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Restoration and Disaster Prevention Learning Program

Restoration and disaster prevention learning program operations team
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Applicable principle

Principle 9: A commitment to promoting sustainability through education

1. The Beginning of the Bottled Water Distribution Activity (*MizuBora*)

The bottled water distribution activity (commonly known as “*MizuBora*”) was initiated by a faculty member of the Morioka Junior College Department of Iwate Prefectural University when they, alongside colleagues and students, personally delivered drinking water bottles that were donated to Iwate Prefecture as relief supplies after the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami that occurred in March 2011. The water was given to affected people living in temporary housing. This faculty member also personally encountered the tsunami while on a business trip.

Even after lifelines were restored and the provision of relief supplies ended, they continued the activity with support such as donations from the Honjo International Scholarship Foundation and the provision of drinking water from ITO EN, Ltd. The purpose of continuing this activity is to use the distribution of drinking water to as a “conversation starter” with people who have been forced to move into temporary housing. It is a way to open up an opportunity to talk with them and let them know that people are looking out for them, as well as to be of some help in the creation of a new local community.

2. Expansion to Student Exchange

Meanwhile, there was an offer from Ohio University (Athens, Ohio, United States) for joint volunteer activities immediately after the 2011 earthquake. Every year, Ohio University students studying at Chubu University (Kasugai City, Aichi Prefecture), students and faculty from Chubu University, and students and faculty from our university cooperate in activities in Miyako City, Yamada Town, and other areas.

In 2013, by incorporating “Water Volunteering” into this joint volunteer activity, it became known as the “Expanded Water Volunteer Program” which includes a larger range of participants. Chubu University and Ohio University have already had exchanges for about 50 years, and in 2016, a student exchange Program between Iwate Prefectural University and Ohio University, was created. Also, from 2018, in addition to these three universities, International graduate students from all over the the nation who are given scholarships from the Honjo International Scholarship Foundation began to join the activity, making the activity a collaboration of four organizations.

3. Evolution into a Restoration and Disaster Prevention Learning Program

In 2022, the direction of this activity evolved into a disaster prevention learning program. The program entitled the “Restoration and disaster prevention learning program”, focuses on service learning. After a two-year hiatus due to the spread of COVID-19, the activity was resumed for the first time in three years.

A total of 70 students and faculty members from the four participating organizations joined in the program, which was held at the Takata Matsubara Tsunami Reconstruction Memorial Park, which was completed approximately 10 years after the disaster, and the Iwate Prefectural Outdoor Activity Center.



Commemorative photo taken in front of Prefectural Tochigasawa Apartments

(1) Breakdown of participants

Organization	Students	Faculty and staff	Total
Ohio University	4	2	6
Chubu University	4	3	7
Honjo International Scholarship Foundation, ITO EN, Ltd.	24	8	32
Iwate Prefectural University	16	9	25
Total	48	22	70

(2) Program overview

(a) Preliminary learning/Gathering 1 (ice-breaking)
 [Iwate Prefectural Outdoor Activity Center]

Following greetings from the representatives of the four participating organizations, the origins of the drinking water distribution activity in the wake of the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami, and the history of exchanges were outlined. After that, as an icebreaking event, “Getting-to-know-you BINGO” was conducted to encourage interaction among participants.



Icebreaking scene

(b) Visiting the remains of the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami
 [Takata Matsubara Tsunami Reconstruction Memorial Park]

A group photo was taken with all participants at the Takata Matsubara Tsunami Reconstruction Memorial Park. Afterwards, they were divided into three groups and toured the Great East Japan Earthquake Tsunami Memorial Hall, the seawalls (Sea viewing spot), the Miracle Pine Tree, and Kesen Junior High School, whose interior was newly opened to the public from 2021. Local guides provided explanations.



Visiting the Miracle Pine Tree

(c) Exchange program with residents (Water Volunteer)
 [Iwate Prefectural Tochigasawa Apartments]

The participants were divided into 6 groups and visited a total of 216 households, distributing bottles of drinking water provided by ITO EN, Ltd., and engaged in conversations with the residents.



Water Volunteer activity

(d) Gathering 2 (campfire)

[Iwate Prefectural Outdoor Activity Center]

On the second night, a gathering around the campfire was held. After the lighting ceremony by the “God of Fire,” songs and dances from many places of the world, including the foreign students’ home countries, were performed, starting with “Macarena” (Spain), and all the participants had a great time. “Morioka Sansa Odori” was introduced from Iwate, where the event was held.



Gathering around the campfire

(e) Experience building a shelter

[Iwate Prefectural Outdoor Activity Center]

On the third day, participants experienced setting up an evacuation shelter under the instruction of Outdoor Activity Center staff. They had hands-on experience in assembling a temporary cardboard bed and a toilet. After that, representatives from each group presented the results of their review as a finale of the year’s program.



Experience of setting up a shelter