

9

The Second Hand Ticks Again in the Hearts of Affected People: Introducing activities of the Student Red Cross Volunteer Corps of Iwate Prefectural University Miyako

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Applicable principle

Principle 9: A commitment to promoting sustainability through education

1. Activity Overview

The Student Red Cross Volunteer Corps of Iwate Prefectural University Miyako (the Corps) is part of the Youth Red Cross of the Japanese Red Cross Society. The Corps is making efforts to help students understand their communities by volunteering at every opportunity, which forms the foundation of the Red Cross Movement.

The Corps has the following four basic policies and goals: (1) contributing to each community, (2) assisting activities of the Japanese Red Cross Society, (3) improving members' autonomy, and (4) deepening interaction with community residents. The Corps is characterized by its cooperation with community residents under their guidance.

2. Start of Activities and Community Activities

The Corps started with several students, who proposed establishing it, and a teacher, who has become an adviser of the Corps, in the autumn of 2008, and was officially approved by the university in 2009. In 2021, the Corps welcomed the 13th generation members and now has about 40 to 70 students. The Corps has received guidance from the Miyako Council of Social Welfare since the start of its activities. Such cooperation with the local community allowed the Corps to facilitate relief activities in the aftermath of the Great East Japan Earthquake and the tsunami in 2011 and helped the Corps recognize the importance of collaborating with outside groups.

In addition, the Corps had built relationships with community residents in the area surrounding the university through activities including social gatherings over hot pot dishes. This relationship greatly contributed to activities after the Great East Japan Earthquake and the tsunami.

Other ongoing activities include blood donation activities of the Japanese Red Cross Society, collaboration with events sponsored by the Rikuchu-Miyako Junior Chamber Inc. and with the Non-Profit Miyakko Base Project, support for events at elderly care facilities, participation in various organization projects in Miyako City, and support for recovery from typhoon damage and other disasters.



Blood donation activities of the Japanese Red Cross Society

3. Support Activities Related to the Great East Japan Earthquake and the Tsunami

When the disaster hit the area on March 11, 2011, the 3rd generation members of the Corps played a central role in activities. The human damage in Miyako City was enormous, with a death toll of 526 and 114 missing, equivalent to 0.9% of the city's population (based on the FY2011 report by the Local Authorities Systems Development Center). The Corps stood up to help those affected by the disaster as a group of the only higher education institution in the coastal area of Iwate Prefecture and began support activities, especially by students who lived in Miyako City at that time. They were mainly involved in sorting relief supplies until students who had visited their parents' homes returned to Miyako City. When all the students came back to Miyako City, the Corps joined cleanup activities which just started throughout the tsunami-devastated city to remove mud and debris from damaged houses and roadside ditches.

When large-scale temporary housing complex was built in the neighboring area to the campus, the Corps implemented various types of assistance, including social gatherings over hot pot dishes mentioned previously as well as other community activities including the tasking of homemade baked bread baked by a bread specialist from Tokyo.

After the earthquake, the Corps gradually resumed its activities that it had conducted before the disaster. It also promoted exchanges and cooperation with students from other universities who came to Miyako City from around Japan to support children affected by the disaster. The Corps helped people who had had the clock in their hearts stopped at the time of the disaster to return to their normal life and their own through activities such as holding community events. These activities were introduced in a report by the International Department of the Japanese Red Cross Society.



Recovery event of the Japanese Red Cross society in Miyako City

4. Our Future Activities

Ten years have passed since the Great East Japan Earthquake, and the reconstruction of hardware such as buildings, seawalls, and roads has been almost completed. While the clock in the hearts of the affected people is starting to tick again, their mental recovery has just begun. The Corps will continue to support them.