



GIFT FOR THE NEXT 100 YEARS

Grief Camp Project for victims of The Great East Japan Earthquake

UPDATE Vol.9

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A Glad Tiding

One day I received a phone call. He introduced himself as a teacher of the high school where a camper from our first camp in Taiwan attends. He told me that he called me to show his gratitude for the camp.

According to the teacher, the camper had been so depressed since the loss of his parents that he couldn't be in a classroom with other students. However, when he came back from Taiwan, he started studying like a different person and soon ranked at the top of the class.

He told the teacher, "In Taiwan, I realized that I had to change". He saw the younger campers enjoying a lot the camp and was ashamed of himself because the girls also experienced the same loss from the Tsunami. Then he made up his mind.

School records can't be an index of one's well-being. However, attaining a better record is a promising sign of one's life because it reflects a desire to learn. This desire is nothing more or less than the desire to live.

I hope he finds the joy of learning after this opportunity. If he can increase the matters of deep interest, the cycle of his life will keep evolving.

Now I'm sure that Camp is a life-changing experience.



The younger campers just enjoyed the camp. But they happened to be his Role Model.



Sky Camp in Asagiri

Now we are preparing our second grief camp. We have named this camp SKY CAMP. The reason is simple -- to feel expansive as a blue sky.

We will have this camp at Asagiri, at the foot of Mt. Fuji. When we see Mt. Fuji, somehow we feel fine. We'd like to share this feeling with campers.

Outline of the Sky Camp in Asagiri

D a t e : from 15th to 17th of September, 2012

V e n u e : Asagiri Field Activity Center (Shizuoka)

Campers: Children (aged between 9 and 18 years old) who lost their both parents in the Great East Japan Earthquake

Organized by National Camping Association of Japan, Asahi Shinbun Social Welfare Organization and National Council of YMCAs of Japan



Visit to El Tesoro de la Vida (again)

This year, we visited again El Tesoro de la Vida, the Grief Camp of Camp Fire USA First Texas Council, to learn about grief camp. It was the 25th anniversary of this camp. Making continuous efforts make a difference, we learned more in this visit.

Reflective kids

This year, almost 150 children attended the camp. There were many more children than last year, and the camp was filled with energy. In this camp, 90% are fun activities and 10% are group therapy sessions, led by a licensed therapist. We attended the sessions of boys around 10 years old.

The loss of parents imposes many changes on the children. The boys experienced much more than the loss itself. In a session the therapist asked them, showing a terra-cotta pot, what were the common points between a human and a pot. One boy answered, "They are breakable"; another said, "They can bear the pressure from the inside". These answers took my breath away. I'm sure I wasn't reflective like them when I was 10 years old.



I suppose they can't stop reflecting to live with their unreasonable loss. Although it can be too much for kids of that age, I think it's very important to learn how to face the loss because they can't stop thinking of it. Camp is a perfect place to have a safe and comfortable environment to talk this kind of topics. And fun activities make them "a kid" and their mind refreshed.

People of Goodwill

This camp is supported by many people. Nearly 80 volunteers work as cabin buddies, camp nurse, activity staff, kitchen staff, and so on. The organization of the staff was just wonderful. Some staff prepared items for the name of cabin group. Other staff prepared plaques and medals for the high scores in archery. There were many more examples. Generally speaking, it's so difficult to build a good organization with many kinds of goodwill. I think we have much more to learn from this camp.

In addition, we were presented with a gift of US\$2,200 for our project. I really appreciate the kindness of the supporters of El Tesoro de la Vida.

Lights of memory, Lights of future

We live a life recalling the past with respect and conceptualizing the future. El Tesoro de la Vida is a place to learn how to live with what doesn't exist now. The group therapy session is the time to learn how to live with the past. On the other hand, fun activities are the times to learn how to live with the future. Some kids asked me about Japan. I really hope their curiosity served for their future.

At the closing session, three cabin groups got together and talked. Each one called the name of the person who had passed away and put their plaque on the wall of memory. Then a candle was lit for each one. The light may be the metaphor of what doesn't exist. Everyone saw the memory in the candles' lights.

After the session, in front of the main cabin, 800 lanterns were shining. 800 is the number of children who attend El Tesoro de la Vida in the past 24 years. (Every camper can attend for 3 years, so the total number is much, much more!) I believe that most of them found the light of future in this camp.

Meaning of ARIGATOU

This time I visited with the supervisor of bereavement support of our project, Mr. Nishida. At the last session of the SHARK group, we shared feelings, and he said that he just wanted to tell about ARIGATOU.

As you know, ARIGATOU means "thank you", but its origin is "incredibly rare to exist". He wanted to express his sense of joy of being there, because he was greatly impressed. ARIGATOU is the best word for us to express our gratitude for the opportunity of being there.



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



NCAJ
National Camping Association of Japan

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