

# **ROAD TO RECOVERY**

**Earthquake Updates by JWCU  
Japan Workers' Co-operative Union**

**December 21, 2011**

## **From the Frontline**

### **Moving Forward: Update on Bihoro in Onagawa City, Miyagi**

Since the devastating earthquake and tsunami in Tohoku, some of our members have suffered tremendously. Among them is Bihoro in Onagawa City (Miyagi Prefecture). In Onagawa, 80% of the buildings were destroyed, including Bihoro Hall and Bihoro's customers' buildings. Bihoro has also suffered from the dramatic decline in its turnover. However, thanks to the global support and members' hard work, Bihoro is rising like a phoenix. The following is a report by Mr. Kajiwara, the president of Bihoro.

"Thanks to your support, our turnover has now recovered to the level before the quake. Currently, our major businesses are waste management, revitalization of forestry, and green space management. Since the earthquake, we are getting more jobs in forest road repair. In the future, we are also expecting more jobs in windbreak construction. Moreover, we are planning to obtain a couple of acres of land, not only to build our office but also to start a number of activities, including gathering places for local residents, farmers market and public bathes heated with bio-diesel fuel. We need about 100,000,000 yen (1.3 million US \$) to do that."



### **Vocational Training and Job Creation Initiatives Are Spreading in Tohoku**

As mentioned in our October issue, JWCU members have started job training programs in Tohoku region. Started in Tome City (Miyagi Prefecture), this initiative is now expanding to other municipalities as well.

The following are updates from training sites.

### <Report from Tome City (Miyagi Prefecture)>



The program started in October, and as part of the training program, the trainees have started community assessment with temporary housing residents. They found needs for farmers market, transportation services, and places to learn some cultural activities. These inputs will be the great hints for the trainees to start their own businesses after graduation.

### <Report from Ohfunato City (Iwate Prefecture)>

The program started, in cooperation with local NPOs and media, on November 28<sup>th</sup> with 10 trainees. This program provides skills and know-how in businesses that link the primary industry (agriculture, forestry and fishery) and community welfare. These trainees became the worker coop members when they started the program, and they are expected to launch a new business unit in April 2012.



Another job assistance program started in Fukushima Prefecture, and 2 more job training programs are launching in Miyagi Prefecture in December and January.

## Nationwide Support

### Chipping in to Support Tohoku

At the board meeting in May, Older Persons' Cooperative in Yamagata Prefecture (JWCU member) decided to have each worker member chip in the 1-day worth of his/her wage to finance support activities for Tohoku. Since May, its members have been visiting Ishinomaki City and Matsushima City in Miyagi Prefecture to provide activities and meals once a month.

On November 27<sup>th</sup>, the members held a festival at temporary housing in Ishinomaki City to encourage its residents. The festival consisted of activities for all generations, including

exercise programs, oral care, picture-book reading for children and tavern.

During the festival, the cooperative members also heard the residents' stories. One of them said, "I'm not ready for the winter. In this temporary housing, only electric heating devices are allowed for safety reasons. Those are supposed to be provided by the City, but we haven't received anything. And we don't know when they will be delivered." Another resident said, "This festival is great. But we have to face the fact that our unemployment insurance will expire in March. We also need to pay tax. If we only keep receiving goods, we have no future. We need to become independent."

The cooperative members will stand by the residents and are determined to keep working with them.



## Global Support

### President of Leftover Love Sharing Community Visited JWCU

On October 20, 2011, Dr. Kyung-Rim Lee, the President of Leftover Love Sharing Community (South Korea) and Ms. Eun-Kyung Lee, the Administrative Manager of its youth support program "1318 Happy Zone" visited JWCU. As reported in the June issue, they kindly donated over 360,000 yen for the relief fund.

(Mr.) Tofu FUJITA, the Vice President of JWCU, and our members in youth support department thanked them for their generosity and reported on our reconstruction efforts. (Mr.) Yuzo NAGATO, the President of JWCU, joined them for lunch and discussed the possibilities to strengthen our partnerships. While JWCU has a lot to learn from 1318 Happy Zone about youth support, our efforts in job creation can be informative for them as well.



We look forward to learning from each other and building stronger relationships!

## **Best Wishes for a Holiday Season**

The year 2011 was filled with natural disasters, not only in Japan but also in many parts of the world. However, this year was also the time for us to rediscover the wonderful support from across the globe.

In this holiday season, let us express our deepest appreciation for all the encouragement and support you have given us.

Thank you once again, and we wish you the best for a holiday season, 2012 and beyond!

