

Kids' AU (Kids' Asian Union)				
Activity Name	Vitalization of the International Student-Japanese Youth Network through the Youth Outdoor Experience Program			
Dates	From May 1, 2009 to January 31, 2010			
Location	Ichien, Yasuoka Village, Shimoina County in Nagano Prefecture; Tokyo Metropolitan District; Nagoya City			
Participants	International Students	Residents, Corporation	Other	Total
	25	35	1,300	1,360

<Activity Details>

We sought a place for mutual exchange between international students and Japanese people in nature, where human life originated. The cooperative NPO-GreenWood (Ichien, Yasuoka Village, Shimoina County in Nagano Prefecture) hosts a camp program called "Shinshu Kid Bandits Camp" every summer and winter. More than 1,000 elementary and junior high school children participate in the program every year, supported by more than 350 volunteers including high school and university students and working adults. The operation of this program emphasizes our focus on the simple everyday activities of eat, sleep, work, and play. The duration of the camps ranges from three days and two nights to 12 days and 11 nights.



Having a meal with children at the

Participants open themselves to others to become a part of the group and build their day-to-day life together. We believe that such an environment fosters true friendship between Japanese and international students, resulting in their mutual understanding.

There was a slight delay from our original schedule because it took longer for us to prepare the application form and to determine the distribution method. This experience made us realize that we need to carry out our plan earlier because many international students return home during summer vacation.

However, we plan to review our process in order to continue offering the program in coming years since our survey indicates that the camps were still well enjoyed by everyone in general.

Another project that we conducted was seminars that introduced different cultures. We took the opportunity at our review session and report meeting, etc., to have international students give presentations about their cultures. Specifically, we organized activities such as learning the culture of each country through food by cooking their dishes, discussing the differences in environmental issues and awareness across the countries by speaking about the rivers in each country, and so on. These seminars were well received, especially by Japanese participants. The majority felt that it was very helpful. We also hope to continue holding these sessions on a regular basis by working around the schedules of international students.

<Comments from The Participants>



A test of courage with the

Name: Bek Mun Jyon (South Korea)

I'm currently studying architecture at the university, living a life that has nothing to do with children, so it was really great to be able to spend a lot of time with children, which I usually don't get to do, by participating in this program. Above all, I actually learned more from the children than I taught them. For instance, I think Japanese people are admirable for doing everything properly, like separating garbage. I need to tell my parents and friends in my country about this.

I usually don't get to talk with people other than my friends at the university and coworkers at my part-time job, but this event allowed me to meet students from different universities and people who work full-time, expanding my network of friends. This was a wonderful experience for me.

Name: Oyunbazar Enkhtsolmon (Mongolia)

I had no idea what I was supposed to do at the camp, but the children around me kindly showed me what to do. I was really touched by their gesture. I was nervous because this was the first time for me to interact with Japanese children and students from other universities, but I'm glad that I participated.



International culture seminar (discussing the rivers of each country)

We had a Q&A session on the bus heading to the campsite. I got a lot of questions about Mongolia during the Q&A session, and that became a great memory for me. I realized that even though Japan and Mongolia have a good relationship, there was still a lot that we don't know about each other. Seeing those children eagerly taking on challenges was inspiring. It motivated me to hang in there and work hard myself. Thank you so much.