

25th Volunteer Activity Supporting Restoration and Recovery



Date	Thursday, July 4 , 2013
Activity site	Rikuzentakata-shi, and Hanamaki-shi, Iwate
Participants	17 (6 men, 4 women, 7 administration office staff)

● Activity Details



On this occasion, our volunteer activities comprised contributing to the emotional care of some of the senior citizens who live in the earthquake-affected region. We invited all members (about 100 people) of the association of senior citizens' clubs in Rikuzentakata City on a day trip to Hotel Shidotaira where they enjoyed hot spring ("onsen") baths and some meals.

Our volunteer staff accompanied the senior citizens on three buses, and entertained them while the buses toured Rikuzentakata City. The seniors could see for themselves the recovery underway in the disaster-struck zones, including the narrow alleyways and residential suburbs.



After settling into our hotel, all the seniors enjoyed the luxury of taking an onsen bath.

Next, we all greatly enjoyed having lunch in the hotel hall. As we ate the delicious food with relish, we watched a performance of traditional Japanese stand-up comedy, and clapped, sang or hummed along with some songs. This was followed by the seniors singing karaoke songs or enjoying talking to the volunteers. Finally, the music of a traditional Rikuzentakata dance song began to fill the hall, and all the seniors just naturally formed a circle and started to dance. We volunteers entered the circle together with the seniors and, by watching how they danced, we too began to dance. It was a very moving and memorable experience.

On the bus going home, the volunteers and seniors had some very animated and enjoyable conversations. When we arrived back at the initial assembly point, we gave the seniors presents as souvenirs.

Later, many of the volunteers made such comments as, "I was very moved by the way the people living in the disaster area try to live a forward-looking life," "I worked hard to make the seniors feel good but in the end maybe I was the one who was made to feel very good," and "It was great that I could have the opportunity to speak to people in the disaster area and so get to know directly what it's like there now."