

History, Video, and Storytellers

Video to Present Fujita's Attractive Features (Local Video Creation)

As well as other areas in the Kojima bayside, Fujita is the result of reclamation work for agricultural use. Called the farm belt of southern Okayama, Fujita has long been supporting Okayama as a main food supplier.

Focusing on various aspects of reclaimed land and agriculture, particularly water, the video club of the Fujita Kominkan has created a video to tell local children about how the area was generated and what type of culture was developed by their local ancestors.

The video has been donated to elementary schools and is filmed at school festivals and many other events.

In addition, volunteers of the storytelling club visit elementary schools and other educational institutions to share with young people today the wisdom of local ancestors and the tradition, using picture cards.



Fujita Kominkan p42 map 32



Making Videos of Local Assets

Local Video Creation



Tomiyama is rich in historical sites, figures, tales, and many other assets that might not be very well-known but are certainly valuable. Unfortunately, there have been few opportunities so far for young people, especially elementary school children, to know about these treasures.

With this as a background, the video club of the Tomiyama Kominkan has begun to gather information on such assets, record them on video, and edit and complete the videos as a record for even children to learn about the assets.

While gathering information, members of the video club made new discoveries, met many people, and formed new ties among themselves as residents, leading to the creation of many more "assets."

So far, 14 videos have been completed. The video club members are now aiming to show the videos on many more occasions, such as local events at elementary and junior high schools, as well as to participate in film competitions.

Tomiyama Kominkan p42 map 26





Hometown Newsletter

Kohoku ESD Newsletter

Our area consists of an urban district and a mountainous district. While the latter is confronted with the progress of depopulation, the former is characterized by the active inflow and outflow of people. This makes it difficult for residents to develop awareness as members of a single community. In this regard, at the Kita Kominkan, we hold a round-table meeting at each neighborhood association to ensure that participants exchange opinions on the current situation of their area, traditional culture, events, history, and a wide variety of activities. A summary of such meetings is published as a monthly ESD Newsletter. It seems that this publication serves as a good tool for people to identify problems in their own area and learn from other areas. Also, it helps people to recognize differences in mindset between generations.

Kita Kominkan p42 map 5



Drama Created by Children and Adults to Unite Ties with Many People



Drama is an artwork that integrates acting, singing, dancing, music, lighting, costume design, stage design, and many other aspects. The entire process, along with watching the dramas, involves many people ranging from children to adults, making drama an invaluable tool for forming ties among people. In addition, a drama can be created even in a small group. At the same time, since there are no specific rules regarding drama creation, a drama can be created as a collaborative work by multiple groups. I believe it would be good for many Kominkan centers in Japan to unite as a single drama company. I also hope that such a drama company will be able to share a great moment of performing a drama in an amicable atmosphere somewhere else in the world.

Endorsing the concept of ESD, the drama company established at the Kyoyama Kominkan strives to express the beauty and pleasure of nature in its works, and convey joy and a deep impression to the audience in a dynamic manner. Based on the mottoes "If you try, you can do it" and "Hope for many more people to get connected," the drama company is continuing to grow with the support of many people.

Members of the drama company established at the Kyoyama Kominkan



Live in an Urban Area

Although at the beginning of the Showa Era approximately 90% of Japanese people lived in rural areas, they now overwhelmingly live in urban areas. In urban areas, while enjoying a convenient life, people consume large amounts of resources and energy, and generate a lot of waste. Is it possible for this lifestyle to continue forever? Another problem is the rapidly aging population. In urban areas, people might be able to live without knowing their neighbors well at all. However, everyone gets older and weaker over time. In addition, natural disasters may strike at any time. To generate a new form of Japanese society, people have been placing too much emphasis on freedom and convenience. It seems that now is the time to review the ideal state of such a society.

Our ESD Practices



Project to Restore Greenery and Soil!

Making Compost to Recycle Soil and Promote Afforestation

It is becoming harder and harder to take care of trees in the garden of a detached house in a central urban area. Since households cannot dispose of unnecessary trees and branches that they cut down in their gardens, as well as fallen leaves, more and more households are taking them out as garbage to be collected by the city.

This situation also applies to the Asahi Kominkan. A wide variety of trees are planted in the Kominkan's garden. We used to commission an outside organization to take care of such plants.

However, in cooperation with local residents, we have launched a project to reuse unnecessary branches and leaves as garden soil, instead of disposing of them as waste. We have also begun to accept unnecessary soil from garden planters and flowering pots from households, and recycle it as garden soil.

Additionally, we have begun to promote the exchange of unnecessary foliage plants grown by local residents, and to distribute seedlings and seeds of flowers and trees. Under the slogan of "making the entire area filled with greenery," we promote these efforts, hoping that they will serve as an opportunity for residents to consider the environment.

We also hold workshops for children to make handiwork using wood from felled trees, grow larval food plants, and place name tags around trees as part of botanical research, in order to help them learn about vegetation and diversity. We hope that such workshops will encourage children to consider their wide-ranging connections with living things.



Asahi Kominkan p42 map ①



Why Not Think About Our Modern Lifestyle?

Excitement of a Natural Life



Prior to the Great East Japan Earthquake, people in Japan used to take safety for granted. However, the disaster has made them realize that safety is not a matter of course, increasing their interest in energy and food.

At the Chuo Kominkan, we have begun to hold seminars to respond to this trend. We believe that if each individual has an interest in the environment and performs what they can do in everyday life, it will help solve environmental problems.

Our seminars handle a wide variety of problems regarding modern lifestyles, in which people focus only on convenience. Specifically, the themes covered at the seminars range from energy, including nuclear power generation, which is now gaining particularly wide public attention; to food, such as vegetables disposed of in large quantities and vegetables grown using a lot of agricultural chemicals; to handy and cheap architectural materials made with chemical products.

Reviewing these problems from various angles, the seminars serve as an opportunity for participants to consider once again a lifestyle that is suited to the Japanese natural climate and is friendly to the global environment.

While helping participants to learn about social changes made so far, and then consider what they can do and tell people around them and the next generation what they have learned, we would like to encourage many more people to consider various matters on their own.

Chuo Kominkan p42 map24



Simple and Slow Life

Simple and Eco-Friendly Life Seminar



In your daily lives, there may be few opportunities to become aware that your life is closely connected with global environmental problems. At the Konan Kominkan, we held a seminar for participants to consider their self-sufficiency rate and food mileage through their eating habits, and to make fashionable bags out of newspapers and think about the relationship between plastic bags and petroleum, as well as about the significance of *furoshiki*, wrapping cloths that were traditionally frequently used by many people in Japan.

Certainly, what each individual can do is limited. Still, we would like to continue holding a seminar and involve many more people, in order to provide an opportunity for people to consider how they should live through learning about past social changes.

Konan Kominkan p42 map12



IT Volunteer Supporters behind the Scene

To make my life after retirement even more fulfilling, I participated in a PC seminar at the Kyokuto Kominkan as an instructor. This is how I became an IT volunteer. Now that 10 years have passed since then, the number of the seminar members, many of whom are of my generation, has increased. Amidst the progress of the aging society, I would like to encourage many more senior citizens to use PCs, which serve as the key to ICT,* and help them form a network through which they can enjoy their daily lives even more.

The development of the seminar has led to the establishment of the Liaison Council of Kominkan IT Volunteers, which holds various seminars and participates in various events. At the Fun Festival for Children held at the Okayama Dome in autumn, the council sets up a booth where children can enjoy hands-on IT training. At an official party for new adults, the council cooperates in taking pictures and printing them. Through these efforts, council members improve their volunteer skills and contribute to enhancing the sense of unity within communities.

*ICT --- Information and communication technology

My ESD experience



Members of the Liaison Council of Kominkan IT Volunteers in Okayama City, which is involved in activities at Kominkan in Okayama City



Precious Toys For You – Thank You

Toy-Reuse Association - Give and Receive Precious Toys – Presents for Those Who Need Them!



Toys are something special for children. As children grow older, however, the time will come to say goodbye to some such toys.

“Although I don’t want to throw away the precious toys my child used to play with, I have no one to give them to.”

In Omoto, located in the center of Okayama City, there is active inflow and outflow of many young households. Inspired by a proposal from mothers raising children, the Omoto Kominkan

decided to take action toward setting up a toy-reuse fair.

First, we invited local residents as staff members to work together with us. Such members were engaged in the entire process of the fair from planning to operation. Some members lived outside Omoto. However, all staff members cooperated with each other and did their best for Omoto. Thanks to their efforts, such a toy-reuse fair is held now three times a year.

Omoto Kominkan p42 map 4

Repair Toys for Reuse!

Toy Hospital

In this age of mass production, mass consumption, and mass disposal, there are too many items surrounding children. At the Asahi Kominkan, we hold a toy hospital event to tell children how wasteful it is to throw away damaged items and how important it is to use such items for as long as possible after repairing them.

Children participating in the event were very pleased that their long-cherished, but damaged toys had been repaired. Some of them had thought that it would be impossible to have their damaged toys repaired. Their parents said that the event helped the children learn about the mechanisms of their toys and the importance of repairing damaged items and using them for a long time.



Asahi Kominkan p42 map 1

Give and Receive Precious Toys – Presents for Those Who Need Them!



When we were asked to cooperate as staff members by the Kominkan, we accepted the offer without thinking deeply; we just wanted to do something to contribute to society.

None of the mothers around us wanted to throw away their children’s long-cherished toys, which were filled with precious memories. However, there was no choice but to throw them away, and we thought that it was very *mottainai* (“What a waste!”).

When we were trying to hold the first toy-reuse fair, we were not really sure what would happen. Still, many toys in good condition were offered for the fair, and many people were pleased to take such items home, saying that they would use them with good care. The profile of the event has increased each time, attracting many more participants. This made us realize that although such an opportunity was not available before, many people have long desired such an opportunity.

We hope that the toy-reuse fair will continue to be held periodically to help people in the entire community connected through the goodwill of the slogans “Present for you!” and “Thank you!”



Members of the Toy-Reuse Association, involved in activities at the Omoto Kominkan



Talk about the Future in Candle Light

Candle Night – Why not Enjoy a Slow Night in Candle Light?

Have you ever played blindfold tag? If you just close your eyes, you will feel somewhat different from how you feel in your daily life.

If local residents enjoy interacting in candle light, they may feel relaxed enough to consider their near future, and think about what they tend to forget or fail to consider in their daily lives under electric lights.

In cooperation with local schools, NPOs, and other organizations, the Yoshida Kominkan provides such an opportunity for participants to talk in candle light about the future of energy, the ongoing problem of nuclear power generation, the ties between people, and many other topics that they seldom discuss in their daily lives.



Yoshida Kominkan p42 map 37



Ready! A Bowl of Udon Noodles!

Udon-tei Tsudoj



In Japan, a nation blessed with longevity, many middle-aged people would like to enjoy some activities to make their lives after retirement even more fulfilling.

In response to this request, the Saidaiji Kominkan holds an *udon* noodle making class.

Once a month, Udon-tei Tsudoj is opened after an *udon* noodle making class by volunteer members who have improved their *udon* making skills. At this shop, while enjoying delicious *udon* noodles, local residents enjoy interaction. Currently, these volunteer members also hold such events at local welfare facilities and community houses.

Saidaiji Kominkan p42 map 14



Live in Rural Areas



During and around the high economic growth period, people in Japan moved from agricultural areas to urban areas. Today, there are many uncultivated agricultural land properties. Less than 5% of people in Japan are now engaged in primary industry. At the same time, an increasing number of young people are beginning to discover the good aspects of rural areas that cannot be observed in urban areas, and to take on challenges in making a shift to a new lifestyle. It is necessary to review the value of both urban areas and rural areas to render each community sustainable.

Our ESD Practices



Local Consumption of Local Produces, and the Future of Agriculture

Our Food and Agriculture

Kojo is one of Okayama City's largest agricultural areas, where approximately 66% of the land is used to grow mainly rice, as well as wheat, vegetables, and fruit. At the same time, due to progress in the development of agricultural land for residential use, more and more households are moving into the area.

Hoping that all residents, including newcomers, will develop an interest in local agricultural produce and learn about the importance of agriculture, the Kojo Kominkan launched a seminar titled Our Food and Agriculture. At this seminar, participants listened to a farmer, learned about how to cook locally produced food, and considered the relationship between agriculture, food, nature, and human beings.

At the seminar, a local onion farmer spoke about how she had begun farming, and problems surrounding farmers (such as too many fallow rice fields and a shortage of successors). The instructor also showed how to cook simple vegetable dishes often cooked by farmers.

Some participants commented that when they buy vegetables or other items from now on, they will choose local agricultural produce. The instructor said that she was surprised that participants were very interested in agricultural problems, and that the seminar had made her realize that it was also important for farmers to disseminate necessary information. The ties formed at the seminar between producers and consumers are expected to develop into further action.

Pushing forward the concept of local consumption of local produces, we are now encouraging people in Kojo to consume what has been produced in Kojo. We would like to develop this effort into an opportunity to consider the future of Kojo.



Kojo Kominkan p42 map 11

Growing Soba in Okayama?

Planting Soba Seeds in Makiishi / Want to Be a Soba-Noodles-Making Master?

Our area consists of an urban district and a mountainous district. While some people in our area have few opportunities to directly experience nature and agriculture, there are problems regarding uncultivated farmland properties, the number of which is increasing year by year due to the progress of the aging society.

Such uncultivated land affects the prosperity of mountainous districts, as well as our disaster and crime prevention efforts. In this regard, at the Kita Kominkan, we launched a project in cooperation with an NPO to make better use of uncultivated land properties.

The NPO proposed growing *soba* (buckwheat), which does not require so much effort to grow and can be harvested twice a year, and welcoming those who wanted to move into our area to open *soba* restaurants. In addition, the NPO also expected that *soba* flowers blooming in riotous profusion would also attract many viewers. By so doing, the NPO aimed to attract many people to our area.

Currently, to make our community even more attractive, we hold hands-on seeds-planting seminars for children and their parents, and also provide various opportunities for residents to harvest *soba* and make *soba* noodles. We aim to hold such seminars more frequently.

Kita Kominkan p42 map 5



Hand Down the Taste of Fujita to the Next Generation

My ESD experience



Fujita is the result of the reclamation of a part of Kojima Bay. In Fujita, the largest farm belt in southern Okayama, rice, lettuce, onion, and other agricultural produce are grown. Fujita has developed together with agriculture.

At the Fujita branch of Japan Agricultural Cooperatives Okayama women's department, we would like to promote activities with a focus on the local community to ensure that people of all generations know about the food tradition and skills handed down in Fujita since the reclamation. By so doing, we hope that the tradition and skills will be passed on to the next generation. As part of such efforts, we cook specialties using food from Fujita, and instruct children, young mothers, and men about how to cook them at the Fujita Kominkan. Of particular note is *hato-mugi-miso*, a healthy, rich-flavored *miso* using rice, *hato-mugi* (tear grass), and soy beans from Fujita. This is an ideal food in terms of the expansion of rice consumption and food safety. Striving to hand down the taste of Fujita to the next generation, we are fulfilled and pleased to contribute to making good use of the wisdom learned from Fujita's rich nature for people's daily lives.



Members of the Fujita branch of Japan Agricultural Cooperatives Okayama women's department, involved in activities at the Fujita Kominkan