

AMDA Invites High School Students from Tohoku

Program Objectives

In July 2012, students from Otsuchi, Iwate prefecture visited Okayama where AMDA Headquarter is located, to interact with students in Okayama. Through the same generation exchange program, it will bring the power of recovery for the affected students. For the students in Okayama where natural disasters are rare, it gives them an opportunity to realize the need of preparedness for the possible future disasters.

Program Details

July 25th

Travel from Otsuchi, Iwate Prefecture to Okayama.

July 26th

Interactive program with local people at a Buddhist temple.



High School students from Otsuchi talk about their experiences during the Tohoku disaster.

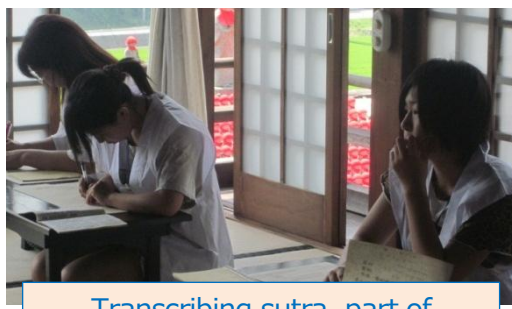


July 27th

Interactive Program with local people at a Buddhist temple.



Interactive Program with local people.



Transcribing sutra, part of one-day apprenticeship program.

July 28th

Sightseeing in Kurashiki City, Okayama Prefecture

July 29th

Exchange program with AMDA High School Club in Okayama

Homestay at AMDA High School Club member's homes



Exchanging ideas with AMDA High School Club members



Lunch time in Okayama with AMDA High School Club Members

July 30th

Travel back from Okayama to Otsuchi

Voices of the High School Students from Otsuchi

Third-Year Student at Otsuchi High School (Female)

As a part of AMDA High School Exchange Program, was invited to Okayama this summer. I experienced so much in 6 days where I had never visited before. What struck me the most was the intense summer heat. It was the kind of heat I had never gone through in my life, so I was a little worried.

At the temple, I talked about my experience during the disaster. During the speech, tears welled up in my eyes remembering what I had gone through, but I think I did my best. We spent two nights at the temple with small children. There was one-day apprenticeship program at the temple. Transcribing sutras and Zen meditation are valuable memories for me. Again, it was so hot all the time, but looking back to the days, I will say proudly that I had a great time.

On the fifth day, I attended an exchange program with AMDA High School Club members in Okayama. We talked about our activities in Otsuchi, and about our volunteer experiences at the evacuation shelters during the disaster time. I felt a lump in my throat remembering what happened the previous year. Remembering the disaster in Tohoku makes me sad, but I hope my story will help other people how to face the crisis.



That day, I spent a night at one of the High School Club member's home. The family welcomed me, and I was very thankful for their kindness and hospitality. Early next day, I left for Iwate. Many people came to see me off at the station. It was hard to say goodbye.

Those 6 days are now a good memory for me. I would like to express my sincere "arigato" to all the people involved in this program.

Third-Year Student at Kamaishi Commercial High School (Male)

On March 11th, I was at a shopping mall with my friends. At 2:46 pm, an earthquake alert rang, someone nearby said it was not safe inside the mall so we rushed outside. I tried to call home, but the line was busy. My friend and I decided to find a higher ground. We decided to go to a nearby gymnasium up on a hill. On our way, there were two fire trucks with loud siren. The firefighters announced that a tsunami warning had been issued that we need to move quickly. The cars on the road were jammed and didn't move an inch. It was a cold day, but I only had a long sleeve T-shirt and a sweatshirt on. Other people around me my age wore just like myself. No jacket, no sweater.

We arrived at a parking lot on a hill to find the space packed with cars. At 3:15 pm, the huge tsunami had arrived. "What's happening? What should I do now?" I was speechless. I couldn't believe what I was seeing in front of me.

Suddenly, I ran into a friend of mine. We exchanged a few words and soon after, we decided to start rescuing people. We carried the people on our backs to the gymnasium. It was hard work, but I just needed to help them, and I wanted to do so. I went back and forth repeatedly to help the people who were hurt.

The gymnasium was cold. The blankets were not enough for all the evacuees. Some people had cut drapes on the windows to use them as blankets, but they were not enough. I managed to survive the shivering night, looking at the fire down the hill through the windows.

This is what I had gone through during the disaster on March 11th. I was very touched that people in Okayama welcomed me. Spending time with AMDA High School Club members was a highlight of my stay. Thank you to all the AMDA staff members for all you did for us.

Voices of AMDA High School Club Members in Okayama

AMDA High School Club Member (Female)

For me, this was the second exchange program to attend. In the first program, although we had so much fun with the students from Otsuchi, I lost contact afterwards which I regret very much. We introduced what we do in Okayama as AMDA High School Club, the presentation went pretty well, and I am happy about that. We discussed how we should collaborate between Okayama and Otsuchi, but the reality was that Otsuchi is not in the same peaceful situation as in Okayama. Learning about the slow progress of recovery effort in Tohoku made me sad, and I should have known better about Otsuchi's real situation before talking with them. My new friends said it was OK to ask blunt questions about Tohoku because they wanted to spread their experiences from the devastating disaster. All in all, our exchange program was filled with good experiences and laughter. The fun time at the bowling alley and spending time with them are great memories I will cherish forever.

AMDA High School Club Member (Female)

After the exchange program, what impressed me most was the students from Otsuchi trying to tell us about their terrible experience while trying to hold their tears. I felt I knew enough about the disaster through TV, but I was wrong. The recovery effort was very slow, the debris still remaining. For this, I am happy I was there at the exchange program with the students from Otsuchi. Sharing their life stories with others who didn't go through the disaster is important, and that is something I want to keep doing. In the beginning, we were all nervous and didn't know what to talk about. Through sharing meals and playing bowls, the ice gradually broke between us, and had a fun time together in the end. There is a great distance between Iwate and Okayama, but we promised to stay in touch!

AMDA High School Club Member (Male)

Through the discussion with AMDA Otsuchi High School Club members, I came to think seriously how we can ban nuclear power plants in Japan. 30% of all electricity in Japan is generated from the nuclear power plants, but we learned there will always be a risk, just like what we saw in Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant accident. We need to shift Japan's energy policy to alternative clean energies, but I know this will take time. The devastation like what people in Fukushima went through should not be repeated. If

thousands of people want safe energy environment as their ideal way of living, shouldn't their voice be able to change our current situation to a much better something? Thus, we, the young generation, should keep voicing our thoughts.

The high school students from Otsuchi and their life changing stories made me weepy, but looking at them trying their hardest to make their lives better, was a very good experience for me. Thank you very much.

Scholarship Recipient Details as of October, 2012

Below is the current detail of the 30 recipients for the scholarship program 2012. AMDA will continue supporting high school students in Tohoku by awarding the scholarship.

Future Occupation (new scholarship students)		
Occupation	Kesen'numa High School	Shizugawa High School
medical doctor	1	
pharmacist	2	2
nurse	8	5
midwife	1	
health worker	1	
clinical laboratory technician	1	
radiation technologist	1	
physical therapist		2
care worker		2
other		4

Future Occupation (Entire scholarship students) as of July 19th, 2012					
medical doctor	9	health worker	1	care worker	3
pharmacist	6	clinical laboratory technician	2	nursing teacher	1
nurse	30	radiation technologist	2	other	23
mid wife	1	physical therapist	14		