

Enjoying the Beautiful Nature of Minamiaizu with Local Youths!

~ Great Adventure in Minamiaizu with Dad ~

(September 18, 2012)

This summer, events were held in various places for the children of Fukushima to enjoy themselves with full vitality. One of these events was the “Summer Vacation: Great Adventure in Minamiaizu with Dad,” which was held on August 11th and 12th. This one night and two day program was jointly organized by the NPO Hinoki Sports Club of Minamiaizu-machi and students attending the “Sports Planning Seminar” at the Faculty of Human Development and Culture at Fukushima University, with the cooperation of Unilever Japan Ltd. and Save the Children Japan (SCJ). For Unilever Japan and SCJ, this was a cooperative program continuing on after the “Project for the Children of Fukushima to Enjoy Skiing,” which was held Minamiaizu in March in 2012.



All of the participants with the beautiful nature of Minamiaizu in the background

“Summer Vacation: Great Adventure in Minamiaizu with Dad” (Great Adventure) is a program centered on outdoor activities which aims to provide children of Fukushima an opportunity to spend some enjoyable time with their usually busy fathers in the great natural environment of Minamiaizu in Fukushima. The 15 pairs of parent and child who participated in this program took part in a total of seven challenges over the 2-day period with points being acquired depending on the results of each of these challenges. These challenges included collecting rhinoceros beetles and stag beetles, shower trekking in a mountain stream, char fish catching contest, fishing in an inflatable boat, fishing with a pole for crayfish, and an inflatable boat race in a swamp. The staff spontaneously poured their hearts into cheering for the children, who were timidly catching rhinoceros beetles, for the children who were trekking with all their might in the mountain stream while being led by their fathers’ hand, for the children who were catching char fish with glee, and for the children who were skillfully steering boats rowed by their fathers.

Parent-child pairs strive to complete each challenge!



Mountain stream shower trekking



Collecting rhinoceros beetles



boat race

On the second day, all the challenges were completed and after people finished eating the delicious barbeque lunch, there was an announcement of the number of points each pair had acquired. The winning pair was an energetic parent and child who had achieved good results on all the challenges. Additionally, everyone was overjoyed because fresh summer vegetables from Minamiaizu (e.g. asparagus and delicious tomatoes) were given as prizes to all the parent-child pairs who had participated.

The children not only had a great time with their fathers, but they also become friends with the other participating children. We also heard various opinions from the fathers who participated: “Playing outside has been restricted due to the concern of the radiation levels, so the physical fitness of our children has surely been declining.” “When we were children, it was normal to have fun in the rivers. But children today no longer even play outside, so this kind of program is really wonderful.” “It reminded me of my childhood – it was fun.” “When I came to Aizu, I only knew of Aizuwakamatsu. This is the first time I have come to Minamiaizu and I am amazed by the beauty of the nature. I would definitely like to come here again.”



A child catching a char fish together with his father



The char fish they caught was served for dinner



Walking in the beautiful green forest in the morning on the second day,
they headed toward the location of the next mission

The great things about this program are not only that the participating parents and children have fun but it also fully demonstrates the energy of the youth in running the Great Adventure. In the planning and running of this program, the students of Fukushima University admirably played a huge role under the guidance of their co-organizer, The Hinoki Sports Club and their supervisors of Fukushima University. Moreover, the program was supported by people born in the local area, who

greatly love Minamiaizu, and who gave up their day off from work to spend the days with the children and their fathers. They participated as volunteers together with local high school students.



The words everyone who participated in this program holds dear to their hearts:
“I love the mountains, I love the rivers too – I love the nature of Fukushima”



Hinoki Sports Club members, Minamiaizu-born adults, and local high school student volunteers!

It is said that there has been an increase in the number of families with parents and children (especially fathers and children) living apart in Fukushima after the earthquake. Building irreplaceable memories of the summer vacation and maintaining parent-child time through activities such as this program is believed to be extremely important in the healthy growth of children. The children who enjoyed collecting rhinoceros beetles and char fishing will no doubt be looking forward to returning to Minamiaizu again next year. Although perhaps it will actually be the fathers who are most looking forward to it. (Reported by Kazuyo Igarashi, Aizuwakamatsu Office)