

Friend Minori Takahashi

Introduction

- My name is Minori Takahashi and I graduated from the Tokyo Metropolitan Fuchu-Asahi Special School.
- I worked in a supermarket for 13 years after graduation. I put vegetables and fruits in plastic bags, put prices on them and laid the items on the shelves.
- Currently, I am working in a factory that manufactures mayonnaise. I lay out bottles on the production line and put the finished products into boxes. I also wipe the plastic drums.

(1) What I Want to Tell You

- Do you have any worries right now? Are you feeling lonely? I did not have friends before but now I have friends.
- Having friends has made me stronger and I do not worry so much at work. I want to tell you about my experience.

(2) About Yuai-kai (refer to the *Footnotes Introduction of Yuai-kai)

- I belong to an organization for self-advocacy called “Yuai-kai”. Anyone over the age of 18 with intellectual disability can become a member.
- The objective of this organization is to talk about our daily lives with other members, and to promote friendship and skills necessary for everyday living by participating in recreational activities.
- I work as a member of the steering committee for this organization. I plan the annual calendar of events. The events include an annual General Meeting, get-togethers for cultural exchange, New Year’s party and an outing on a bus. Club activities are also offered and I belong to the recreation club. Cooking classes are also offered as a special activity.
- The members participate in conventions of the “Inclusion Tokyo” as well as in the national convention for “Self-advocacy.” We also participate in the “Asian Conference on Mental Retardation”. Our lives are pretty busy.
- In the recreation club, we go hiking and also to places such as museums. These activities are decided upon the requests from the members .We discuss and talk a lot in order to cooperate with each other

(3) It’s Fun To Have Friends

- There was a time when I could not communicate well with the others at work. I also cried. I went to “Yuai-kai” and told the others of my problems

and asked for their opinions. Everyone there always listens to me earnestly and helps me. I treasure my friends in this organization.

- My dream is to start a new circle in Yuai-kai. I want to have more interactions with others.
- I am thinking of being a leader for the gourmet circle.
- I want to start this circle not because I like to eat, but to make it a place for social exchange for those who do not have access to the internet.
- We can talk about a lot of things such as “let’s go pick fruits” or “let’s experience farming”. I want many people to participate.
- Many restaurants are introduced on television but if the area was restricted the area to Shinjuku Ward, we can probably go on our own.
- I will do a preliminary research on my own and then give information to others.
- Every third Sunday, I go to the Yuai-kai gathering with my friends and enjoy chatting.
- I also participate in “Tamariba Palette”, a leisure activity club for both the disabled and the non-disabled. I have been to different places as well as on overnight trips. I have been to the museum, fruit-picking, “Mother Farm” and also to an uninhabited island.
- I try to participate in many activities but also think of my financial allowance.

(4) Let’s Make Friends

- My mother is very understanding and I always ask her opinion but now that I have made friends, I feel that my way of thinking and behavior has changed.
- I feel that my encounter with different people has changed something within me.
- I advise those without friends to find some hobby.

(My friend’s photo)

We can become friends when we do something fun together.

- My participation in “Yuai-kai”, made me want to do things more on my own, it has given me confidence and allowed me to experience the wonderful feeling of having friends .I would like others to share this feeling.
- I am saying this not just from my experience, but by taking one step forward one can change. “You are not alone. You are surrounded by many friends”, is the message I would like to convey to everyone.

*Footnotes Introduction of “Yuai-kai”

1. Name: Self-Advocate Group “Yuai-kai” supported by Tokyo Metropolitan Parents Hand in Hand Association.
2. Establishment: June 19, 1994
3. Membership: People over the age of 18 with intellectual disability (about 140 members)
4. Mission Statement: To talk about our everyday life, to have social interaction through sports and recreations, and to assist our lives within the community.
5. Annual Membership Fee: ¥2700 (of which ¥1000 is the annual fee for Inclusion Japan)
6. Administration:
 - ① The activities are decided at the board meetings. There are 16 members on the board.
President 1 Vice President 2 Recording Secretary 2 Treasurer 2 Auditor 2 Committee Members 7
 - ② Important decisions are made by the executive board.
 - ③ The executive board is made up of 9 members: President, Vice President, Recording Secretary, Treasurer, and Auditor.
7. Events: Bus Outing in April, General Meeting in June, Social Gathering in October and New Year’s Party in January.
8. Club Activities: Bowling Club, Recreation Club, Karaoke Club, Gourmet Club (each club holds 5 meetings per year)
9. Extracurricular Activities:
Cooking Class (Started 4 years ago and meets 4 times a year)
Consultation session (unfortunately this is not in practice now)
10. External Activities:
 - ◎ Participation in the convention of Inclusion Tokyo
 - ◎ Attending talk sessions to make requests to the Tokyo government office.
 - ◎ Participation in the convention of Inclusion Japan (self-advocacy),
Participation in the convention of Inclusion Kanto-Koshinetsu area (self-advocacy)
 - ◎ The board decides on other necessary participations.
e.g. meetings of the Tokyo government, seminars and meetings of Inclusion

Japan, conventions of Inclusion International, university seminars