

It has been 6 months since the Great East Japan Earthquake. We are deeply grateful for the heart-warming encouragement and support received from both within and outside of Japan. We will continue to cherish these 'bonds'. All the planned temporary housing is complete and soon all the evacuation shelters will be closed.

This newsletter shares the current situation in Iwate as it moves towards recovery.

【Road to Recovery】

The first O-bon after the disaster

The affected areas observed the first O-bon after the Great East Japan disaster and some of the disaster victims set up a worship altar at their temporary houses to welcome the ancestral spirits.

Many of the people living away from their family houses in the affected areas, returned to visit the ancestral graves and pray for the victims of tsunami.

The traditional O-bon dance performances were also held, in order to bring back the cheerfulness and revive the local connections, at a temporary housing complex in Omoto district of Iwaizumi Town on the O-bon days of 15th and 16th August. One of the participants said that 'they can't just keep on crying all the time'. There were also many traditional fishermen's banners at the venue.

(◆For Details: ... <http://bit.ly/qTPKbL>)

Children were seen enjoying the fireworks



Traditional fishermen's banners were put up, with a wish for fast recovery of the affected areas

【Thank You! We're moving on !】

"First Sanma" of the season

On 22nd August, the fish markets in the cities of Ofunato and Miyako had some cause for celebration as these cities saw the first catch of *sanma* (saury), an Autumn delicacy! This gave an impetus to the fish markets striving for recovery.



Excitement fills the fish market with the first seasonal catch of *sanma*

This year's *sanma* was somewhat bigger and had more fat and better shape; it was traded at a price of 538~650 yen/1kg, which was higher than the last year.

【A message from Azusa Iwashimizu of Nadeshiko Japan National Women's Soccer Team】

Azusa Iwashimizu who was a member of the world cup squad when Japan won the FIFA Women's World Cup 2011, comes from Takizawa Village and she was awarded "Iwate Prefecture Citizen Honour Award" on 8th August. Following is a message of support from Azusa:

To the people of Tohoku Region,

I've never forgotten (you all)...
I always keep thinking about what I can help.
All I was thinking about was 'to gift you with a good result'.

I'm looking forward to visiting you all with the tournament medal, so please wait for me.

Thank you for all your support.

Lets walk together ! Cheers for Tohoku Spirit! !

Azusa Iwashimizu
Nadeshiko Japan



The message and uniform of Iwashimizu on display at the 'citizen's room' in the Iwate Prefectural office

【Information about Casualties and Damage in Iwate (As of 26th August)】

○Human Casualties

Deaths : 4,649 Missing Persons : 1,927

○BuildingDamage

(Residences only; complete/partially damaged) : 24,680

【Special Feature】 Thank you for your support to the “Iwate Fund to Support Children’s Education”!

We are grateful to the warm support that we have received from domestic as well as overseas individual and corporate donors; we also received many offers such as “we would like to donate in the form of ‘hometown tax’ for the children orphaned by the disaster.

There are many children in Iwate Prefecture who lost their parents in the recent disaster. It is necessary to provide long term support to these children until they can graduate from a school of their choice and become independent members of the society.

“Iwate Fund to Support Children’s Education” hopes to appeal to a wide audience for contributions and support the children orphaned by the disaster. The contributions will be used as supplementary grants or scholarships for the children for the period between their entry into a school to university graduation.

We would like to request for your continued support and Cooperation.

◆ For Details: ... <http://www.pref.iwate.jp/view.rbz?cd=33420>

★Iwate Fund to Support Children’s Education Donations

Approx. ¥1.4195 billion (1,867 donations)
(Note) Donations/Contributions

★Relief Money (As of 5th August)
Approx. ¥15.2462 billion
(66,195 donations)

~This money will be distributed to the disaster victims through local administration

★Donations (As of 5th August)
Approx. ¥ 5.2994 billion (3,658 donations)
~This money will be used to finance reconstruction & recovery projects carried out by the prefecture.

◀How to donate▶

<http://www.pref.iwate.jp/view.rbz?cd=32136>

【The Cultural Heritage of Hiraizumi vol.1】

■Hiraizumi and the Pure Land

The Pure Land thought played a critical role in the planning and construction of Hiraizumi’s temples and gardens.

The Pure Land is, in Buddhist terms, the afterlife, where the deceased are reborn in the realm of the buddhas. Devotees of the Pure Land faith were mindful of Amida Buddha (*Amitabha*), the merciful Buddha of Infinite Light, and repeated his name in hopes of salvation and rebirth in his Pure Land; so, too, did Hiraizumi’s lords create their temples in hopes of salvation.

The idea that meditation on Amida and constant repetition of his name could bring about rebirth in the Pure Land, (*kanso nembutsu* in Japanese) reached Japan by way of China. In China, illustrated guides-maps and madalas-were produced to convey this teaching to the people. In Japan, this same idea developed into full-scale representation of the Pure Land not on paper but in sacred Amida halls and Pure Land gardens. By simulating the next life in this one, people were better able to focus their thoughts on the salvific power of the Buddha and the Paradise that awaited at his side.

By representing the Buddhist Pure Land here on earth, Hiraizumi attempted to recreate that same true peace in this life.



Chuson-ji Konjikido