

Community Development through Coexistence and Mutual Support



In both urban areas and rural areas, there are many things that are dying or becoming obsolete. Seasonal events, festivals and other forms of local tradition represent wisdom, enabling a wide variety of people to enjoy working together to preserve and improve their local communities.

Our ESD Practices



Community Development through Mutual Support

Association for Forming Ties – Preparation for Better Senior Lives –

Association for Forming Ties among Local Residents – What We Can Do –

The aging ratio of our area is by far the highest of all the urban areas in Okayama City. To ensure that local residents can continue to live with no worries, it is essential for them to develop their networks among themselves.

At the Kozai Kominkan, we strive to train volunteers who can provide daily life support that is neither offered by the administration nor covered by public nursing care insurance.

It is often pointed out that there is a difference between those who provide support and those who receive it. To provide support for local residents, the first step we take is to identify what they actually need and how they would like to be engaged in their local community. Secondly, based on this identification, we discuss what types of activities should be promoted and what should be done to continue such activities. In the near future, we would like to work with the local elementary and junior high schools and many companies.

We believe that these efforts serve as a good opportunity for both children and adults to regard the aging society as their own issues and prepare for better senior lives.

Kozai Kominkan p42 map10





Request Tune: “Heavy Rotation”!

Challenging Lesson – Special Classes Held for Junior High School Students of Special Needs Education School Attached to the Faculty of Education, Okayama University



At the Higashiyama Kominkan, we were requested by a teacher of a local special needs education school to run a class interacting with local residents in the subject of “Integrated Studies.” Since we strive to create a comfortable community environment where all residents, regardless of age, physical or mental condition, or nationality, live together. We were very pleased that we were requested to do so.

We organized a class in which students selected their favorite activity from among dance, music, and craft production classes and tried it once a week over about one month.

In the music activity, it was decided that students and members of the Kominkan’s music club would play together. The song requested by the students was “Heavy Rotation,” – a hit song of the Japanese young idol group AKB48.

Since most of the members in the music club were in their 60s or 70s and have never played it before, the joint performance served as a fun interaction event filled with embarrassed smiles and the volunteers of the Kominkan’s clubs learned a lot from each other. Many of them commented that it became grateful and precious opportunities for both of them.

Higashiyama Kominkan p42 map²⁹



“Let’s Try It Together!” “I Made It!”

Striving for Coexistence – Through Interaction with Okayama Prefectural Okayama Nishi Special Needs Education School



Welfare facilities and special needs education schools in our area have so far had few opportunities to interact directly with local residents.

At the Minan-Nishi Kominkan, the hub of the community, we strive to create an environment where all local residents can live comfortably. In this regard, we have launched activities to connect local residents and Okayama Prefectural Okayama Nishi Special Needs Education School.

We have made the first step forward by cooperating with the school by holding seminars at the Kominkan, selling agricultural produce, and cleaning up the Kominkan together. Such mutual interaction efforts are expanding to the extent that volunteers who usually read books for children at the Kominkan or other local facilities now visit the school and read books for the students.

Minan-Nishi Kominkan p42 map³⁶

Starting from You, Ask “Why?”

Terakoya Takamatsu

While studying at school, don't you have anything about which you would like to learn more or don't you have any questions about explanations given to you?

At the Takamatsu Kominkan, we hold a *terakoya* (elementary school), where the focus is placed on mutual interaction between instructors and students, rather than one-sided instruction to cram knowledge into children's brains. At this school, instructors teach children until they understand well, and both the instructors and students learn from each other. Most instructors are local residents who used to work as school teachers. They are trying to create an environment where children can learn on their own initiative.

At this school, instructors respect questions raised by children and search for answers to the questions together with the children.

Through the children, ties are formed among people who have retired from their jobs and parents, beyond generations. Learning at a regular school is now developing into learning in the local community.

Takamatsu Kominkan p42 map22



What Do You Want to Be in the Future?

Why Not Try a Job? – Career Experience Program



At the Fukuda Kominkan, we hold a workshop in cooperation with schools and parent-teacher associations (PTAs). At the workshop, elementary school students experience simulations of the jobs that they would like to do in the future, such as a journalist, a patissier, a hairdresser, and a *manga* creator.

It seems that the simulations of such occupations stimulate elementary school students to help them become aware of and consider their dreams and futures.

Additionally, at this workshop, university students are engaged as volunteer staff, which allows children to enjoy interaction with a wide variety of adults.

We hope that through the workshop, children will learn a little about the mechanisms of society and have more interest in the local community.



Fukuda Kominkan p42 map30

Make Our Ensemble Heard Far Away

KND Wind Ensemble

Our area is confronted with the problem of a super-aging population combined with a declining birth rate. Due to the area's location far from major urban areas and its inconvenient transportation access, many young people move out of the area when they enter higher-level education or begin to work.

What makes people want to continue to live in their hometown or return to the area? Based on this question, the Konandai Kominkan is trying to use music to further enhance the area's attractive features.

The KND (KoNanDai) Wind Ensemble is a brass band consisting mainly of the brass band club of Konandai Junior High School, along with other members of all generations from elementary school students to men and women in their 60s. The brass band has become so popular that people both inside and outside the area look forward to listening to their performance.

The number of brass band members is gradually increasing. Some members are high school students and people in their 20s and 30s who cannot engage in local community efforts so frequently, due to their school and work activities.

Presently, the brass band's main activity is playing volunteer performances at local welfare facilities for senior citizens and the Kominkan. We hope that this effort will encourage young people who have left our area to come back again in the future, and that when such young people become adults, they will promote some activities together with local children. Our dream is extending.



Konandai Kominkan p42 map13



Summer Vacation Free School

The Summer Vacation Free School is a project launched in 2001 jointly by the NPO Okayama City Kodomo Center (and Child Theaters established across Japan) and many Kominkan centers in order to create a sound environment for the growth of children.

For this project, local residents, including junior and senior high school students, serve as instructors and volunteer staff. The project allows children to experience various fun activities in their local Kominkan and foster their zest for living.

Under the project, a wide variety of programs incorporating the characteristics of each area and each Kominkan are held, such as a tile art class that stimulates children’s interest in creation, an experiment class to experience science together with university students, a pizza and *udon* noodle cooking class, a fire-making class, a *nagashi-somen* (floating noodles) experience, and many other activities that children seldom experience at home.

Summer Vacation Free School



To provide opportunities for children to enjoy various activities during summer vacation, the NPO Culture and Experience Net Saidaiji Child Theater and the Kyokuto Kominkan jointly offer a wide variety of hands-on programs every year. Holding programs almost every day during summer vacation, we feel that the number of programs provided is perhaps the largest in Okayama City!

This is made possible by the participants in seminars held at the Kominkan, as well as other local residents, who look forward very much to spending time together with the children. Actually, right after the free school period ends, such participants and residents begin to discuss what types of programs they will provide the following year. Just like a toy box, the free school is filled with a host of fun activities. The school is a valuable place to attract and connect many people.

Kyokuto Kominkan p42 map 8

Summer Vacation Free School – Opportunity for Junior and Senior High School Students to Demonstrate their Abilities

The Summer Vacation Free School held by the Minami Kominkan serves as a good opportunity for students from public kindergartens, elementary schools, and junior and senior high schools to get together at the Kominkan, and contrive new games and learn from each other.

Certainly, local adult residents cooperate in running the free school. Still, the main players in this project in recent years have been junior and senior high school volunteer students.

When participating in the free school as volunteer staff for the first time, many junior high school students simply serve as assistant staff. On the other hand, many senior high school students begin to work in the project based on a clear awareness of their future vision, such as doing a child-related job. In this regard, such senior high school students face the elementary school children from a different perspective from that of junior high school students and adults. They instruct the elementary school students about Japanese calligraphy, the games of *go* and *shogi*, and how to make lunch, and help them do their summer vacation homework.

Partly because their schools are located close to each other, there are opportunities for them to meet other than at the Summer Vacation Free School, which will lead to ties being formed among students across a wide age range.



Minami Kominkan p42 map 35



So Many Worries about Raising the First Child

Waiwai Café



At the Seto Kominkan, we have begun a Waiwai café event as a joint project with the Council of Social Welfare.

Held at the Kominkan, a Waiwai café event is promoted in cooperation with a health center, a child-care committee, and a nutrition improvement council, so that parents raising their first children will not feel isolated. Such parents tend to feel anxious and worried about raising children.

While the first part of a Waiwai café event focuses on helping parents raise their children by providing child-rearing information, the second part of the event is café time, when parents raising their first children interact with each other.

During the event, participants' children are taken care of by child-care committee members and students majoring in infant nursery science at a local university. Moreover, an adviser is invited to the café time, with whom participants can share their daily questions and worries.

Seto Kominkan p42 map18

Community Development Starting from Child Rearing

Terakoya School for Rearing Children



With the increase in the number of nuclear families, more and more new parents are worried whether their ways of raising children are right; there is no one around them whom they can ask for advice.

Amidst this situation, in cooperation with an NPO, the Joto Kominkan holds the *Terakoya* School for Rearing Children, where parents with infants share and discuss their daily concerns and learn from each other. By attending the school again and again, young parents form closer relationships among themselves, which develop into stronger ties through which they



can help each other in their daily lives. At the final session of the school, such parents hold an interaction event on their own initiative in order to deepen their ties. After completing the school, some participants serve as managing members of organizations for parents and children. Thus, more and more parents experiencing the school contribute to the local community.

Joto Kominkan p42 map16

Understand that There is No Right Answer regarding Child Rearing

Nikkorina - Child-Rearing Dialogue Meeting

More and more new parents today are anxious and worried about their ways of child rearing; there is no one around them whom they can ask for advice.

If they can share such anxiety with those who are in a similar situation or those who have raised children, they may feel somewhat relieved. In response to a request from participants in a parenting support program to have an opportunity to exchange information and share concerns even after completing the program, Nikkorina – a Child-Rearing Dialogue Meeting – was established.

By interacting with other parents, those who have raised children, and senior citizens who love children, new parents realize that there is no right answer for child rearing, and that they can establish their own styles after referring to a wide variety of child-rearing examples.



Fukuhama Kominkan p42 map31



Raising Disaster Prevention Awareness in the Entire Community

Disaster Prevention Camp in Mitsu



After the Great East Japan Earthquake, Okayama City launched a wide variety of disaster damage prevention efforts, involving many local residents, including children.

In Mitsu, the focus is placed not on an earthquake but on a flooding. Recently, based on the scenario of a flooding, the Mitsu Kominkan held a Disaster Prevention Camp, in which residents participated in an evacuation drill and experienced making various tools, emergency food, and sandbags.

It is essential for each resident to develop their capability to cope with a natural disaster. However, since junior high school students worked extremely hard during the camp, local adults were convinced that young power is truly reliable.



In Okayama, which is seldom hit by a natural disaster, it might be difficult to change each resident's awareness. By promoting the Disaster Prevention Camp in Mitsu steadily as a grass-root activity, we would like to create a community environment to reduce natural disaster damage.

Mitsu Kominkan p42 map³⁴

Producing a Map to Connect Individuals with Individuals, as well as the Past and the Future

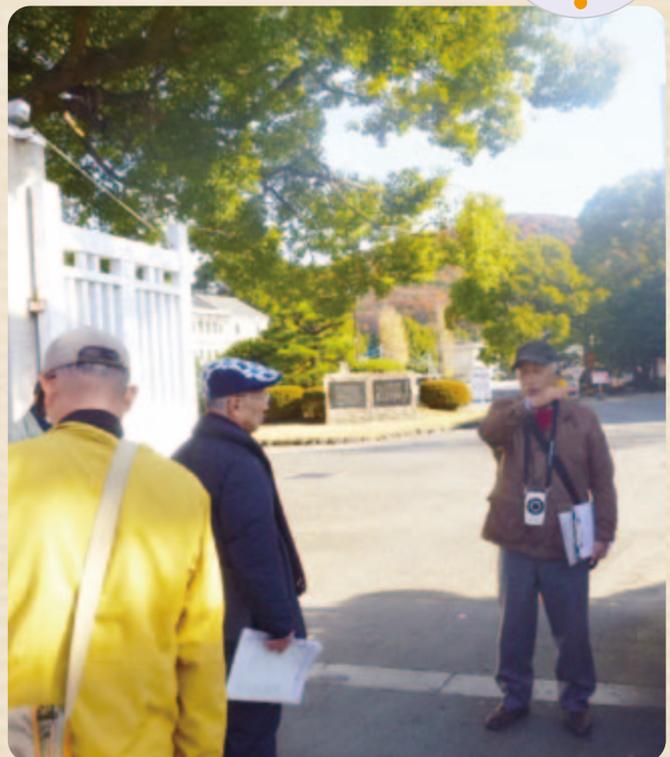
During the Second World War, approximately 70% of urban areas in Okayama were reduced to ruins by a severe air raid. As a result, there are no documents left today to tell what the streets looked like before the destruction of the Sixth High School in the war, and how people used to live their lives. People in those days lived a humble life, but they were spiritually rich. To tell young people today about this period, I am now working on a map production project at the Chuo Kominkan.

As part of the map production project, I visited people living in and around the area where the Sixth High School used to be located, interviewed graduates from the high school, and gathered many episodes. This series of activities has enabled me to meet new people from all generations and to form new ties with them. I listened to a wide variety of people. Some explained what they had heard from their parents and others told me about their own experiences. I also heard about the streets in olden days, and how people in those days felt about their situations. While listening to these people, I felt like I was sharing a moment of the lives of people in the past. This has made me realize that the scenery that I usually see inadvertently is filled with a wide variety of feelings of many people. By promoting these activities not alone but in cooperation with people engaged in various efforts promoted at the Kominkan, I can meet many people and form many ties. I think that this is as great as a community development activity.

My ESD experience



Mr. Tetsuya Omori, involved in activities at the Chuo Kominkan





Nice to Meet You! Where Are You From?

Japanese Language Class / Interaction at Kominkan Festival

In many areas, various companies employ workers from abroad, making it necessary to encourage such workers and local residents to understand each other and form ties among themselves.

Since there is an industrial complex in Mitsu, the Mitsu Kominkan holds a Japanese language class to help foreign residents learn Japanese. Some class members introduce their homeland cultures at a Kominkan festival and other events. This serves as an opportunity for people to deepen their understandings about diverse cultures and interact with each other.

Mitsu Kominkan p42 map 34



Are You All Right? Let's Evacuate Together

Multinational Meeting for Disaster Prevention



Although many foreign people live in our area, there have been few opportunities so far for such people to meet with Japanese residents. Some of them live in the same community without knowing each other's face or name.

Since our area is seldom hit by a natural disaster, residents were originally not highly aware of the importance of disaster prevention. Still, since it is too late to take action after the occurrence of a disaster, the Multinational Meeting for Disaster Prevention has been established, with the involvement of many people who speak different languages in their everyday lives.

In light of their difficulty in direct verbal communication, the executive committee of the meeting proposed holding hands-on events for both Japanese and foreign residents. Today, as members living in the same community, they join various experience programs and discuss various topics together.



Koki Kominkan p42 map 9

Where Can I Find a Doctor?

Friendly Kyoyama



The number of foreign residents in Kyoyama is very large, even compared with other areas of Okayama City. Since many of them do not speak Japanese, they will perhaps feel a wide variety of concerns in their daily lives.

Considering that their most serious problems concern physical health, the Kyoyama Kominkan has produced a Doctor Map to indicate where internal-medicine specialists, pediatrics, dental clinics, and other medical institutions are located in our area. In addition, we have established the World Club as an opportunity for young parents who are worried about raising children to interact with each other.

We also hold cooking classes where participants can get to know each other by introducing their home-country dishes and also themselves.



Kyoyama Kominkan p42 map 7



Have Some Tea and Music?

San-moku, Open Café Event

San-moku is an open café event planned and operated by volunteer staff of the Higashi Kominkan.

At the event, coffee (100 yen a cup) is served, using famous mineral water from a local water source. Also, at the event, members of various clubs of the Kominkan and local residents play musical instruments and demonstrate other performances, providing a relaxing time for participants.



It has been three years since the café event was first launched in 2011. Held monthly on the third Thursday (pronounced "san-moku" in Japanese) from 13:30 to 15:30, the event attracts 40 to 80 participants on each occasion.



Higashi Kominkan p42 map 28

Vigorous Area through Encounters with People of Different Generations and Occupations

Yuttalist Café



If people with a wide variety of skills and experiences play a major role in community development after their retirement, the community will become more vigorous. To people who have placed their focus only on their jobs so far, however, it might be difficult to begin taking action for the local community. To serve as a bridge between such people and the community, Yuttalist Café event is held.

At this café event, middle-aged men, many of whom have relatively weak relationships with the local community, act as staff. This helps them become aware of local activities and meet people. The café event is replete with staff members' attention to detail. They roast raw coffee beans produced with care for the environment and production system, using a roaster made by a staff member. Serving very tasty coffee (100 yen a cup), the café event is popular both in and outside the area. Held on the fourth Saturday every month from 13:30 to 16:30 (admission by 16:00), the café event serves as an opportunity for anyone to drop in and hang out in a casual atmosphere.

Konan Kominkan p42 map 12