

## Support coming from all over the country!

All kinds of people from all over the country come to support various locations in Fukushima. Here are some messages from two of them.



Nigata Disaster Volunteer Network, NPO  
**Sayaka Sugawara**

I was born and raised in Miyagi, so to me Fukushima is a place that I often come to visit for sightseeing and other things. So far, I have lived in Miyagi, Yamagata and Niigata, so always in areas that surround Fukushima. Therefore, I feel very connected and close to Fukushima. I hope to walk through life connected to other people who are also involved with Fukushima.



Social Welfare Council of Kashiwazaki City  
**Yukio Ogake**

As Fukushima is the neighboring prefecture, I have come here in all four seasons. The people here are very nice, the nature is filled with lush green. I was envious of this atmosphere. When the earthquake happened to this beautiful area, I wished I could take a magic wand to make things back the way they were! From now on, I hope to convey our experience of how to efficiently reconstruct a disaster-stricken area, with the smallest loss of time and effort possible.

## The Secret of the Central Community Chest of Japan (Akai Hane - red feather) What it has to do with the Disaster Volunteer Center

"Please make a donation for Akai Hane!" Every October, you can hear calls like this in many places. Many of us have made contributions in the past. Actually, the 10 yen or 100 yen that you donated before is now supporting disaster volunteer centers around Japan.

There is something called "Reserved funds for natural disasters". Three percent of the donations that are being made to the Central Community Chest of Japan are set aside for the event of a crisis. The money from nation-wide donations, accumulated over a maximum of three years, is now being used for the regions affected by the Tohoku disaster.

"Our office was washed away by the tsunami." For places like this, a prefabricated building was rented using money from the fund. "We have no stationary and cannot make copies." Also in places like this the fund can help out. At first, money from the Prefecture Community Chest is sent to the Disaster Volunteer Center, and used where it is needed the most. It is a special feature of this fund that the money can be used in such a flexible way.

Contributions arrive from throughout Japan in many different forms. There are direct charity donations to the people affected by the disaster. There is emergency aid to NPOs and volunteer organizations helping the victims. And donations to the Community Chest of Japan, which are meant to improve the area you live in, are reaching the cities affected by the disaster. This is a way that we can help both your city and our own one, and contribute to a fund that helps everybody.

This October, the Community Chest of Japan will again be collecting donations. Please make a contribution that can connect your city with the affected areas.



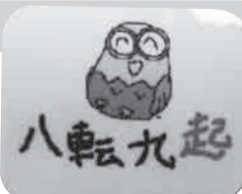
The Community Chest of Japan (Akai Hane)



## Thoughtful encouragement goods from different regions

### ● "Always rising after a fall" sticker

An employee of the Social Welfare Council of Aizuwakamatsu City made this sticker. This character is a mix of the "Okiagai koboshi" (a traditional Japanese doll from Aizu designed so that its weight causes it to return to an upright position if it is knocked over) and an owl (Jap. fukurou), a symbol of luck and also a pun on three different "fukus": Fukushima, good luck (koufuku) and reconstruction (fukkou)! The Japanese expression for perseverance and resilience, for always rising after a fall, is usually "if you fall seven times, get up eight times". Since this time there was an earthquake, a tsunami and a nuclear disaster, we changed the expression to "if you fall eight times, get up nine times".



### ● Shinchi Sticker and Badge

This is a joint project by the Shinchi town disaster volunteer center and the "Thinking of Shinchi wherever you go-Club" (consisting of members from Shinchi in their 20s and 30s). They hand out a set to every volunteer who is active in Shinchi, as a sign of gratitude, saying "Thank you for doing something for Shinchi" and "Please do not forget Shinchi".



## For people in shelters

### Taking good care of your mouth can save your life

Ryohei Adachi, Professor of Oral Health at the Kobe Tokiwa University

Do you know that keeping a clean mouth also prevents pneumonia?



### Pneumonia is one of the main causes of death for elderly people!

Actually, pneumonia is a very serious disease for elderly people. In statistics ranking the causes of death in Japan, pneumonia is fourth after cancer, heart attack and stroke. The number of deaths caused by pneumonia is on the rise. Especially among the so-called latter-stage elderly (over 75), pneumonia is the number one cause of death. It is the ailment endangering the lives of old people the most.

Eighty percent of pneumonia in elderly people is aspiration pneumonia. Aspiration means that something is breathed in by mistake, that food or saliva, which should go down the esophagus, goes in the windpipe instead. In many cases of aspiration pneumonia, saliva goes in the windpipe during the night, germs in the saliva settle into the lung, multiply and cause the breakout of pneumonia. Therefore, it often occurs in many elderly people who often have weakened swallowing reflex and less physical strength.

To prevent aspiration pneumonia, it is important to ① clean the inside of the mouth and the surface of false teeth with a toothbrush and mouthwash (gargle medicine) and ② keep up your physical strength by keeping to a diet that is rich in nutrients.

### There are more cases of pneumonia after a disaster.

The people affected by the natural disaster at first experienced an extreme lack of water. I believe that when you do barely have enough drinking water to survive, you cannot think about brushing your teeth. We have experienced that exact same thing at the Hanshin Awaji Earthquake here in Kansai 16 years ago. Nobody knew that germs in the mouth cause pneumonia, so even us dentists thought that nobody would die from not brushing your teeth. As a result, many elderly people in evacuation centers died from pneumonia. Deaths that are not a direct result of the earthquake or the tsunami but caused by a medical problem that occurred after the quake are called "disaster-related deaths". In case of the Hanshin Awaji Earthquake, the number of these deaths was about 1000. Most of these people had been elderly. Pneumonia was the main cause with 24%. In 1995, the number of deaths by pneumonia in Kobe City was much more than in the 10 years before and after the quake. I am convinced that most of these cases were aspiration pneumonia, where lack of water led to mouths that were not cleaned, so that germs could multiply.

### Prevent pneumonia by cleaning your mouth!

So how can we prevent aspiration pneumonia after a disaster? I mentioned two methods before. Obviously, it is difficult after a large-scale disaster to improve your diet, when there is shortage of goods arriving in the affected areas. But as far as cleaning your mouth and false teeth goes, it is possible with a small amount of water. It is being said that if mouths were kept clean at nursing homes, the number of cases of pneumonia could be reduced by 40%. I think the same is true for evacuation centers. Disaster-related deaths are also caused by stress, lack of exercise, worse conditions for high blood pressure and diabetes. Let us make sure that we take good care of our mouths, sleep enough, exercise regularly and do not forget to take our medicine.

### Taking care of your

- 1) Use a toothbrush as often as possible. It is not enough just to gargle.
- 2) Brush your tongue and the insides of your cheeks using a soft toothbrush. It is not only the teeth that get dirty.
- 3) Brush false teeth with a toothbrush as well. False teeth that are left in the mouth are a hot bed for germs.
- 4) Ideally, you should clean your mouth after each meal, but the most important time is before you go to sleep.
- 5) After a disaster, cleaning your mouth is not something you do to prevent cavities or periodontal diseases. Keep in mind that this is something you do to save the lives of the elderly.

Last but not least, let me say that I pray from Kobe for a fast recovery of the region and for the health of the people affected by the disaster.

### Editor's note:

A volunteer who was going to help out in City A heard that "There are not enough volunteers in City B". The volunteer then took a bicycle and rode 15km to City B. It is not a matter of the distance, but this spirit moved me. (Adachi)



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