



GIFT FOR THE NEXT 100 YEARS

Grief Camp Project for victims of The Great East Japan Earthquake

UPDATE Vol.10

October - 2012

Sky Camp in Asagiri

We named our Grief Camp for the children who lost their parents in the Great East Japan Earthquake, "Sky Camp", because the song we sang most in the camp was "Ano Aoi Sorano Youni (Clear as the Blue Sky)".

Outline of the Sky Camp in Asagiri

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

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

Campers: 17 Children (ages 9 to 19) who lost both of their parents in the Great East Japan Earthquake

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

This time we had 17 campers, and 9 of 10 campers of our first camp in Taiwan returned. How wonderful they feel very familiar to this camp.

The windsock of friendship

When the campers arrived at the camp, we had the opening session starting with the flag ceremony. Campers raised the windsock filled with many messages. Kazu, the program director, explained that this windsock was presented from El Tesoro de la Vida, a camp for the children who experienced the loss of their loved ones, the same as the campers of Sky Camp.

At the last camp in Taiwan, we didn't emphasize that this camp was for children who experienced loss of parents, so this explanation was a challenge. Maybe some campers felt a bit uncomfortable, but the windsock of friendship helped them to understand that this camp was supported by many people.

Say Hello to the Sun!!

Most of the day, they simply enjoyed the camp. For the children who still live in the affected area, even just running around in an open place is a very fun activity. Many temporary houses are placed in the school yards. Some live in temporary houses which are much smaller than the houses where they used to live.

"Can we play?," campers asked the staff very often. I suppose it means that they can't play to their hearts content in their everyday lives.

Of course we answered, "Yes, you came to this camp to play!"

They enjoyed singing, cooking, making candles, tie-dye, campfire, expedition in the woods, and chatting with their cabin buddies.

Although the weather was very changeable during the camp, Mt. Fuji appeared in the morning of day 2. The sun rises from behind Mt. Fuji. Some "early bird" campers saw the sun shining on the top of the mountain like a diamond.

Everyone has very special scenery which makes them feel brand new. The diamond on Mt. Fuji could be a special memory for some campers.

When I talked about our visit to El Tesoro de la Vida for one week, some girls blamed me, shouting "It's not fair! We want this camp much longer!" Their voices were too loud, but it was a very delight complaint.

Yes, the next one will be much longer!!



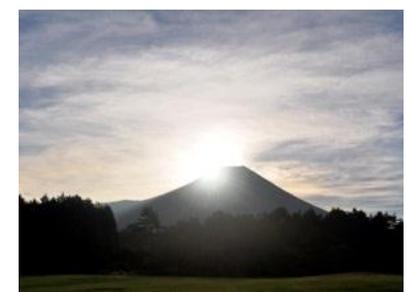
9 of 10 campers of Taiwan camp came again!!



We had flag ceremonies with the windsock filled with the messages of volunteers of El Tesoro de la Vida



Everywhere around the world, kids love S'more



The sun appeared from behind Mt. Fuji. This view gave us a radiant mood

Reflect one's self, Recall the loved one

We took some moments to reflect during the camp.

One is the Heart Activity on the day 2. They drew or stuck a big heart on a colored paper. Then, they placed some face marks which expressed their feelings.

"Happy", "Sad", "Lonely", "Confusing", "Mad", "Surprised".

The facilitator, Nishiyan, told them, "Any feelings are OK. This camp is a safe place, so you don't have to be afraid to express your feelings."

They decorated the heart with stickers and learned that any feelings were precious.

At the time of candle fire, a staff, Chuka, talked about her father who had passed away when she was very young.

For some campers, who were not prepared, this topic may have made them uncomfortable. They listened to her with anxious looks, seeking the hand of their cabin buddy.

They will face again and again the unreasonableness of losing their loved ones, so we really wanted to provide a safe place for them and show that there are many people they can lean on.

Raindrops keep falling on my head

Three days are too short to play enough, to reflect and talk in a completely comfortable atmosphere!!

However, I still believe that they enjoyed the camp. In the morning of day 3, it rained hard, and the noise was so loud in their tents, but no one complained. I'm sure they played a lot and were so tired that they could sleep despite the noise of the rain.

When I saw the campers who were singing like birds in the drizzly rain, a Bacharach song, "Raindrops keep falling on my head" came to me:

*Raindrops keep falling on my head.
But that doesn't mean my eyes will soon be turning red.
Crying's not for me, cause I'm never gonna stop the rain by complaining.
Because I'm free, nothing's worrying me.*

My wish is that they could lead their lives with optimism like this song.

Next Sky Camp in Yoshima Island

Three days is too short, so the next camp will be for five days in March!

We are planning the next Sky Camp on a small island, Yoshima. There is a YMCA camp, and it has many marine activities. We think that it's possible to prepare more age-appropriate activities for each age and gender group.

We have learned a lot in this one and half years, visiting El Tesoro de la Vida, reading documents provided by our global camp friends and our practice of camp with the children who lost the parents in the earthquake. Now I have a feeling that we will have a better camp. We have to keep working!



Heart activity, reflect and express one's feelings



A small concert by the candle light



Volunteer staffs cuddled up to the campers when they felt butterflies in their stomachs



We ask you to...

- Provide information about previous grief camps
- Donate to support the project visit 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!!