

This newsletter conveys the voices of foreign residents, while also focusing on the activities of various international organizations and on the restoration efforts after the disaster.



Voices from Fukushima

Helping Fukushima by Making Tohno Washi

Sylvia Gallagher (From Wellington, New Zealand/ Currently living in Iwaki)

In October 2019, Sylvia Gallagher started working for Iwaki's *chiiki okoshi kyoryoku-tai* (Local Vitalization Cooperator). She is trying to help revitalize Tohno town by making the local traditional craft, *Tohno Washi* (Japanese traditional paper). Wanting to promote more of Fukushima to the world, Sylvia is also creating a picture book made out of *Tohno Washi*.

(Interview Date: December 26, 2019)



- Can you explain to us the kind of work you are doing now?

In Iwaki, I am currently making *Tohno Washi* as well as helping to revitalize the local community of Tohno town. Recently, I have also been busy making graduation certificates for schools.

- What is *Tohno Washi*?

Tohno Washi is handmade Japanese traditional paper. It is made out of paper mulberry, a plant which is produced in Tohno Town. We make the *washi* paper by boiling and drying the paper mulberry's bark multiple times. Currently, there are only a few places in the prefecture that make *washi* paper using this method.

- What is difficult about making *washi* paper?

I think the most difficult task is removing black parts from the

paper mulberry's bark, a process called *chiri-tori*. In order to make the paper white, we have to remove as much of the black parts by hand and that takes up a lot of time.

- Can you also tell us a little bit about your picture book?

One friend is in charge of creating the story while I am in charge of the illustrations. It was after I started my current job that we thought about making it out of *washi* paper. The picture book is almost finished so my friend in England is currently looking for a publishing company.

- What is the story of the picture book?

The main story is about a horse trying to get back home. The book portrays scenes of areas struck by the tsunami as well as areas near the nuclear power plant. But the

ending gives readers hope about the future.

- Can you explain the main point of the picture book?

Because of the nuclear power plant accident, there are areas in Fukushima where people can no longer live right now but also areas where you can live normally. I want to let the world know that even in these places, there are people who continue to be engaged in numerous activities. When writing this book, I even went and checked out the restricted area near Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant.

- What kinds of things do you want to do from now on?

In the future, I want to try and make *washi* paper using different methods. Also, please come see for yourself how special *Tohno Washi*'s unique texture is.

Doing Yoga in Chinese (Aizu-Wakamatsu City)

Aizuwakamatsu International Association held the "Let's Do Yoga in Chinese" event on December 20th. It was the last day in a six series event and so after doing yoga, there was a workshop on Chinese tea. Participants from Japan, China, Malaysia and Vietnam enjoyed spending time with one another. The yoga and Chinese tea instructor Feiyu Li said, "These six events went by fast but it was fun doing yoga with everyone."



Rwanda Photo Exhibition in Fukushima City

Think About Education in RWANDA had a Rwanda photo exhibition from January 6th to January 11th. During a presentation about the organization's activities, it was announced that children from Chiba will have a homestay experience in Rwanda. Also at the venue, many people stopped by to check out the Rwandan coffee and other merchandises being sold.



Japanese Class New Year's Party in Fukushima City

Fukushima Immigrant Women Support Network (EIWAN) is an organization that supports immigrant women through activities such as Japanese classes, heritage language classes and support for foreign students attending school.

On January 11th, female foreign residents from the Japanese Class gathered to celebrate the New Year. There was food from different countries laid out on a big table for the potluck party. It seemed like many people had fun explaining about their home country's food while talking to one another.



**Multilingual information on the revitalization effort :
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We would appreciate hearing your thoughts and opinions. Please send us any information that you would like to see covered or information about people willing to be interviewed.



Publisher

Fukushima International Association
〒960-8103 Funabacho 2-1, Fukushima City, Fukushima Prefecture
☎ 024-524-1315 ☎ 024-521-8308
✉ info@worldvillage.org
🌐 <http://www.worldvillage.org>
Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/fiainfo>