

Recreation project for Fukushima children

As a result of the accident at the Fukushima Plant, the children of Fukushima have been forbidden to play outside because of the fear that the children would be exposed to excess radioactive materials.

This project which is sponsored by Fukushima Prefecture Consumer Co-op Federation and the Institute involved in disaster recovery planning at the Fukushima University is intended to meet the needs of parents living with such anxiety of children's health damage due to radioactive materials by providing vacation tour for the children under a project name "Fukushima children's recreation" under "let's get connected".

Children including preschool are taken out for recreation during the weekends and school vacations.

Activities during the winter included rice pounding, snow sliding and playing in a hall of a Japanese style hotel.



One year anniversary of the Great East Japan Earthquake Co-op support efforts towards the disaster recovery

Japan marked on Sunday March 11, the first anniversary of the earthquake and tsunami that killed thousands, left many homeless and set off a radiation crisis that shattered public trust in atomic power.

The overview of the earthquake:

- Date and time of occurrence: March 11 2011 at 2:46 pm
- Geographical epicenter: 130 km east of Sendai
- Depth: 24 km and Magnitude: 9.0

Status of the damage:

As of February 21 2012, the number of casualties and damages stands as follows:

Dead: 16,140, Missing: 3,123, Injured: 6,112, Physical damage: total collapse of buildings 128,582, half destruction 244,031, partially damaged buildings 691,882, buildings flooded above floor level 20,425 and buildings flooded below floor level 15,502.

Number of evacuees

Total number of people taken refuge from Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima prefectures stands 71,123 as of January 26 2012.

Status with Co-op

Death and missing: Many co-op members fell victim to the earthquake. For regular employees and co-op committee members 40 people died and 3 got missing.

Physical damage: Some co-ops in the stricken area suffered from collapse of head office building, store buildings and the home delivery facilities.

Co-op's effort towards reconstruction:

The Japanese Consumers' Co-operative Union (JCCU), in collaboration with co-ops across the nation, immediately after the occurrence of the earthquake established a task force and supplied

emergency relief items to the affected areas. Again, co-ops nationwide extended help to the afflicted co-ops in the region helping them to restart their operation.

In addition, in November 2011, JCCU instituted "a life support fund-raising program" under the slogan "let's get connected" and called on its member co-ops to support the program which focuses three aspects of living support.

More than 200 co-ops across the nation have responded to the fund-raising and as of March 1 a total amount of 3.4 billion yen had been donated, which has since been delivered to the three affected prefectures.

The three support areas under the program include:

[Kerosene support to victims in the the temporary housing](#)

In this winter, in order to lighten a little, the burden on the household of the victims living in the temporary housing in Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima Prefectures "support of kerosene project" under "let's get connected" has been initiated for co-op members who receive regular supply of kerosene through the home delivery service.

This service, which started in November last year by Co-op Tohoku Sunnet Federation supplies 18 litres of kerosene only once to each household.



Supply of kerosene

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Promotion of IYC 2012 in Nagano Prefecture

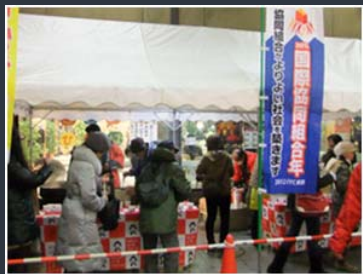
In Nagano prefecture a light festival is held every year to commemorate the Winter Olympic Games in the prefecture.

This year marks the 9th anniversary of the event, which was held on the second and third weekends in February. In this event, the message for peace is conveyed through lights with the aim of reaching out to the world.

To coincide with this famous event which normally attracts many spectators, the IYC planning committee in collaboration with Nagano Prefectural Consumer Co-operative Union and JA Nagano (Japan Agricultural Co-operative) seized the opportunity to organized a side event on the 11th and 18th with the aim of increasing public awareness about the co-operative model of business.

The event was held on the main shopping street of Nagano where most young and old people use. The event, which started at 18:00, included activities like distributing IYC PR brochure, pocket tissue and serving mushroom soup to about 1,500 people.

The event attracted many spectators and it served as a proper channel to reach many people with the good message of IYC.



The tsunami-attacked schools in need of books

The black tsunami wave, which flowed over the 5-meter-high barrier, engulfed the Akahama Elementary School in Otsuchi-cho, Iwate, on March 11 when the earthquake occurred.

The earthquake damaged the school library, which was on the second floor of the building, and the tsunami flooded the books.

At the moment the building is sealed off due to its danger of collapsing, however, the library still remains in bad condition with books scattered about on the floor.



In order for the children to continue their education the elementary school moved to a temporal prefab building in September 2011.

However, other schools are sharing the same building making it so crowded.

Keiko Sasaki, the principal of Akahama Elementary School mentioned that in the situation where children have lost their house and belongings, school library would have much to contribute to them.

Similarly, Nagasaki Elementary School in Iwaki, Fukushima lost about 3500 books since their library were also damaged by the tsunami.

Takayuki Katsukura, the school principal, expressed his anxiety that even though the school had a new facility, it would not have enough books for its students who have to stay indoors to read for the fear of radioactive contamination.



The School Library GENKI Project

In order to solve this pressing need of the school, JCCU launched the school library GENKI Project which is the third project under the "let's get connected" launched by JCCU as part of the effort towards the disaster recovery.

This project raises funds for the renovation or commissioning of new school library for the schools in the stricken area that lost their library facilities as a result of the earthquake and the subsequent tsunami.

In November 2011, at the ICA General Assembly in Cancun, the Cooperative Development Foundation (USA) donated 120 thousand dollars (9,370 thousand yen) towards the recovery goal of Japanese Consumer Co-ops.

This donation is being used as part of the funds for the "School Library GENKI Project".

JCCU is calling on its member Co-ops to contribute towards this project by donating generously so that Co-op could provide books, library facilities and places for library-related events for the children.

Reiko Kido, director of the members' activity department, said: 'Donations to the school libraries will improve the teaching conditions of the disaster-affected area. We want to continue this action on a long-term basis.'



Reconstruction of life in the affected areas poses many challenges and require long-term assistance.

However, with the power of co-operation and with the earthquake affected areas as our core, co-op is working hard to progress along the road to recovery.

Soliciting media's support in raising the profile of co-operatives.

To create a stronger voice for co-operatives through press involvement, the board members of Nagano Prefectural Co-operative Union held a meeting with media companies in the prefecture on February 17 to solicit their partnership for the effective promotion of co-operatives.

The managing director Yoshito Komatsu briefed the media about the current status of the business and activities of the co-op to further deepen their understanding.

This is the sixth time the meeting has been organized.

Five media companies, including NHK Nagano Broadcasting Station, the Mainichi Shimbun, the Nagano Broadcasting System and two more others participated in the meeting, which was also attended by 11 board members of the co-op federation.

One of the most important agenda on the meeting was to inform the press about the launch of IYC 2012 and to solicit their assistance to expand the visibility of co-op through exchanges with the public.

The board members also asked if the media has any request or any idea that will foster good relationship and to create the atmosphere for a better coordination.

It was a very significant round-table conference for both parties.



Co-op Sapporo helps to reduce isolation of elderly

Elderly isolated with few friends, neighbors on which to rely are an increasingly urgent social problem in Japan.

Attempts to prevent the solitary death and isolation of the elderly, Co-op Sapporo signed an agreement with the local government under the theme "Agreement on Regional Protection Activity of the elderly" to check in on senior citizens over the age of 65 during the product and meal deliveries, increasing their human contact and improving their lives.

Co-op hopes to strengthen ties within the community through its delivery business. The agreement empowers co-op delivery men/women to make sure nothing is amiss when they visit the homes of the elderly and to contact a special centre at the ward office if something is wrong.

That office will in turn contact hospitals and local welfare officials if needed.

A co-op delivery official commented; "we supply delivery goods to approximately 750 households in the city and our concern is to deepen the co-operation agreement and offer quick responses.

Sometimes when we visit we have catastrophic experiences such as accumulated newspapers and mails. When we deliver, we also make sure our customers are safe."

Since last year Co-op Sapporo has signed 16 similar agreements with local governments.

The number of accidents found through this process is more than 40 in a year.

At the signing ceremony the Executive Director of Co-op Sapporo, Toshifumi Yamaguchi commented; "Together with the local government we want to build a social system where citizens can live in there with peace of mind."



Mayor Hiroshi Harada (right) and the Executive Director of Co-op Sapporo Toshifumi Yamaguchi shaking hands after the signing of the agreement.

Co-op Yamaguchi organizes "Lively Women" competition

The Co-op Yamaguchi Lively Women Grand Prix Award ceremony was held on March 14 with the Yamaguchi Dietary Education club emerging as winners of the prefectural governor prize.

The prize was contested by various social groups dealing with livelihood, child-raising, welfare and community development.

Co-op Yamaguchi in collaboration with the local government and with the support of local news media organized this event to recognize the significant contributions being provided by the groups and to further encourage the advancement of their respective activities.

This year is the 6th time the event had been organized. 37 groups in the prefecture submitted application to take part in the competition and after severe screening Yamaguchi Dietary Education Club came out as the winner for their active involvement in food education for pre-school children, parent-child cooking classes and rice harvesting tour.

Ms. Nishimoto a representative of the club remarked, "We are truly grateful for this honorable award and we are motivated to reach many people the importance of eating habits.

The ceremony was attended by about 80 people including representatives of the various organizations and the judges.

Masahiro Ariyoshi, the president of Co-op Yamaguchi gave the final remarks by saying, "making a large network through grass-root activities is very important for creating affluent society for Japan". I'm looking forward to working with the various organizations and offering support for the expansion of their activities.



Group photograph of the organizations that won the prize

JCCU adds the Q&A list to its "CO-OP Brand products site" mobile version.

JCCU started to operate the Q&A site at its "Co-op Brand Products Site" mobile version from March 19, 2012.

On this site, consumers can search ingredients, places of origin, allergy related information, etc.,

Again, with the introduction of QR code scanning system, web-search becomes easier for consumers.

Now consumers are able to search wider range of products including non-food products.

In addition, every Co-op non-food product launched after April would have QR code on the label to enable the service to be used on a wide range of items.

The site provides information on the Co-op brand products as well as development stories of popular products, secrets of long-time best selling products and sharing consumers' comments of recommendation and review.

The newly added function on the site is sharing questions raised in daily life.

JCCU believes that the information provided on the new mobile version site would improve consumers' daily life.



News in Brief

Food safety and consumer watch

These days members anxiety about radioactive contamination of food have increased. As a result the reference value to regulate radioactive materials contained in the food has been significantly tightened from April.

Since the East Japan Earthquake, JCCU has been receiving inquiries reaching over hundred a month with almost all concerned about the radioactive material in foods.

Consumer co-ops have intensified their monitoring of food from the restricted areas and monitoring results (areas and levels of radioactive contaminants) are made available to members through the website and at member meetings.

Reference value of radioactive cesium in the current system for vegetables, grains, eggs, fish, and meat is 500 becquerel per kilogram, while the new standard allows 100 becquerel for the same food items listed above.

In Co-op Kobe, if the measurement exceeds the new reference value the sale of the items would be stopped.

By the end of February 861 specimen items have been examined.

Inspection will lead to raising members confidence in the products.



Germanium Semiconductor detector

Co-op support for the 2012 Japan Paralympic Cross-country skiing

On February 18, the 2012 Japan Paralympic cross-country skiing was held in Nagano.

At the request of the Japan Association of cross-country skiing for disabled people (NPO), the Nagano Prefectural Consumer Co-operative Union offered food and drinks selected from co-op products to the national team to extend recognition to teams achievement.

The items include 360-cup noodles, some sweets, tea and cocoa drink.

Co-sponsoring this event forms part of the prefectural union's social contribution and to encourage disabled people who are interested in Paralympics to recognize their dream.

In 2011, JCCU also provided similar support to the cross-country ski team which was held in Vancouver.



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