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The Candle Night Newsletter--#23

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Candle Night Committee

Candle Night Summer 2008 is approaching. We welcome your message at

http://www.candle-night.org/english/2008summer/candle_scape.html

Topics

*2008 Summer Solstice Marks Candle Night's Fifth Anniversary of Sending a Message to the World

*Candlescape--Sharing your feelings with people around the world

*"Lightsout" events in Asian cities--

'Dim It' in Hong Kong, 'Candle Night Korea,' and 'Lights Out Day' in Taipei

*Event Report--Earth Candle Night in Mauritius

2008 Summer Solstice Marks Candle Night's Fifth Anniversary of Sending a Message to the World

This year's 2008 summer solstice also marks the fifth anniversary of an event called Candle Night since it was started in 2003.

The idea of holding Candle Night in Japan, where people turn off their lights and light candles in unison, was originally inspired by the Voluntary Blackout movement in Canada, which was launched in 2001 as a way to protest the U.S. Bush administration's declaration that it would build a nuclear power plant each month.

Inspired by the Canadian movement, two Japanese non-governmental organizations (NGOs) -- Daichi-O-Mamoru-Kai (also known as the Association to Preserve the Earth) and the Sloth Club -- worked to start a voluntary blackout movement in Japan. The first Candle Night, held on the summer solstice, June 22, in 2003, was launched together with other environmental groups using the slogan "Turn off the lights. Take it slow."

The Candle Night initiative simply suggests that people switch off their lights for two hours, from 8:00 to 10:00 p.m., on the night of the summer solstice and enjoy some time by candlelight in any way they want-- having dinner, listening to music, taking a bath, etc.

Some join in local Candle Night events, while others simply enjoy a quiet night without watching TV. It is a voluntary, participatory, and creative cultural campaign that suggests that people share "alternative ways of spending time" and "more diverse scales of affluence" by temporarily turning away from goods and information as an experience shared by society as a whole.

Beyond political messages such as saving energy and protesting the use of nuclear power, Candle Night encourages a broader concept that calls for enjoying time on one's own by "turning off the lights and taking it slow," which has resulted in attracting many supporters. The initiative was started with the hope of involving as many as one million people. It turned out that some five million across the country joined in the first time (according to an estimate by the Ministry of the Environment), and more than 200 major landmarks such as Tokyo Tower and Himeji Castle turned off their lights.

Since then, Candle Night has taken place on the summer and winter solstices every year, and involved more supporters and events each year. In 2007, a total of 39,845 major facilities, including the famous landmark, Tokyo Tower, switched off their lights, reducing power consumption by 812,508 kilowatt-hours across the country.

The event is now spreading across the world. The Korean Environmental Women's Network, an NGO in Korea, worked closely with Japanese Candle Night organizers to hold their own Candle Night. Events were also held in Taiwan, Australia, China (Shanghai), Mauritius, and many other countries. The Candle Night Committee now sends out newsletters in English to 64 countries in its bid to connect activities and shared feelings in each country and around the world.

Featuring a Sense of Connection and Happiness

The key promoters of this event only provide a platform, however, and do not take the lead in spreading the movement. That is probably why many events are independently organized and the movement has spread so fast around the world.

Each of us may feel that alone our impact is small, but when people act together positively as one it can be powerful. The Candle Night Committee is hoping to connect with other movements in the world, such as the group organizing Earth Hour in Australia, identify the links among the motivations behind the various movements, and then make them visible. Many people are concerned about our planet and future, but we have not yet reached the point where these feelings become strong enough to turn into actions that then drastically change politics and the economy. The Candle Night Committee would like to connect people through these shared thoughts and feelings and transform them into power.

The Candle Night website, the "Candlescape," uses advanced information technologies such as cell phones and the Internet to help share such feelings and reinforce a sense of connectedness. Participants not only in Japan but also around the world can send messages that are displayed in real time globally. The messages appear as "lights" on the world map displayed on the website. The website enables participants to realize the existence of other participants around the world who share the same feelings.

Special Extended Campaign for Candle Night 2008

In 2008 the summer solstice is on June 21. Two weeks later, on July 7, the G8 Hokkaido Toyako Summit will be held in Japan. Since there are obviously many other countries in the world besides the G8 countries, the Candle Night Committee explored ways to involve more countries and send out diverse messages. Thus, in 2008, the Candle Night event will be extended from Saturday, June 21 (solstice) to Monday, July 7 (Japanese Star Festival), and again call for people to "turn off the lights and take it slow."

Besides the extended Candle Night weeks, the committee is taking a new step. They have remodeled the Candlescape website, which can now better facilitate collecting and sending messages from people all around the world.

On the message board, for instance, anyone can write and send their messages by clicking on the point where they live on the globe and then uploading their messages in English or in their native tongue. The messages are then displayed after rising from a point of light on the globe, illustrating how participants' feelings are being connected across and beyond boundaries.

On the opening webpage of the message board, the English word "candle" is also written in 20 other languages. Once they have selected "candle" in their own language, participants can then write their messages. The 2008 version of Candlescape provides 20 different language platforms, and that number will continue to grow. http://www.candle-night.org/english/2008summer/candle_scape.html

Messages from all around the world will cross over on Candlescape. It can help display many people's messages on the web, and will be a perfect place to share thoughts and feelings with people around the world.

Candle Night Calls on People to Stop and Reflect

Candle Night is now being observed twice a year on the summer and winter solstices. In Japan and around the world, in communities, cafes, and homes, people who share the idea have started to gather and to take action. Candle Night provides an opportunity for them to put their ideas into action.

People who participate in Candle Night are encouraged to stop a moment and think not only about their immediate personal issues but also about true happiness and the things they believe are important, even in the middle of their busy daily lives. Organizers believe that the result of taking this time to think and ponder can be used as one of the leverage points to redirect our society and economy onto a better path, both in Japan and around the world.

Organizers hope you will join Candle Night and enjoy some quality time. Please be sure to write your own message on Candlescape. Even if each of our powers is small, connecting together provides great momentum in moving our world forward in a positive direction.

(Written by Junko Edahiro and Yuko Kishikami)

Note: This article also appeared in the Japan for Sustainability Newsletter #069. For more information on JFS, please visit <http://japanfs.org>

Candlescape--Sharing your feelings with people around the world

How to write your message on Candlescape

Visit http://www.candle-night.org/english/2008summer/candle_scape.html

To write your message, select "Flash" version.

1. Select a word meaning "candle" in your language.
2. The globe will be displayed along with the message sent just before yours. Then, click the "Send your message" button at the center of the screen below.
3. Click "From World."
4. Put the cursor on the globe. It rotates as you drag it. Click the point where you live and it will appear in an enlarged version of the map.
5. Click the point on the enlarged map and the message form will appear. Type your nickname, message and e-mail address, then click OK.
6. If your PC environment is slow, try the HTML version to read messages from around the world.

<http://feel.candle-night.org/archives/scape/2008summer/nonflash/index.php?lang=eng>

As of June 10, messages can be sent only using the Flash version. Sorry for any inconvenience this may cause.

"Lightsout" events in Asian cities--

'Dim It' in Hong Kong, Candle Night Korea, and Lights Out Day in Taipei

On the evening of the summer solstice, June 21, for one hour starting at 20:30, a lights-out event called "Dim It" will be held in Hong Kong. The event is organized by the Friends of the Earth Hong Kong.

This activity is a call for people to change their lifestyle rooted in mass consumption, which is leading to air pollution and global warming. NGOs and businesses in these cities will join.

"Dim It" website: <http://www.foe.org.hk/lightsout/>

June 9 Press release:
http://www.foe.org.hk/welcome/geten.asp?id_path=1,%207,%2028,%20150,%203781,%203891

Details in other initiatives will be in the next issue of the Candle Night Newsletter.

Candle Night Korea
Korean Women's Environmental Network (KWEN)
<http://www.candle-night.or.kr/>

Lights Out Day
Society of wildness (SOW)
<http://www.lightsoutday.org.tw/>

Event Report: Earth Candle Night in Mauritius

On May 2nd, 2008, from 18:30 to 19:00, the Earth Candle Night in Mauritius was held. It was the third Candle Night event in the country. NGOs, the Association Civique Midlands and the First Steps Network hosted the event, along with the cooperation of the Ministry of Public Utilities and Central Electricity Board.

The event started by the reading of a Candle Night verse, then a classical music performance was held. Starting with this occasion, people in Mauritius are determined to promote energy-saving.

The next event will take place on May 8, 2009.

For more information and to view the event report, please visit:
<http://earthcandlelight.webs.com/>

Editor's note:

Candle Night has now started to send more messages to the world. Around the world, natural disasters such as the cyclone in Myanmar and the great earthquake in China have devastated these areas and many people are still suffering. Because of these events, I believe it is even more important to share our feelings with others. (Y.K.)

We also invite your local stories, festivals and events related to candles and fires.

We released the 2007 Activity Report on the following URL. Please take a look to see the whole picture of our initiative.

<http://www.candle-night.org/data/candlelight-report2007summer-english.pdf>

Please send emails to: eninfo@candle-night.org

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Back issues of the newsletter are also available.

http://www.candle-night.org/english/2008summer/news/news_letter.html

We welcome your comments. Please send them to: eninfo@candle-night.org

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