

Reporting on the future of Fukushima



Journalism School participants and Akira Ikegami (center front row)

Newspapers created by students ranging from elementary to high-school Featuring revitalization efforts of Fukushima residents

Five and a half years on from the Great East Japan Earthquake, Fukushima students divided into groups, visited several sites around the prefecture and created newspapers based on their observations, with the aim of highlighting the progress of Fukushima prefecture's revitalization, and observing and reporting on people hard at work in various fields. A Journalism School workshop was held over three days from August 6 to 8 at the Koriyama Nature Center in Koriyama and several other locations in the Ken-chu District, in order to help students to learn about the current state of the prefecture and acquire techniques for communicating ideas effectively. Twenty-five students from various parts of the prefecture, ranging from fifth-grade elementary to second-grade high school,

took part in the workshop. Under the guidance of professional journalists, they gathered information and organized their observations into articles, which they then presented in the form of newspapers. This was the fourth time the school has been held. The workshop was first held three years ago in Nihonmatsu city. The following year, it was held in Iwaki city, followed by Aizuwakamatsu last year, and at various locations throughout the Ken-chu District this year. Until now, the focus had been mainly on revitalization-related topics; this year, however, it was expanded to include individuals and groups active in the fields of culture and sports.

The students were divided into six groups and covered various topics at locations around the

city. One group visited PEP Kids Koriyama, an indoor playground for children, to cover trends in visitors to the playground. Another group went to Miyakojimachi in Tamura city to report on Miyakoji Sweets Yui, a confectionary shop hoping to promote the return of former residents through confectionary making. These visits, which also included reporting on the new Asakano-gama kiln installed in Koriyama, allowed the students to get a closer look at the state of the prefecture since the disaster. While covering the professional basketball team, Fukushima Bonds, and wheelchair basketball team Team Earth, several of the students had the opportunity to play with the teams, and learn first-hand about the passions and technical skills of the players. The final group of stu-

Journalism School August 6 to 8, 2016
Koriyama Nature Centre, Big Palette Fukushima

dents learned about the global phenomenon of anime culture at Fukushima Gainax anime production studio, the presence of which is expected to promote tourism to the prefecture. After gathering the necessary information, the students tackled the difficult task of creating a newspaper under the guidance of high school teachers and journalists from local newspapers, by writing the articles and selecting the photos to be used. The students put their ingenuity to the test to successfully create the newspapers, while getting a feel of the difficulties involved. Comments from the students revealed their insights from the experience: "Putting information

together in a clear and concise manner is really hard"; "It is important to work together as a team."

As the final step, each group presented their newspapers to an audience made up of members of the community at Big Palette Fukushima Hall. They explained confidently what they wanted to communicate in their respective newspapers and what they had learned in the process of creating the newspapers.

The Journalism School workshop was organized by Fukushima prefecture and the Fukushima no Manabi Executive Committee in cooperation with Fukushima Minyu Shimbun and Fukushima Minpo News.

Newspapers reviewed by Akira Ikegami

Journalist Akira Ikegami, who was invited as a guest instructor for the workshop, reviewed and commented on the newspapers created by the students. After hearing the presentations, Ikegami pointed out to the stu-

dents the positive aspects of their work and areas that needed improvement.

"I think you have genuinely understood the importance of accurate reporting and communication of information" he said.

Ikegami acknowledged the students' increased understanding of the current state of the prefecture through their experience, stating "It is your role to raise awareness of the current state of Fukushima as it continues on its path to revitalization. I'd like you to be able to accurately

communicate what Fukushima is like now, and what a wonderful place it is."

Ikegami took questions from the students, talked about current news topics, and recounted some of the difficulties he had encountered during his time as a journalist.



Ikegami answering questions from the students

This project is funded by the Fukushima Great East Japan Earthquake Child Support Fund.