

“I want to make use of this experience also in my school life”

SCJ supported “Wakame Seaweed Sale”

by Suezaki Junior High School of Ofunato City

(September 27, 2012)

Since the earthquake of last year, Save the Children Japan (SCJ) has been providing various types of educational assistance to the children of Tohoku. This time, we supported “Wakame Seaweed Sale,” an annual event of Suezaki Junior High School located in Ofunato City in Iwate Prefecture.



Suezaki Junior High School has a total of 133 students. Their school buildings did not suffer from last year's earthquake; however, temporary housing had to be built in their schoolyard, and about half of the students experienced some damage from the earthquake. For 11 years, the school has included the growing and commercializing of wakame seaweed, together with practical sales training. Through this activity the school intends to nurture young people who can succeed in the local industry of wakame seaweed cultivation. During a school trip to Tokyo, they used to sell their wakame seaweed every year and received high praise. The seaweed always sold out.

However, as a result of the earthquake, the tsunami swept away all of their wakame seaweed and cultivation facilities. Yet they managed to have a sale of wakame seaweed again in Ofunato City last year. This year, they decided to travel to Morioka City to sell their seaweed, with a wish to enhance opportunities for reconstruction through Suezaki's seaweed. SCJ assisted with their bus travel from Ofunato City to Morioka City, and one of our long-term partner corporations FamilyMart Co., Ltd. shared their professional sales skills, to help the students and school get ready for the sale.

◆ Friday, September 14, Training for Wakame Seaweed Sale

In the multipurpose hall, 48 second graders of the junior high school gathered together. To start with, SCJ staff talked about children's rights and introduced information about SCJ support activities. We discussed questions such as, "Until what age are people defined as a child?" and "How many countries have ratified the Convention of the Rights of the Child?" Also to increase the students' deeper understanding, we also briefly explained about SCJ activities that are based on the Convention of the Rights of the Child.



SCJ staff explaining about children's rights and SCJ support activities: Fujiwara and Shimizu

Next, Mr. Obinata, the Sales Director of FamilyMart Morioka Office, taught the students about sales "knowledge." Mr. Obinata said that conveying one's feeling is the basic rule of sales. He asked the students, "What do you recommend about Suezaki's wakame seaweed?" a question to draw out the attractiveness of Suezaki's wakame seaweed from the students. He continued, "You may not realize the attractiveness of your wakame seaweed as it is now very familiar for you, but your wakame seaweed has many good points, including that it is the Sanriku Brand and the cultivation volume is the largest in Japan, or it is fleshy, crunchy, and healthy and so on." The lesson started with learning about the products (goods), and was followed by services and manners (customer service), and the sales techniques (effort) to sell products. Regarding the manners for serving customers, the students learned about "being trusted by customers and making customers feel comfortable." All of the students were convinced by such professional knowledge and advice, "it is important to have an appearance that would make others receive a favorable impression about you." Throughout this limited time of a concentrated 30-minute lecture, the students remained attentive and closely listened to the lecturer.



Mr. Obinata graciously shares his “knowledge” of professional sale techniques

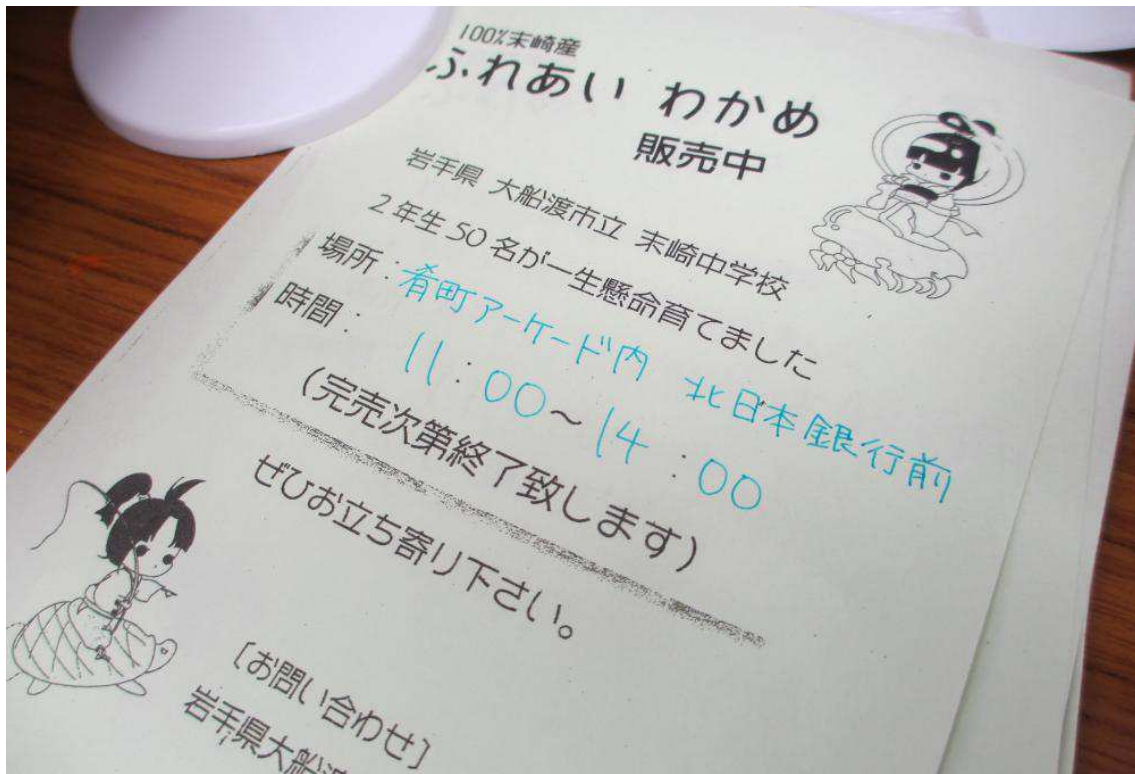
After the lecture, the students practiced making smiles. Relaxing face muscles, the students opened their mouths wide saying “Mickey!” to make a smile.

One student, Munenari Yamamoto, representing all the students, shared his impression on this lecture: “I didn’t know so much about how to serve customers so I learned a lot. These things were good to know because I can use this knowledge and skills when starting to work in society in the future. I want to sell out our wakame seaweed!” In a week, the students were having a wakame seaweed sale in Morioka.

◆ Friday, September 21, Wakame Sale in Morioka City

At 7:30 am, 48 second graders of Suezaki Junior High School got on a bus and left Ofunato for Morioka. They were to sell their wakame seaweed at four locations (Morioka Station FESAN, KAWATOKU, Sakana-cho Arcade, and AEON Maegata Shop). As soon as they got off the bus in Morioka, although it was lightly raining from the morning, they started distributing hand-made fliers to people walking by their sales locations.

The students added some sale information for each shop in the fliers, and handed them out to the people around the shops before the start of the sale, wishing to welcome a shop full of customers. They were divided into four groups of over 10 persons each, and each group was to sell 300 sacks of wakame seaweed at each location. One group was further divided into two so that they could take turns taking care of their shop. For an effective sale, the members of each group shared the roles, some tried to attract customers, some served the customers and others handled the accounting duties.



Finally the sale began. People stopped walking in front of the shops and many gave them encouraging words such as, "I came here because I heard that you were coming from Ofunato to sell your wakame seaweed," "I got a flier, so I am here," and "Good luck!"

People gathered around the students showing a lively smile when serving customers. At every shop, they put so much effort in selling their wakame seaweed, shouting out, "Don't miss the opportunity to get delicious Sanriku wakame seaweed!" and "Who wants to have our great wakame seaweed?"

Students had three hours for selling. Their enthusiasm got higher and higher, one of them said, "At the beginning I was so busy to attract people, but I enjoy this now because many customers are visiting our shop!" Still, customers sometimes didn't show up. Then, they remembered the advice from Mr. Obinata to say the strengths of their product when attracting customers. They put increased "spirit" into themselves again, and promoted their product in a loud voice, "We made this wakame seaweed. They are so fleshy and delicious!"



[Sakana-cho Arcade]

Mr. Obinata (the second from the left), the Sales Director of FamilyMart Morioka Office, also came to the shop. The shop gained so much popularity and was visited by many people going through the Arcade. Probably the fliers produced a positive effect. This was the first shop that sold out all 300 sacks of wakame seaweed among the four locations.



[KAWATOKU (Park-side exit)]

The shop was located outside and it was lightly raining. Still, the guests entering the department store stopped by and bought wakame seaweed.



[AEON Maegata Shop]

Leaving from their selling booth, the students sometimes walked around in the AEON Shop with a hand-made signboard to attract customers.



[FESAN]

They could have a selling place in the event space within Morioka Station Building. Everyone tried hard to attract customers using a loud voice, especially when there were only a few sacks left.

Finally sometime after 14:30, all of the 1,234 sacks of seaweed were sold at the four locations. It was not easy for some locations to sell all of their products, but after achieving it, the students seemed to have a sense of fulfillment and confidence.

Some of students' impressions were as the following.

"Mickey (to make a smile) that we learned at the sales lecture was useful."

"That advice to speak fluently and clearly was so effective!"

"It is difficult to sell products."

"I want to make use of this experience of selling wakame seaweed also in my school life."

From their comments, it seems that they learned many things through practicing what they had learned from the lecture and experiencing an actual sale.

By accompanying the students from the time of sales training, we staff also could recognize again the importance of giving support that contributes to these students' activities and local revitalization. From the bottom of our hearts, we would like to thank Suezaki Junior High School, FamilyMart Co., Ltd. for their cooperation, and Mr. Obinata, for giving the students such an opportunity and to offer this valuable support. We also received thanks from the Iwate Prefectural Board of Education, "We really appreciate that SCJ gave its support not only through equipment provision but also through soft components, training. Please let us continue to work together."

SCJ will continue promoting our child support in the aspect of soft components.

(Reported by Noriko Sato, Public Relations)