

What I Think About the Activities of the Miyagi Disaster Mental Health Care Center Over the Past Year

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Two years have already passed since the Great East Japan Earthquake, and over that time, the initiatives of the staff of the MDMHCC have seen massive development.

Though reconstruction gaps between residents have widened, alcohol-related problems are on the rise, and difficult cases continue to increase in number, you all have put your minds to your daily visitation work and other activities with utmost passion, and have even endeavored to undergo skill-up training to improve your ability to respond to the cases you see as specialists and professionals. I am quite moved by your diligence and work ethic. At the same time, through myriad public awareness activities, the community residents you work with are now beginning to show an interest in and understanding of mental health, and your efforts have even given you the opportunity to identify new individuals in need of support. Finally, while no small number of municipal staff have begun to develop illnesses and disease through long-term work and exhaustion, your work to reduce their burden and teach them about self-care has positively affected their mental health and spread the importance of support for supporters far and wide.

While it is no easy feat to understand the changing needs of the community and flexibly respond to them, it is vital that you all take a stance that allows you to both maintain and further collaborations with other organizations and also reduce the burden placed on municipalities as you continue to work. Finally, because it is often too easy to forget, you must remind yourselves that the Center has an expiration date, and that you must enable municipalities and residents to independently engage in activities and self-care practices after it is gone. This perspective is incredibly important; as supporters, you must maintain an objective outlook toward the future.

As workers who have gathered from both within and without the prefecture, I am sure there have been times when people have hurled heartless comments at you or your colleagues. However, your efforts to keep the best intentions of the region in mind as you go about your work are also surely leading to making the overall community stronger. As you progress toward your work in FY 2013, I know you will continue to maintain the impeccable posture and attitude as supporters that you all have built up so far, to collaborate with organizations and people throughout society, and to provide flexible, adaptable support deeply rooted in the needs of your communities. My colleagues and I will make every effort to provide you with whatever support we can.

Finally, I would like to express my deep respect for every individual involved in supporting local communities. While keeping in mind that many of you are as much survivors as supporters, I humbly ask that you praise your own efforts thus far and continue to provide care to those around you.