

Self-Advocacy and East Japan Great Earthquake

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(Parents' Association for the persons with Intellectual Disabilities and their families)

I would like to talk about self-advocacy and East Japan Great Earthquake.

First I would like to introduce myself. Secondly I will talk about the self-advocacy group.

Thirdly I will show you the DVD. Fourthly I will talk about our recent activities.

Lastly I will share my conclusion.

1. Self Introduction

My name is Mayumi Narazaki. I live in Yokohama-city, Kanagawa-prefecture. I am a representative of self-advocacy group called "Sunflower". I work as a care giver at a nursing home. I am one of the members of editorial committee of "Stage" which is the quarterly newsletter for the self-advocates by the self-advocates published by Inclusion Japan.

2. self-advocacy group called "Sunflower"

There are five self-advocates in this group. There are six supporters in this group. We meet once a month. We have a board meeting once or twice a month. I will show you the DVD.

3. DVD

I will show you the DVD. This DVD is about our meeting and activities.

4. Recent Activities

1) The problem was raised.

Inclusion Japan has its national conference for self-advocates and parents once a year. It is not easy for some of the self-advocates to attend this national conference. It is not easy for most of us to travel to the place where the conference is held. We have to pay registration fee, accommodation and transportation fee. It costs us a lot!

2) We decided to have our local meeting.

We sent letters to the local self-advocacy groups and asked what they would like to do. They answered as follows: I want to do something fun. I want to make friends.

We decided to have our very first local meeting in Yokohama last year. Five local groups gathered and shared experience.

3) What about this year?

4) East Japan Great Earthquake happened.

I will show you some pictures of the devastating situation in eastern Japan area.

These pictures are taken in Kesen-numa city.

The picture to your left is Minami-sannriku town, Miyagi-prefecture. Right picture is Ojika peninsula.

You can see carp streamer celebrating Children's day above the debris all over the ground.

5) Many self-advocates evacuated.

I found out that many self-advocates from Iwaki-city, Fukushima prefecture evacuated from their home town to Kanagawa prefecture. Their temporary place is like a residential institution. I guess it is stressful for them to stay such a place. I believe it will be of some help for them if they know they have some other self-advocates near them. I live in Yokohama-city, Kanagawa prefecture so we decided to invite those evacuees to our local meeting this year.

6) Our program 2011

Our program this year was:

We had lunch and self-introduction from noon.

We had three concurrent sessions. First one was study group and the theme of this study group was "Our life". Twelve self-advocates attended this study group. Second one was cooking group. They cooked octopus fritters and parfait. Thirteen self-advocates enjoyed cooking. The third one was sight-seeing group. They went to Minato-mirai 21 which is the famous coastal area of Yokohama. Fourteen self-advocates had a fun time there.

After the concurrent sessions we gathered again and had a game time. This is and was the most exciting period!

Then we did briefing session. At the briefing session we did have a say not only for ourselves but also for people from Fukushima. These are some of the examples.

Hi, friends from Fukushima, are you all right after the earthquake and tsunami?

I could have a fun time today. I watched the situation on TV and understand you are facing great troubles. Do your best!

I enjoyed cooking with you all.

I have been to Fukushima twice and I know it is a wonderful place. I hope you will be able to come back to your home town.

Lastly we had a closing address.

7) I visited Fukushima.

I visited Fukushima prefecture from April 30 to May 1, because I have many friends and supporters in Fukushima. I am so worried about them since I watched the damage of the earthquake and tsunami. Professor Nagase asked me to come and visit Fukushima with him. I was wondering how friends were doing and what happened to the shops and other buildings. I wanted to know the situation of Iwaki-city, because I couldn't get enough information from TV. I decided to go to Iwaki-city with Nagase. When I arrived at Iwaki by bus, I was surprised to see the station and the shops there had not changed a lot. I could meet the supporters whom I wanted to meet most. I was very happy to find her alive. I visited a town where Nagase's Friends live and he showed us around the area stricken by the earthquake and tsunami. He also showed us around the school which is used as an evacuation center. I saw many elderly people and children there.

I asked them where young people are and found out that they are working during the day time. I talked with elderly people and the followings are what they said. They were happy when they could take a bath. They were happy when they could have delicious meal. They wish they could have individual counseling. They want to have someone they can talk to.

I also enjoyed playing with the four dogs there. I like dogs. I guess those dogs had frightful experience like we did, too. When I actually stood at the sight, the damage of the earthquake and tsunami looked far more devastating and horrifying compared with the TV report. I wish the town will be recovered and reconstructed as it used to be.

5. Conclusion

I think it is important to know that we have friends. I want to be neighbors of those suffering from this disaster. Self-advocates from Fukushima prefecture looked a little bit nervous at first, but gradually they looked happier and could have wonderful memory in Yokohama. I am happy if they keep this experience in their mind.