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Candle Night Newsletter #38

September 7, 2010

Candle Night Committee

We have had one of the hottest summers on record in over 100 years in Japan. How have you enjoyed your summer/winter this year?

Topics

- * Candle Night Summer Solstice in 2010
- * Lights-Down Campaign in 2010
- * Event Report: Candle Night in Solviva Organic Farm--Lights of Soil, Lights of Winds

Candle Night Summer Solstice in 2010

Communication via Twitter and Facebook appear to have developed more Candle Night fans in 2010. As the number of Tweets and Facebook postings increase, Candle Night has gained more attention. The number of followers and fans increased every week towards the summer solstice; especially the Candle Night Facebook Fan Page. It received many feedback comments and "Like" responses from around the world.

On June 21 and July 7, 2010, Candle Night opened a temporary webcasting station for two hours. It featured the "heart" of Candle Night by telling stories and talking about Candle Night. The guest speakers of the program were; Candle Night key promoters Kazuyoshi Fujita and Shin'ichi Tsuji, Japanese singer Tokiko Kato, Kate Sakai, and MCed by Saiko Ito of Candle Night Committee. Fujita and Tsuji gave some important messages on Candle Night in their talk; "There should be a million ways to enjoy Candle Night. We just need to be as we feel." "We don't need material wealth. What we really

need is spiritual wealth--it is visible when artificial lights are turned off." Many tweets were posted during the program and Ito read the messages and gave comments in real time. From the tweets, we could see that young people, particularly in their teens and 20's, sought for "a sense of connectedness" and were interested in "slow" life through Candle Night.

(Taeko Ohno)

Lights-Down Campaign in 2010

Japan's Ministry of the Environment Lights-Down Campaign 2010 took place as part of the Challenge 25 Campaign--a new national initiative to prevent global warming. It corresponded and cooperated with Candle Night. 69,346 facilities and businesses participated in the summer solstice lights-down event on June 21, while 69,203 facilities and businesses participated in the lights-down event on July 7.

Event Report: Candle Night in Solviva Organic Farm--Lights of Soil, Lights of Winds

A Candle Night event titled "Lights of Soil, Lights of Winds" was held at the Solviva Organic Farm on June 19, 2010. The farm--a beautiful terraced rice paddy field--is located in a mountainous area of Takashima City, Shiga Prefecture and commands a fine view of Lake Biwa, the largest lake in Japan. Under the theme of protecting a historical terraced paddy field and the global environment, 50 participants lit about 1,000 candles. The candles produced a beautiful "move of lights" all around the terraced paddy field.

Terraced paddy fields were seen all over Japan in the past. They use natural slopes in mountainous areas. Each area of a paddy field is very small. Maintaining these areas require heavy manual labor because it is difficult to use machinery, and thus productivity is very low. The use of terraced paddy fields has decreased since the 1970s due to the national policy of rice acreage reduction and aging producers.

Since 1990, the terraced rice paddy fields have regained popularity because of their function of protecting the ecosystem, preventing floods and replenishing water sources,

as well as food production. It has also renewed its cultural value as one of Japan's traditional landscapes. However, many remaining rice paddy fields remain abandoned and have not been revived.

Solviva Organic Farm is a place where you can enjoy beautiful Lake Biwa. In spring, wild flowers bloom around the terraced paddy fields; in summer, swinging grains of rice; in autumn, colorful leaves; and in winter, a snowy landscape. Two years ago, farmer Koichi Yoshikawa changed his farming practice from organic farming to "natural farming," using spring water from the area. In the natural farming process, they don't use machinery nor tilling. They don't get rid of weeds, either. Rice grows in natural surroundings as is.

Yoshikawa says, "when we think of the future, it will become more and more important to live without depending on fossil fuels. We started Candle Night because it gives us an opportunity to protect nature, not to put more burden on the earth, and to feel the light of the moon and the stars.

Their Candle Night--Lights of Soil, Lights of Winds--has become part of the "Satoyama Life Project" to rejuvenate local communities. People from the area and students from nearby cities cooperate with each other to hold the event. "Lights of Soil" means lights shed on the beauty of the soil; while "Lights of Winds" means the communication among people who join and participate in the event.

Participants of the event said, "It was interesting to get together with people with different backgrounds in a place far away from their everyday lives. Candle Night connected one another and worked as a catalyst to change people." "By flickering candlelight, it was a good opportunity to think about the meaning of "Lights of Soil" and "Lights of Winds" based on the terraced rice paddy fields and their natural surroundings." "It is a once-a-year event and very special, but I hope the feeling of being thankful to nature becomes our everyday thought."

(Taeko Ohno)

We invite your local stories, festivals and events related to candles and fires. Please send emails to: eninfo@candle-night.org

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Candle Night Committee

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