

AIDAIR UPDATE



Hauling a load of trash

BACK IN JAPAN

We are currently leading short term disaster relief teams in Northern Japan.

Hello from Japan!

We can't believe that it's taken us this much time to write. We have been here for 5 weeks now and are only now letting you know what we've been up to...apologies for the delay.

In summary, we are:

- working with several summer teams that have come over with Asian Access.
- staying at a karate dojo with anywhere from 10 to 30 other volunteers (from other agencies, too).
- working in a town called Ishinomaki in the region of Tohoku. This area was hit hard by the earthquake and tsunami on March 11th
- and it really is as bad as it looks in the news.

Part of why it's taken me (Roberta) awhile to write is because...I have been culture-

shocking. It's true. It's also the whole reality-is-different-than-expectation thing. So, while I think I'm doing better than I was a few weeks ago, I'd still appreciate your prayers.

Robert has been really busy. After adjusting to his wallet disappearing the first day that we were volunteering, he's been juggling leading our team, helping to manage volunteers from other agencies, assessing needs, meeting with pastors, and...dealing with lots of people. To say that we often feel like we're in over our heads is an understatement.

That said, we're also grateful to be here. We get to meet legitimate needs, live in community, and be salt and light in a very dark area. Thanks for your prayers and words of encouragement. We look forward to sharing more stories from our time here in the coming months.



These are a few of our interns at 6:30 am on a Saturday making 250 rice balls for a kids event. We played games, did crafts, gave food, and distributed clothes. Neighbors commented that it was the first they heard that much laughter in the park since the tsunami.

SUMMER RELIEF TEAMS

Sights, Sounds, and Smells

Working in this region has been sensory overload. It has been challenging to process what we are seeing, hearing, and smelling.

Seeing

We've seen cars and boats in houses, buildings totally ripped from their foundations, and ruined pianos, books, and clothes. We've seen the tsunami's waterline in houses anywhere from 6 to 15 feet, far-off looks on peoples' faces, and countless gutters full of sewage, rotten maggot-filled fish, and all sorts of debris. We've seen entire neighborhoods that are overwhelmingly devastated. Yet we've also seen some elderly people at an evacuation center laugh at our attempts to sing Japanese folk songs and dozens of kids who live in government housing shout and play at the fun fair we organized.

Hearing

We've heard many, many stories of loss. I (Roberta) was cleaning out a closet in a family's house, and I heard some of the memories attached to what I was pitching. There was a kimono from a wedding, the dress that a daughter wore to her first piano recital, and much more. We've thrown away so many ruined children's toys and pictures and tools...so many memories. We've met people who have lost neighbors, siblings, spouses, and children. We have heard stories of a woman who was up to her neck in cold water for 14 hours holding her two children before she was rescued and of a

young man who waded through the water covering his ears because he was overwhelmed by all of the cries for help.

We've also heard a lot of gratitude expressed for the help that we're giving. A lot of our time is spent simply being extra hands and together are able to accomplish quite a bit – shoveling mud out of gutters or under houses, digging out stumps, taking trash to the dump, etc. Less frequent but still significant, we've been able to distribute fresh vegetables, diapers, clothing, umbrellas, and bug repellent in a few hard-hit areas. Again, the recipients are very generous with expressing their gratitude.

Smelling

I don't know exactly how to describe it, but there are places that I can only breath out of my mouth. It's been over 3 months, and... sometimes the smell is pretty rank. We get to leave at the end of the day, take a hot bath, and sleep far away from the smell. Yet for the people in the devastated area, the smell (and flies!) is the new reality.



If there is something we can do...

A nice smell, however, is the smell of barbeque. We, together with other volunteers, grill chicken, hotdogs, vegetables, fish, and/or Japanese noodles, and people in the neighborhoods come out to get a hot meal. It's sometimes the first meat and/or fresh vegetables they've had in weeks. We've been able to do these a couple of times a week in nearby neighborhoods, and it's been fun to connect with people over grilled meat and watermelon.

Smells like this update is coming to an end. We really would like to **hear** from you. And even better, we hope to **see** you later this fall. Anyway, we really are thankful for the opportunity to serve here this summer. We are also excited to see what fruit God will produce in the coming years.

Prayer Requests

Please joining us in prayer for our lives and future ministry. Above all, we ask you to pray that we would grow daily in our relationships with Christ and with each other. Also pray that our lives would be oriented in a way that facilitates good preparation for our future in Japan.

Please pray for:

- A Japanese girl named "m" who recently asked to hear God's story
- the last 2 weeks to go smoothly (transitions, processing, etc.)
- seeds to be sown to fall on healthy soil
- good interactions among the various volunteer groups
- meetings Robert and Roberta have with Japanese pastors to discuss future church planting projects

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