

International Volunteer Network - Notes
MSC-SICPF Joint Meeting, Saturday, September 30, 2017

The purpose of this meeting was to introduce the formation of the International Volunteer Network by SICPF and present various volunteer options and experiences.

Ken Hartmann opened the meeting. Seniors have more time, and may be able to volunteer. SICPF wants to formalize a system to connect expat volunteers to groups and organizations.

First, Yukiko Sakai, of the Sapporo International Communication Plaza Foundation (SICPF), presented the proposal of the International Volunteer Network. The Plaza always receives requests from expats who want to volunteer and groups that want expat volunteers. She introduced the proposed system. From today to March 2018 is the trial period. During that time, they will only provide information and build a database of volunteers, but will not do any coordination. There was a discussion of the insurance system for volunteer workers. Details will be clarified later.

Michiyo Yoshida presented about Go!Fly!Wheelchairs. She started this 19 years ago. They accept wheelchairs from donors, coordinate with recipients, and with travelers who deliver the wheelchairs. Several cases of recipients was presented. They have delivered 2780 wheelchairs to 80 countries.

Cindy Edwards talked about her experiences with Go!Fly!Wheelchairs. At first, Cindy and her students made Christmas cards for Filipino children. They visited Go!Fly!Wheelchairs and met Michiyo for the first time. Last year Cindy delivered a wheelchair to Bali. It takes an incredible amount of coordination. She also delivered three wheelchairs to Taipei.

Father Manfred from Rumoi spoke about House of Friendship. The German word is 'house-friendship.' The House of Friendship movement began in Germany after World War II. To illustrate the core idea Father Manfred introduced the African proverb; 'I am your are. You are I am.' Another way to express this is 'If you weren't here, I wouldn't be here.' House of Friendship started in Hokkaido in 1989. The first House of Friendship was in Bibai for Susukino workers, and then Chinese students. Now in Rumoi there are about 100 Vietnamese working in a fish factory. They go to church. Every month they have an outing. it doesn't matter where they go. It's important just to be together. Every Monday they have a discussion group. The main theme is 'If you wouldn't be here, I wouldn't be here.' Maybe there can be some kind of volunteer work with this.

Yoko Otake introduced several volunteer organizations in Sapporo. She also read a message from Stephanie from Asahikawa, describing the difficulties of volunteering in Japan.

Ken closed the meeting. He explained that if you put a Japanese URL in Google translate, the site will come up in English. It is very useful for researching about volunteer activities in Sapporo. He mentioned that the YWCA has a program for alternative education at the Christian Center. Also, it seems that there is a great need for volunteer web designers in English.