

Rotary Club, Fukushima Kids



I. Introduction

I am pleased to introduce this group of 20 middle school students from Fukushima Prefecture. They are on a summer language and culture tour with the Associates in Cultural Exchange headed by our fellow Rotarian, Mr. David Woodward. We are happy to welcome them to Seattle Rotary for the first time in the history of the tour program.

II. Nuclear Disaster, New Direction

March 11th last year, 50 minutes after the earthquake, a 50 foot high tsunami struck the Fukushima Dai-ichi power station, knocking out the main and backup power leading to a nuclear disaster. In the following days, it was assessed at level 7 on the

International Nuclear Event Scale second only to Chernobyl in 1986. 160,000 residents were evacuated, 100,000 in Fukushima and 60,000 in neighboring prefectures. The Japanese public reacted strongly to the accident and 48 of the 50 nuclear power stations in Japan have been shut down, reducing the nation's power supply by one third. Japan's economic and social focus will shift to renewable energy development in the coming decades. A government program encouraging investment in renewable energy went into effect this month.

III. Nuclear Fallout

I would like to make one thing clear: unlike Chernobyl, where 6,000 died in the accident and cleanup process, and scores of thousands more suffered from effects of radioactive sickness, and contrary to sensational media reports, no one was killed by radiation in Fukushima, and there are no confirmed cases of radioactive poisoning.

Thanks to the courageous efforts of TEPCO workers amid the severe conditions, Fukushima Dai-ichi power reactors were cooled down, stabilized and under control by the end of last year. The workers were dedicated and disciplined in following the rules and regulations to ensure everyone's safety.

In Fukushima Prefecture, 300 square miles, which is smaller than Kitsap County, are still restricted. The equivalent radiation dose in that area is measured at 20 millisievert each year, which you

would get from 50 flights between Tokyo and New York. In the rest of Fukushima, which is about 5,000 square miles and smaller than the Olympic Peninsula, the radiation is normal, as low as levels in Seattle. We are working very hard to decontaminate the area so that the residents may come back. We have regular, periodical health checks for the residents, and have imposed very strict rules about food and products from Fukushima. Thus far there have been no confirmed cases of radiation sickness from any Fukushima products. Japan is united to support and rebuild Fukushima.

IV. Hope for the Future

I would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere thanks to the United States, who sent expert teams to help us tackle the Fukushima nuclear disaster. Also the US Forces immediately responded with Operation Tomodachi, involving nearly 20,000 personnel, 140 aircraft and 20 naval vessels. Stateside, Americans organized fundraisers, collected donations and engaged in volunteer projects, many of which are ongoing. We will never forget the warm and powerful support from the United States.

Last September, ANA received the first Boeing 787 Dreamliner at Boeing Everett. Before starting commercial operations, ANA took it to the Fukushima airport. Over 200 kids, some whom had lost families and homes, were treated to a one hour flight. It gives us all hope to see the younger generation taking to the skies in the next generation of aircraft.

Together, we will build a brighter future! Please join me in welcoming these brave kids to Seattle.