

## Building a Community Where Everyone, Foreigners and Japanese Alike Can Live Comfortably

International Exchange Events & Japanese Language Classes Mantomi Kominkan

Since 2019, Mantomi Kominkan has hosted the Mantomi Market (local market) once a month on Sundays, fostering exchange between foreign residents and local citizens.

In 2024, the kominkan launched its hosted program, the “International Exchange Meeting.” Local volunteers from the “International Exchange Promotion Team” and foreign residents deepen their connections in a friendly atmosphere through activities like cooking together, making Tanabata decorations, trying on yukata, participating in Bon dance, trying on Ao-Dai(Vietnamese traditional costume), and taking part in evacuation drills.

Since September, a monthly Japanese language class for foreigners has been held. The program addresses



community challenges like traffic rules and garbage sorting. Under the guidance of instructors, the “International Exchange Promotion Team” provides support, advancing practical Japanese learning for daily life.

Mantomi Kominkan aims to serve as a hub for interaction between foreign residents and local citizens.

## Seeking Opportunities for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities, Their Families, and Supporters to Learn and Deepen Understanding Together

Mira☆Kuru Seto Kominkan

Launched in 2022 to provide learning opportunities and foster exchange among individuals with developmental disabilities, children with developmental disabilities, their families, and supporters living in the Seto Kominkan area.

Monthly workshops deepened understanding of developmental disabilities, teaching how to provide necessary support and seek



appropriate assistance. Specifically, we actively created opportunities to learn essential knowledge, such as how to request support during high school entrance exams (taught by a former high school teacher) and visits to local welfare offices and group homes. From the outset, we aimed to create a learning space driven by the participants themselves. Consequently, the “Mira☆Kuru” group for individuals with developmental disabilities, their families, and supporters was established in 2025. We will continue to support Mira☆Kuru's activities and promote awareness about them.



# Disaster Prevention • Safety and Security

Enhancing regional disaster resilience

## Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Through Community Efforts

### Disaster Preparedness Camp Senoo Kominkan

Every year, we hold a Disaster Preparedness Camp where residents of all ages from children to seniors reassess their homes and region from a disaster prevention perspective, aiming to become people who can act effectively when disaster strikes. In 2024, the camp was held on the elementary school grounds



and in the gymnasium.

Participants split into groups to experience booths featuring earthquake simulation vehicles, water fire extinguishers, and disaster prevention games. Junior high school students served as group leaders, timing transitions between booths, encouraging hydration, and carefully guiding participants to ensure smooth activities. Participants of the camp, observing participant movements, are increasingly considering disaster shelter management as a personal responsibility. They learned to think about how to act and what to prepare if a disaster actually occurs.



## Disaster Preparedness Starts with Learning Names and Faces

### Three School District Disaster Preparedness Exchange Meeting Sonan Kominkan

The Sonan Junior High School district encompasses three elementary school districts. The Three School District Disaster Preparedness Exchange Meeting began in 2019, prompted by the sentiment that “if there are no connections formed in everyday life, it’s difficult to cooperate when a disaster strikes.”

Many participants are members of voluntary disaster prevention groups or individuals involved in disaster preparedness activities. Through repeated attendance, they learned each other's names and faces, transforming initially reserved conversations into casual



exchanges. Participants share their respective disaster prevention activities, inspiring attendees from other districts to think, “I should try that in my own area next time.” Since 2021, junior high school teachers have also joined. This has fostered collaboration between the junior high school and the community, including support for disaster preparedness education at the school and recruitment of volunteers for local disaster prevention activities.





# Updating Local Disaster Preparedness from Women's Perspectives!

Women's Disaster Preparedness Café    Ichinomiya Kominkan



During the 2018 Western Japan Heavy Rain, the Ichinomiya area also suffered damage including above-floor and below-floor flooding, as well as landslides. The following year, we held a “Disaster Preparedness Seminar for Women,” attracting participants across a wide age range, from elderly individuals to mothers with small children. Responding to feedback from attendees expressing a desire to “continue interacting with people of different ages,” the “Women’s Disaster Preparedness Café” was born. This is sixth year of the Café.



Over the years, we've discussed disaster preparedness measures for the home, made steamed buns with juice pack, and heard from city employees who provided support at evacuation centers during the Noto Peninsula Earthquake. At our chat sessions, many perspectives unique to women's experiences are shared, and holding these meetings regularly fosters connections between different parts of the community. Our



future goal is for participants who learn through these workshops to become instructors at local community centers and PTA meetings, growing into disaster preparedness leaders within their region.

## Preparing for Disasters~Building Community Connections~

Disaster Prevention Training Presentation Event    Takamatsu Kominkan

All three elementary school districts within the Takamatsu Junior High School district conduct their own disaster prevention drills. Since 2013, we have held an annual “Disaster Prevention Training Presentation Event” at the Kominkan, hoping to share information, learn from each other, and deepen connections.

Each elementary school district presents the results and challenges of their training, receiving advice from external instructors such as certified disaster prevention specialists. During themed discussion sessions, participants actively raise challenges and opinions such as “How to get young people involved” and “The importance of building everyday connections.”

Participants have commented, “Hearing about other districts' approaches was very helpful,” and these insights are being applied to each community's disaster prevention and mitigation activities.

We will continue these efforts to reaffirm our preparedness mindset for disasters and encourage local residents to think together.



## Apartment Buildings can be Affected!

Apartment buildings can be affected!? “Manbo Night Cafe” Omoto Kominkan

The Kuwada Junior High School district, where the Omoto Kominkan is located, is in central Okayama City, an area densely packed with apartment buildings.

Residents began preparing, saying they wanted to consider staying safely at home rather than going to an evacuation shelter if a disaster struck. People who wanted to spread awareness about the importance of this preparedness then took the lead in starting the “Manbo Night Cafe” at the Omoto Kominkan. “Manbo” is short for “Mansion Bousai (Disaster Prevention for Apartment tenants).” Through discussions at the cafe, residents’



awareness of disasters shifted, recognizing that “preparation isn’t just for individual homes, but for the entire apartment complex.”

Inspired by information learned at the night cafe, activities are expanding: residents are forming voluntary disaster prevention groups based on the model learned there, holding study sessions to hear about advanced examples, and more.

Everyone is driven by the desire to protect the places they know and love from disasters and to increase what they can do to keep living there.



## School × Community × Kominkan: Learning Disaster Preparedness While Having Fun!

“TKB (Takashima-Kyokuryu Disaster Education Group)” Takashima Kominkan

TKB is a group formed by disaster prevention specialists in their 30s to 50s who responded to a call from the Kominkan. We aim to provide disaster education that involves children and parents

through cooperation between schools and the community.

Key activities include creating videos used in the introductory lessons on disaster prevention and mitigation for 4th graders, and conducting outreach classes. Furthermore, during the school term, they plan and run an

experiential workshop for elementary students called “Takashima Disaster Prevention Quest.” This quest is set up as “Catch the Escaped BOUSAI Monster!” where children tackle disaster prevention missions. At the venue, junior high and high school students, university students, the fire department, and companies collaborate to provide uniquely designed hands-on activities.





# Youth Participation in Local Communities

Toward the Succession of Next-Generation Community Activities

## Harnessing Youth Power for Community Development

Junior High and High School Volunteer Group 'Okayama CENTRAL Crew' /Asahi Project  
Asahi Kominkan

The volunteer group "Okayama CENTRAL Crew (OCC)" was formed to enable the junior high school third-year students who participated in the 2023 Kominkan Summer Festival to continue their activities even after advancing to high school. Approximately 30 junior and senior high school students are registered. Junior high students plan and run the Children's Summer Festival, while high school students organize and operate the children's craft booth at the Culture Festival and the World Exchange Festa.



Furthermore, following the consolidation of elementary schools into a single district, university students plan and conduct "Historical Walking Tours" that highlight the area's strengths. These tours aim to foster cross-district interaction among residents and cultivate a sense of attachment to the community, and they have been very well received by participants.

Asahi Kominkan will launch as the new Okayama Chuo Kominkan in 2026. OCC members have made a strong declaration: "We will support the new Kominkan."



## Aiming to Be a Place for Learning and Connection

Summer and Winter Break Children's Study Class    Fukuda Kominkan



Launched in 2023, this program aims to create a safe space for elementary school students to study without disrupting their learning rhythm during summer and winter breaks, while also providing opportunities for junior high and high school students to contribute.

Junior high school students volunteer to support these classes. They receive training beforehand on how to approach and interact with elementary students. Drawing on their own experiences, they help elementary students think through their “I don't understand” moments and support their learning. During

winter break, high school calligraphy club members assist with calligraphy homework assignments.

Hearing elementary students' “I did it!” and “Thank you!” boosts the middle and high school students' self-esteem, creating a triple-win relationship centered around the Kominkan.

Elementary students who participated in this program desire to volunteer when they become junior high school students. This activity makes a place for a cycle of learning and connection among young people.



## Middle and High School Students Shine in Summer Vacation Workshops!

Sannan Kids Club    Sannan Kominkan

We held a workshop for elementary school students called “Summer Vacation Kids Club,” where middle schoolers participated as assistants. We thought it was a waste to stop there! Starting in 2024, we recruited middle schoolers to get involved from the planning stage and formed the “Sannan Kids Club.” Junior high students now take charge of one session of the summer workshop, challenging themselves



with planning and operation. After numerous meetings, they successfully offered activities like “snow globe making” for elementary students. It was heartening to see them thoughtfully crafting explanations easy for younger children to understand. To grow their membership, they proactively used the school intercom to recruit fellow students to join their activities. This year, even students who graduated from junior high are participating alongside them.

We look forward to continuing our support for these children's proactive activities.



## Connecting Children and Youth to the Community

### Kamitsumichi Volunteer Group Joto Kominkan

To create learning opportunities and community participation for junior high and high school students, we launched a year-round, registration-based volunteer group in 2023. Approximately 20 members, primarily students and alumni of Joto Junior High School, are registered.

At our kickoff meeting, we discussed ideas for this year and planned activities including intergenerational board games, intergenerational new sports, the Summer Vacation Memories Festival, and cake baking.



We aim to evolve from passive volunteer activities to a volunteer group that takes initiative in its activities.

We hope that these activities will help nurturing the next generation of community members while fostering communication across generations.



## The Takashima Community Development Team: Bringing Smiles to Takashima!

### Takashima Community Development Team Takashima Kominkan

The Takashima Community Development Team is a volunteer group formed by junior high and high school students in 2022 to commemorate the 30th anniversary of Takashima Kominkan. With the slogan “Bringing smiles to Takashima residents + creating excitement for everyone through our teamwork,” the team members participate in community events upon request and plan and execute our own events.



Our biggest event is the “Takashima Kids Summer Festival.” It was born from the members' desire to give children fun summer memories after local events were canceled due to the pandemic. It is held with the support of adults who share the team's vision. The Community Development Team handled attractions like a haunted house and shaved ice. The venue was filled with the smiles of children, local adults, and the team members themselves. Later, following a team member's idea, they donated a long rope and balls purchased with part of the event's proceeds to their alma mater elementary school.

## Building the Future of Our Community with Youth Power

### Team Nada: Registered Junior High and High School Student Volunteer Program Nadasaki Kominkan



Facing challenges such as an aging population and weakening community bonds, young people are increasingly relied upon as members of the community. Aiming to cultivate future leaders for the Nadasaki district, the registered junior high and high school student volunteer group “Team Nada” began its activities in 2017.



Beyond assisting with community events, Team Nada independently plans and runs its own events (such as disaster prevention festivals, summer festivals, game tournaments, and environmental activities). Through the cooperation and collaboration of local residents, opportunities for youth involvement are expanding. Particularly in disaster preparedness, Team Nada's activities have been a catalyst. This includes joint fieldwork with residents to create neighborhood disaster maps for improved preparedness and conducting initial response drills for opening evacuation shelters.

We will continue to strive to promote resident interaction and revitalize the community through the activities of Team Nada.

## Okayama's Shining Examples of “Work” and “Work Styles”

### High School Students × Company Experience Event Minami Kominkan

Okayama City is home to many companies committed to the SDGs. However, high school students rarely have opportunities to learn about local businesses. Consequently, when they attend universities outside the prefecture and later consider employment or career changes, Okayama City companies are sometimes excluded from their options.

Therefore, we created a space where companies in Okayama City



working on SDGs could directly share their “jobs” and “work styles” with high school students, hoping to spark their interest and consideration for these companies as future employers. Students from Okayama Hosen High School, adjacent to Minami Kominkan, have been able to experience the strengths of each company through interaction and hands-on experiences with company representatives. Furthermore, presenting what they learned to the companies and local community members has deepened their understanding of local businesses.





# Environment

## Raising Environmental Awareness

### The Future Environment Connected by Junior High Students

#### What We Can Do to Eliminate Marine Debris Minan-Nishi Kominkan



The Minan Junior High School district has many irrigation canals. In the past, farming tools and harvested crops were transported by river boats. At the Minan-Nishi Kominkan, we learned about the current state of trash in local irrigation canals and rivers. Starting in 2021, we began holding study sessions to raise awareness about river trash. In 2023, we launched the “Minan Model,” aiming to enhance community strength through both local activities (waste collection) and environmental education (learning), with the goal of solving marine and river waste problems. Based on ideas from junior high students at workshops, we conducted experiments installing nets in irrigation canals to study waste runoff.

Additionally, during biannual cleanup activities, local neighborhood

associations and junior high students jointly collected trash from irrigation ditches, sorted it, learned about plastic waste, and considered actions they could take to eliminate marine debris.

We intend to continue expanding the circle of people who take personal responsibility for protecting the local environment.



### Get Close to Creatures Around Us

#### Kyokuto Nature Observation Team Kyokuto Kominkan

One of our goals is to deepen understanding of the creatures living near the Kominkan. We visit mountains and rivers each season, learning how many creatures inhabit our local environment. For example, we observe the Asagimadara butterfly, known for its long-distance migration, flying to Mount



Keshigo every year in search of Fujibakama

plants(Thoroughwort Flowers). We also learn about how specific invasive species disrupt ecosystems.

The children and parents who participate in this program report that encounters with creatures they've never seen before deepen their understanding of nature and help them become more comfortable with it. This leads to new perspectives and changes in behavior.

