanayama e-mail : kanayama@camping.or.jp

The full project plan is available at http://www.camping.or.jp/grief_camp_ncaj.pdf



ARIGATOU means "incredibly rare", thus it's MIRACLE.
It's a miracle that we have you in the camping community. ARIGATOU!!