



Fukushima Youth Voyage

"Widened Horizons: Opening the World's Door for Fukushima's Youth"

BACKGROUND AND NEEDS:

The young people of Minamisoma in Fukushima are facing a grim summer. They have already endured one of the world's largest-ever earthquakes, a devastating tsunami and the terror of the nuclear accident at the Dai-ichi nuclear power plant, just 10-40 km away. Minamisoma Mayor Sakurai Katsunobu was recently named one of TIME Magazine's 100 most influential people in the world for his outspoken plea for help from the media and the international community in the wake of the March 11 disaster.

The southern half of Minamisoma was designated as an evacuation or control zone, and residents in other parts of the city also face severely heightened levels of radiation and are advised to remain indoors. This is an untenable situation for anybody, but especially cruel for children and for their worried parents. As the summer holidays approach, the parents of the city are desperate for a safe alternative to their children remaining isolated indoors or being exposed to high levels of radiation.

PROGRAMME:

There is an alternative. Peace Boat, a Japan-based NGO, in cooperation with the Minamisoma Parents and Teachers Association (PTA), has developed a program that would support the youth and parents of the town in their desire to keep their children safe over the summer holiday period. **The Fukushima Youth Voyage** is a two-week global voyage of discovery and empowerment -- an opportunity for 49 Junior High School students from six different schools in Minamisoma to spend the summer in a healthy, dynamic and creative environment, where they can learn new skills, enjoy new experiences and gain a fresh perspective on the future, while enabling their parents to focus on rebuilding their community.

Travel dates: **July 23 - August 4**

Education and instruction: The program schedule includes **onshore exchange meetings and public speaking engagements** designed to put the students' experiences in a global context. While at sea, there will be lessons and workshops, including an **intensive English conversation training course, sports, music and the arts**.

First port of call: **Viet Nam**, where students will participate in an exchange program with young victims of Agent Orange/Dioxin. In **Singapore**, students will experience the unique and diverse mix of Chinese, Malay, Indian and Arab cultures. Finally, they will stop in **Sri Lanka** to put their experiences in context, and participate in an exchange program with young people who survived the 2004 earthquake and tsunami.

At each port, students will learn empowerment through public speaking, by hosting a photo exhibition about the Tohoku Earthquake and Tsunami and Fukushima nuclear disaster, thanking the host country and international community for their support and raising awareness about the importance of ongoing global cooperation.

They will also be accompanied by survivor of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima Mr Nakamura Hiroshi, who will share his experiences and information about the dangers of radiation with the

students, other participants onboard, and people met in ports of call.

The world needs to understand the human truth of the disaster. Media coverage has focused on the nuclear crisis in Fukushima, while the voices of survivors go unheard. We have a duty to make sure that their stories of bravery in the face of unimaginable trauma are told. **This trip will give these students an opportunity not only to bear witness to their own suffering but also to see how others have coped with tragedy and hardship and managed their own recovery.**

ITINERARY:

- July 23: Depart Minamisoma, stay overnight near Narita Airport
- July 24: Depart Japan for Da Nang, Viet Nam (via airplane)
- July 25: Exchange with Agent Orange/Dioxin victims in Da Nang; Embark Peace Boat
- July 26 – 27: at sea
- July 28: Visit Singapore, participate in intercultural exchange programme
- July 29 – Aug 1: at sea
- Aug 2: Visit Colombo, Sri Lanka; exchange with young survivors of 2004 tsunami
- Aug 3: Depart for Japan (via airplane)
- Aug 4: Arrive Narita Airport, return to Minamisoma

BENEFITS OF THIS PROGRAM TO MINAMISOMA

The Fukushima Youth Voyage offers an extraordinary opportunity for both individual and community recovery and growth, and supports the people of Minamisoma on many levels. Children will be evacuated, even briefly, to safety and will have a life-changing experience. Parents will have their burden of worry lifted. This program also brings a powerful message to the world. Your insight and generosity in supporting such a program would be deeply appreciated within Japan at both the community and national level. For young people who have lost everything they expected in their lives, this program opens the door to a wider world of possibilities.

ABOUT PEACE BOAT

Peace Boat is a Japan-based NGO providing dedicated disaster relief and long-term support for the recovery of several cities in Miyagi prefecture following the devastating earthquake and tsunami of March 11. This is one of many projects Peace Boat has undertaken to help survivors rebuild their lives. Peace Boat has also long been committed to efforts for a nuclear-free world, carrying out education and advocacy activities, such as inviting atomic bomb survivors to join global voyages and share the reality of the damage caused by radiation and the need for a nuclear-free world.

MORE INFORMATION

- Peace Boat's relief activities: <http://peaceboat.org/relief>
- More information about voyages and Peace Boat's longstanding advocacy of social issues, humanitarian causes and nuclear abolition: <http://peaceboat.org/english>
- Japanese information available here:
- <http://www.peaceboat.org/info/news/2011/110713.shtml>
- A blog of the Fukushima youth's voyage will be online here in Japanese: <http://ameblo.jp/pbfukushimayouth>

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