

Fund-Raising Campaign to Donate a Grand Piano to Earthquake and Tsunami Hit Schools in Toni

<Summary>

The Toni Hope Foundation is a group of ordinary Japanese citizens who are supporting children in an elementary and junior high schools in Toni, a town which was hit by the great East Japan Earthquake of March 11, 2011 and the tsunami that followed. We collect donations from Japan and abroad to give monetary assistance to the children when they graduate from their elementary and junior high schools to help them continue their education. This program is coming to its end next year as the students who entered elementary school in 2011 are graduating from junior high school in 2020. As we conclude our 9-year project, we are taking up the challenge of collecting 2,700,000 Japanese Yen or, roughly 25,000 US Dollars, to donate a grand piano to the Toni schools. Your support will be highly appreciated.

Following are the details:

<Great Earthquake and Tsunami of 2011>

The great earthquake hit northeast Japan on March 11, 2011. Many cities and towns along the coast were severely damaged by the accompanying tsunami. Toni, a small town along the Toni Bay in the city of Kamaishi, Iwate Prefecture, was one of them. Toni had one elementary school on the coastal area and one junior high school on the hillside. The tsunami swept away all the houses around the elementary school. Only the school building and the gymnasium were left standing, but they were no longer usable and were torn down soon later. The school children had to go to a nearby school temporarily. The tsunami did not reach the houses and the temple on the hillside, but most of them were severely damaged by the strong earthquake. So was the main building of the junior high school. The gymnasium was used to conduct classes for the students. In Toni many people lost their houses. Many fishermen lost their seaweed and oyster farms in the bay. Some lost their lives.

<The Toni Hope Foundation>

Chieko Takadate, a former high school teacher living in Yahaba, an inland town of Iwate Prefecture, was deeply shocked by the great damage caused by the earthquake and tsunami. She wanted to do something for the people hit by the natural disaster and wondered how she could do so. She decided to support school children in Toni. She knew the town because she had once taught a student from Toni.

She set up the Toni Hope Foundation to support all the children in the elementary and junior high schools of Toni – a total of 103 boys and girls at that time (now around sixty). When an article about her project was carried in a national newspaper, a great many donations came to her right away. One of the readers of the article, Yasuo Hori, a former high school English teacher and Esperantist, offered to take part in her activity. The circle of support

spread widely not only in Japan, but internationally. Takadate and Hori were invited to a talk show on the radio. From time to time their activity was reported in newspapers.

The project has continued successfully, collecting regular and occasional donations, for more than 8 years. The foundation keeps all incoming donations in its bank account throughout the year and gives 70,000 Yen (650 US Dollars) to each student finishing elementary school and 120,000 Yen (1,100 US Dollars) to each student finishing junior high school for their next stage of education. The foundation also gives a small gift of traditional sweets to each student to celebrate their graduation.

<9-Year Project Coming to its End>

Takadate, however, first planned to support the children for one year only. But the damage by the earthquake and tsunami was so huge that one-year support was not just enough. We, the members of the foundation, decided to continue our support until March 2020, when the boys and girls who entered elementary school in 2011 finish junior high school. In Japan the school year begins in April and ends in March the following year. The current school year of 2019 will be the last one year of our activity for the school children of Toni. Thanks to the wholehearted support by many people, the foundation finished the 8th year of its activity in March this year. When we conclude our project next March, we plan to give 70,000 or 120,000 Yen to every elementary or junior high school student who is enrolled in the school at the time, in addition to the students who are graduating. We expect to collect enough money to do so by next March.

The town of Toni is on its way to recovery. In 2012 a prefabricated school building was built in the playground of the junior high school and all the elementary and junior high school classes were held in that temporary facility. In 2017 the construction was completed for new buildings of the elementary and junior high schools, though several years behind the schedule. They stand on the hillside at a higher level than the playground, with long stairs leading to the upper road for evacuation in case of a tsunami.

<Our Last Challenge: Donating a New Grand Piano>

We were surprised this March when a request came from the Toni elementary and junior high school principals for us to donate a new grand piano to their schools. They said: "The grand piano we own now was donated by a music college after the earthquake. It had been heavily used by the college students for a long time. A local tuner says the piano is coming to the end of its life. Neither the schools nor the city of Kamaishi has any budget for a new one." We are their last hope. They definitely need a grand piano in their gymnasium for such school occasions as entrance and graduation ceremonies, cultural festivals, concerts and other events.

We are ordinary citizens of limited financial resources and yet have continued to donate modest amounts of money every month or from time to time to the foundation with the sincere desire to support children in the earthquake-hit town of Toni. As we conclude our program next year, we have decided to accept the school principals' desperate request and donate a

new grand piano to their schools.

The grand piano the school principals are asking for costs 2,700,000 Yen (25,000 US Dollars). It is a huge amount of money for a small foundation like ourselves. But we would like to fulfil their request and donate a grand piano as a gift to the current and future children at Toni schools. We hope many people will help us raise the fund for this final great gift.

Chieko Takadate

The Toni Hope Foundation

Address: 7-7 Nishitokuta, Yahaba, Shiwa, Iwate

028-3603 Japan

Tel&Fax : +81 019 697 3851

Mail address : tchieko@cocoa.ocn.ne.jp

Remittance can be made to the Japan Post Bank integrated account of the Toni Hope Foundation with the following information:

- Account Number: 18390-1308778

- Account Holder's Name: Takadate Chieko

For details, please visit the Japan Post Bank website at:

https://www.jp-bank.japanpost.jp/en/djp/en_djp_index.html