

Fukushima Desk News

September 2014

“Thank you” from children

(Based on *Fukushima Mimpo*, July 19, 2014)

The Iwaki Branch of a bank became the temporary Futaba Machi Kindergarten and Elementary school. Everybody in Futaba Machi was obliged to leave the town after the accident of the Nuclear Power Plant, and the classes of these two schools were started in April 2014 in a corner of the bank. The total registration of these two schools at the beginning of the year was eleven (11). By the end of the first semester they were 15 in all. Only two first graders started the year. The teachers praised them both, as they were very studious. They loved to read. Last year, one of them read 151 books, and the other 143. From September on, the children will move to a new place, though the new building will still be temporary. The concern of the principal had been that the school life of such a small group, especially in a temporary class room, would not be helpful for the development of the social aspect of the children. However, the hidden vitality of the children appeared, to prove that his worry was unnecessary. Now that their summer vacation came to an end, we imagine how excited they are with the experience of a new school building.

Children of Hirono, come home!

(Based on *Fukushima Mimpo*, August 10, 2014)

The gathering named “Come, children of Hirono School!” enjoyed the return of all the members of Hirono Machi, since the long absence of those who had to evacuate the town since the Earthquake. The total number present was 130 students of the elementary and junior high school, which included 40 children within the town. Everybody was full of happy smiles. Some of them had not met for three years.

As of next spring, there will be the new school in this town, which will

be called Futaba Mirai Gakuen High School (meaning Future of Futaba), named by Prefectural Governor Yuhei Sato, with a prayer that the school may be a birthplace of men and women who bear Fufure Futaba Town.

(ここに写真)

Party for village children with barbecue and bingo game

(Based on *Fukushima Mimpo*, August 17, 2014)

(ここに写真)

A party named “friendship renewal gathering” was held for the children of Kawauchi Village who have evacuated Kawauchi and returned from every direction. More than three years has passed since the Earthquake, so this was the third gathering. However, it was the first time to have it right in the village. Fifty people, consisting of the children and their parents, were there to enjoy barbecues and bingo games.

This type of gathering, organized by the towns and villages, seemed to stand out in the news items this year. At summer festivals, like bon-odori dancing, more faces of those who had evacuated their home land were seen, who looked happy to renew their old acquaintance.

All the town members hope to return safely

(Based on *Fukushima Mimpo*, July 5, 2014)

The people of Naraha Machi are still obliged to live with no clear view of the future. For example, Mrs. K, 89 years old, would like in Naraha as a happy life of the farmers consisting of three generations. However, since THAT day, she had to move to Hiroshima to join her daughter’ s family, and her son and his family had no other choice than to move to Tokyo. The life of the whole family changed completely over night. Mrs. K has no complaint as she had access to what is called “day service” where she found new friends, too, and people were good to her. However, overcome with the desire to live with her old friends, she came back with her husband and entered a temporary residence not too far from her home land. Very soon Mrs. K established friendship with her neighbors as if they were her own family. However, five months after their return from Hiroshima, her husband took sick and died. Mrs. K remarks, “In his new life in Hiroshima,

the tension of adjustment must have been too much for my husband. Our old house in Naraha was filled with happy memories even if there were hardships. My heart withers as I imagine how much he must have endured.” She also says, “Frequent communication with attention is so important for the elderly people. Every generation experiences loneliness of evacuation. I would advise young people not to be shy to join group activities. I hope the day will soon come when our former land is ready again to receive men and women of all generations, where they can live in the houses they built, and cultivate their own fields.” Her remarks make our hearts ache.

Murmurs of the residents in Temporary Houses

“Aloha Massage” is a kind of foot bath, where one-to-one massage is given. When the whole body becomes relaxed, one starts to talk quietly, and the content of the murmurs of the Temporary House residents often startles us. All we do is just listen and nod, but the time spent in this way is often very valuable. There are many little remarks which need our attention. Depending on the content, it is sometimes necessary to notify certain people. More and more we feel the need of following such quiet murmurs. We recognize the increasing need for personal following of such people.
(ここに写真)

Need for preventing domestic violence in disaster areas

How to raise the consciousness of people concerning domestic violence in disaster areas has long been our concern. Luckily we found that *Kahoku Shimpō* was taking up the topic in its issue on August 19, 2014. During these three years after the Earthquake, it reports that the seriousness of domestic violence by spouses and boyfriends has increased. The statistics show that during the year 2013, the number of consultations received by the police office of Miyagi Prefecture was 2092, which was an increase of 236 compared with that of the past year; of Iwate Prefecture 368 which was 70 an increase; and of Fukushima Prefecture 857 which was 17 increase.

Thus all these prefectures recorded a higher number of sad events compared with last year. Furthermore, the counseling telephone service of the

Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare throughout the country reports that the number of consultations concerning domestic and/or sex violence received, treated in these three disaster prefectures are almost double in number compared with all the other prefectures in Japan. If human dignity is ignored by psychological or physical violence in this area, how could one talk about reconstruction?

Simultaneous search for the missing

This past August, Japanese Buddhists celebrated the fourth Bon Festival since the Earthquake. To console the deceased, 400 policemen were called up on this day to search for clues to bodies of the still missing. By going through the mountain of debris in Namie Elementary School, where most of the debris and rubble of the area have been piled since the Earthquake, the crew found three pieces of human bones. They also found some single-lens reflex cameras and credit cards. Among the policemen who worked on that day, there were 69 new members who had just joined, some of whom had come from Namie and Hirono. What a memorable day it became for them, working so hard to respond to the cherished desires of their relatives and close friends! The last and definitive disposal of the debris has been postponed indefinitely, as they pull down and go through carefully for there must be things of value for those who lived there. The newspaper report on the general search on this day urges us to think of the meaning of life.

Number of deaths connected with the Earthquake.

These numbers are taken from *Fukushima Minpo*. According to the newspaper, these deaths are identified as Earthquake victims, but there are many other deaths of ambiguous causes, which are indirectly connected with the explosion of the Nuclear Power Plant.

On the following table, the first figures are the total number of deceased

of the area in the present year, and the numbers given under the names of the cities/villages are those who have been definitively recognized as caused by the Earthquake.

June 12	(1718)			
June 13	(1727)	Minami Soma Shi	1	Futaba Machi 4
June 21	(1728)	Katsurao Mura	1	
June 25	(1729)	Futaba Machi	1	
Junly 2	(1730)	Tomioka Machi	1	
July 11	(1732)	Futaba Machi	2	
July 16	(1734)	Tomioka Machi	2	
July 17	(1735)	Katsurao Mura	1	
July 25	(1736)	Futaba Machi	1	
July 29	(1739)	Tomioka Machi	3	
August 8	(1743)	Futaba Machi	4	
August 13	(1744)	Minami Soma Shi	1	
August 14	(1748)	Namie Machi	4	