

Reporting on the revitalization of Fukushima



Journalism School participants holding up the newspapers they created

Newspapers created by Fukushima students Reporting on steady progress of Fukushima residents

Journalism School

August 1 to 3, 2017

Iwaki Seaside Nature Center, Iwaki City Lifelong Learning Plaza

Six years after the Great East Japan Earthquake and TEPCO Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant accident, a number of Fukushima students came together and visited various sites around the prefecture to report on Fukushima's steady progress on the road to recovery and to create newspapers based on their observations.

A journalism school was held for three days from August 1 to 3 at Iwaki Seaside Nature Center among other locations to help students learn about the current state of, and issues affecting the prefecture, and to acquire techniques for communicating ideas effectively. This year, which marks the workshop's fifth year, a total of 34 students ranging from fifth-grade elementary to third-grade high school took part in the workshop.

The students divided into six

groups, and on the first day of the workshop, each group visited a different site to cover a topic. Sites visited by the students included Wonder Farm, a hands-on agricultural theme park where visitors can enjoy local food products, the Naraha Remote Technology Development Center where the Japan Atomic Energy Agency is developing nuclear disaster response robots and related technologies, Spa Resort Hawaiians, and Aquamarine Fukushima.

The topics covered by the other two groups included an interview with Yoshiteru Nishi, team chef for the Japan National football team, and an interview with Takeshi Suzuki, Paralympic alpine skier and resident of the town of Inawashiro.

On the second day, the students got together in their respective groups to write their articles and create the newspapers, under the guidance of journalists from local newspapers. They used computers to design the layout

and learned how to create headlines, arrange photos and other aspects of putting together a newspaper. While working on the newspapers, the students could be heard exchanging comments such as "It's hard to express" and "I wonder how I can phrase this best." To decide on a masthead, group members brainstormed ideas and were able to create unique titles for their newspapers.

On the last day of the workshop, each group presented its

newspaper to an audience at Iwaki City Lifelong Learning Plaza. The students confidently presented their impressions and observations about the strong determination of Fukushima residents as they continue on their way to full recovery.

The Journalism School was organized by the Fukushima Prefectural Government and the Study Fukushima executive committee in collaboration with Fukushima Minpo News and The Fukushima Minyu Shinbun.



Ikegami answering questions from the students

Akira Ikegami as special instructor

On the last day of the workshop, journalist Akira Ikegami acted as a special instructor. Reviewing the newspapers created by the students, he stressed the positive aspects of their work and pointed out areas that needed improvement. He took a keen interest in their work, and proactively

offered feedback, such as "This article's viewpoint is well thought-out" and "Why didn't you report on this topic?" He also took questions from the students, and discussed the difficulty of communicating information accurately in a way that is easy to understand while also providing them with

useful tips about reporting. Ikegami also emphasized to the students the importance of valuing their dreams and never giving up on their quest to make them a reality. Regarding the revitalization efforts in Fukushima, he left them with the message, "Learn all you can about the current state of Fukushima, and keep in mind that it is important that the

true state of affairs is communicated as widely as possible to people outside the prefecture."

While sharing lunch with the students, Ikegami spoke about what inspired him to become a journalist and recounted some of the hardships of reporting in war zones, such as the time when he got too close to a minefield.