



Soso Team for Establishing a New Health and Welfare System for Psychiatric Care

Soso COCORO News Nagomi

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FY2012

New Fiscal Year Commenced

Spring has come and we can feel the freshness of young green leaves. I hope you are enjoying the season.

Taking this opportunity, I would like to offer my heartfelt thanks for your support for the NPO, the Soso Team for Establishing a New Health and Welfare System for Psychiatric Care. Thanks to your great support, four months have passed since the Soma Wide Area Mental Health Care Center "Nagomi" was established in January. We welcomed six new staff members to the Center in April, including one clinical psychologist, one psychiatric social worker, two health nurses and two office clerks serving concurrently as counselors. Making use of their expertise, we are expanding our activities into the outreach promotion business and the Mental Health Care Center business in the district.

In this second issue of our newsletter, we will introduce to you our salon activities in emergency temporary housing, our outreach business, our individual visit programs, our consultation activities, the current situation of health and welfare services for psychiatric care, our study sessions and conferences conducted by all staff, and our staff members themselves.

To restore health and welfare services for psychiatric care in the Soso District, all of our staff members will make efforts to provide continuous support. Thank you for your continued assistance and cooperation.



Photo: On April 13, in celebration of the retirement of Director Shinichi Niwa from the Fukushima Medical University, we presented him with a jacket bearing the "Nagomi" logo and took a commemorative photo.

New Fiscal Year's Greetings from Vice Director Takako Okawa



This year, the "cherry blossom front" moved north very slowly, and we eagerly waited for the flowering of the cherry blossoms. Then they suddenly burst into bloom, turning the whole town pink, but then changed to green leaves in no time. I believe this is the first time that I have seen cherry blossoms bloom so late since I moved to Fukushima 14 years ago.

Writing this, I do not remember at all how the cherry blossoms bloomed last spring. There are many cherry trees on a mountain viewable from Route 115 connecting Fukushima City with Soma City, which herald the arrival of spring. Although I made multiple round trips on the road since the beginning of April last year, I do not remember cherry blossoms at the time at all.

How do you feel to see cherry blossoms this year? Again, do you remember how they flowered last year? What did you do and how did you feel this time last year?

As far as I remember, I struggled to conduct my daily activities without thinking about the future. At least, I did not imagine that a NPO would be established to manage the Soma Wide Area Mental Health Care Center "Nagomi." With a total of 12 staff members working together in a new fiscal year, the Center is conducting its activities more actively.

Looking back, I know this has been a turbulent year. However, what is unchanged is the generous support provided by people from around the country. This time last year, many people came to Soma City to engage in assistance activities on our behalf.

Today, we can pursue our activities thanks to your participation in our NPO. We hope that more people will become our members, and, at the same time, as a member of the NPO, I will also endeavor to provide support for many more years. I look forward to your continued cooperation.

Outreach Activity

Nurse Nobuyuki Hirota

"How are you, Mr. XX?"; "Did you sleep well last night?"; "Have you eaten yet?"

It is two weeks since Mr. XX began to avoid making contact with us. On a residential street moist with the morning dew, we visited Mr. XX's home, wearing our Mont-bell red jacket uniforms. We knocked on the window of his house from the garden and talked to him as his back was turned to us.

We provide support mainly to people in the district with mental conditions and disorders by visiting their homes. While taking care of them in the district, we often face various occurrences that we cannot experience in a hospital. One such occurrence is the different signs that people show when they need assistance or their mentality is unstable. We will continue to visit individual homes as often as possible so as not to miss even a faint sign, and work in close contact with local residents, sharing the pleasures and hardships of their lives.

Mr. XX finally recognized us, though his back was still turned to us. We saw him in profile through a curtain with his face reflecting the soft light of the morning. Then we heard his moderate voice. We exchanged a few words with him, asked about his conditions of the previous day, exchanged glances among ourselves and left his home after placing a can of coffee with a message written on a small label near his room. We felt as if he bore a slight smile, even though we could see nothing but his back.

This is how our wonderful days begin.



Mr. Hirota left his office in Tokyo and became a staff member of the Soma Wide Area Mental Health Care Center "Nagomi" to restore the Soso District.

Salon Activity

Office clerk and counselor Satoshi Suda

Hitoyasumi no Kai and *Hitoiki no Kai* were started partly to prevent residents' withdrawal while living in temporary housing. The *Hitoyasumi no Kai* in temporary housing in Soma City started at the East Ground Temporary Housing on June 30, 2011 after the earthquake.

At *Hitoyasumi no Kai* and *Hitoiki no Kai*, we sometimes offer advice regarding the troubles and problems of residents, and sometimes consider together with them how to deal with their issues. Before the Mental Health Care Center "Nagomi" was established, many people including volunteers had helped us to pursue our consultation activities. This has led to our current salon activities. Blood pressure checks, which we currently conduct, were commenced to meet the requests of residents visiting us at the time. Now many residents come to our salons mainly to receive these checks.

Meanwhile, some people love to chat in the salons. In temporary housing, however, there are also those who do not like to come to places where many people get together, as well as those who have difficulty going out because of their bad physical conditions. In such cases, we visit individual homes to listen to their talks during our visits as part of our salon activities.

Since *Nagomi's* foundation, we have been able to secure enough fixed staff members to conduct our current activities such as salon services and house-to-house visits. Our current organization enables us to be closely involved in the daily lives of local residents in order to grasp their needs. We will try to develop our salon activities that have come to fruition through the full support of people from across the nation.

Mr. Suda commutes from his home in Fukushima City to the Center every day. He is loved by everyone in the temporary housing, from children to the elderly.



One Day at the Mental Health Care Center "Nagomi"

- 9:00- Warming up (one-minute speech, exercises, etc.), morning meetings
- 10:00-12:00 Visits/*Hitoyasumi no Kai*
- 13:00-15:00 Visits/*Hitoyasumi no Kai* & *Hitoiki no Kai*
Conferences for outreach business, steering meetings (every Monday)
- 16:00- Afternoon meetings, recording, etc.
- 16:45-17:30 Study sessions (every Tuesday)



↑ Exercises at warming-up time



← Group work at a study session (about "recovery," one of the ACT's concepts)

Thoughts and Lessons of the Residents in Namie-machi

On March 24 (Sat), Ms. Terumi Sato, a staff member of *Nagomi*, who had lived in Namie-machi before the earthquake, entered an evacuation zone to take daily necessities out of her house. Before and after entering the zone, she had to call at the Baji Koen (facilities used for riding training) on a mountainside in Minamisoma City to conduct necessary procedures. Permission for entry was given after permit cards and equipment such as a radio, protected gear and gloves were offered.

Dropping in at the seashore of Namie-machi, she saw chimneys of the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant in the distance and, at the same time, bunches of flowers, which were offered in mourning for the victims, placed next to the debris still left there. Residents in Namie-machi were forced to evacuate after hydrogen explosions at the plant. I heard that most residents thought their evacuation was temporary and left home with only the barest necessities. Sadly, some people who were flushed out immediately after the tsunami may have died in the cold water, receiving no help during their final conscious moments. It grieves me to think that if it had not been for the nuclear accident, some people could have been saved.

For the residents in evacuation areas, it is intolerable that they cannot live in or even enter their homes, despite

residing very near them. They also feel very frustrated with the fact that they cannot return to their hometowns. Meanwhile, some residents decided to leave their hometown and make a new start in another place. However, they may continue to wonder whether they made the right decision for the rest of their lives. For one year after the nuclear accident, residents have suffered from anxieties over issues such as harmful rumors, living as evacuees, the distribution of donations, compensation from TEPCO, the outlook of decontamination, the closing of schools, and unemployment, which all arose from the nuclear accident. In addition, there will still be emotional gulfs between residents, which arise from feelings of inequality due to differences in their living environments. I believe what is crucial is not to judge who is a winner and who is a loser, but that we look to the future and build communities where we can live in peace and where children want to live in the future.

(Editor Yonekura)

Photo: Current Namie-machi



FY2012 Application for Soso Team Membership!!

The Soso Team for Establishing a New Health and Welfare System for Psychiatric Care (Soso Team) became NPO contributing to the restoration and regeneration of health and welfare services for psychiatric care in the Soso District, which were disrupted after the earthquake and the nuclear accident.

We opened the Mental Health Care Center "*Nagomi*" as a healthcare service institution to work on the healthcare service business in the community.

How to apply for membership

We are recruiting regular and supporting members who have sympathy with our purpose.

1. Regular member: annual membership fee 10,000 yen
2. Supporting member: annual membership fee 3,000 yen

Application

① Specify the following and apply by mail or fax to the address stated below:

regular member or supporting member; name; address; affiliation; occupation; phone number; e-mail address

Bank name: Toho Bank, Soma branch

Account no.: Savings account no. 1044879

Account holder: Director Shinichi Niwa

Specified non-profit corporation

Soso Team for Establishing a New Health and Welfare System for Psychiatric Care

② Application is also accepted through our website.

<http://soso-cocoro.jp/> (in Japanese only)

Soma office, Mental Health Care Center "*Nagomi*"

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Tel: 0244-26-9753

Fax: 0244-26-9739

E-mail: office@soso-cocoro.jp

Mental Health Care Center "*Nagomi*" Website Opened!

<http://nagomi.soso-cocoro.jp/>
(in Japanese only)

We are looking forward to your visit.



* We will regularly deliver our newsletters and local information to members. We look forward to your active participation.

Staff Introduction ①



Director of the Center/
Nurse
Kazuma Yonekura

I intend to create a workplace in which staff members can acquire the ability to think for themselves and the whole team can grow together.



Nurse/ Social welfare
worker
Nobuyuki Hirota

One year has passed since the earthquake occurred. Some needs of residents have changed and others remain unchanged. I will continue to carefully conduct my activities from residents' viewpoint.



Division director/Nurse
Terumi Sato

I have new experiences every day. I want to consider together with residents how they can gain the life they want and strive for its realization.



Office manager/Counselor
Ren Otani

Our activities are becoming more and more recognized in local communities. I want to create a pleasant working environment to conduct better support activities.



Occupational therapist
Mina Nishiuchi

Through our salon activities, I have seen gaps emerging in terms of the pace of reconstruction. Now my objective is to pay thoughtful attention to individual residents, instead of striving for union.



Office clerk/Childcare
worker/Nursing care worker
Satomi Sato

We hold "*Chotto Kokode Hitoyasumi no Kai* (Gathering for taking a short break)" on Saturdays, in order to create an environment with a relaxed atmosphere for parents, children and other participants.

Talk of Office Manager

I went to a Fujiko Hemming's concert.

A few years ago, I watched a NHK TV program that introduced this musician. When I learned that Fujiko suddenly lost her hearing just before her debut concert while studying music in Germany, I could not stop crying. I have since attended her concerts on several occasions. Her live performances had a great impact on me, someone who had not been interested in music before. Her "*La Campanella*" and "*The Tempest*" filled my eyes with tears. Meanwhile, she is also known for making several mistakes in her performances. However, she says that it is natural for humans to make mistakes.

Whenever I listen to her music, I think that it is not only her technique but something exceeding that which enables her to give her superb performances. Fortunately, I enjoyed opportunities to meet her in dressing rooms and at convivial gatherings through an acquaintance whom I met on a trip to Okinawa two years ago.

Since then, Fujiko's concerts have been the only pleasure for me who have no hobby.



Editor's Note

In the middle of April, cherry blossoms in Soma City were in full bloom, albeit later than usual. In time with the blooming of the flowers, many people visited Baryo Park, noted for its cherry blossoms.

Have you enjoyed our second newsletter? With a total of 12 staff members, the Mental Health Care Center "*Nagomi*" is becoming more vibrant and lively. We will continue to exert strenuous efforts to provide continuous support.

Editor Natsumi