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The Candle Night Newsletter--#24

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Candle Night Committee

We are still in "Candle Night Week!" Candle Night Summer 2008 is extended to July 7, the first day of the G8 Hokkaido Toyako Summit. Enjoy slow quality time by turning off your lights.

Candle Night can be observed everywhere. It's not limited to organized events. Why don't you join us and enjoy a quiet night wherever you like?

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*Candle Stories--Brighten up Afghanistan with Used Candles

*On/Off Museum-- Join us by sending your photos!

*Event report--"Tokyo Happyakuyatou" and Tokyo Tower's Lights-down

The Tokyo Tower, emerging from the darkness, looks fantastic with its lights off. On June 21, "Tokyo Happyakuyatou 2008" was held at Shiba Park where the Tokyo Tower is located. It was organized by Daichi-O-Mamorukai (the Association to Preserve the Earth), which serves as the Secretariat of the Candle Night Committee. It is an organization whose focus is organic food and agriculture.

The event started at 12:30. Kazuyoshi Fujita, President of Daichi-O-Mamorukai and one of the key promoters of Candle Night, made an opening remark. Next, there was a live talk show featuring Shinichi Tsuji, another key promoter of Candle Night. After the show, music performances were held. They included a traditional Japanese lively instruments performance, a show featuring traditional Japanese drums played by students of Myojo Gakuen High School, and a free live concert by Japanese singer, Tokiko Kato.

According to Daichi-O-Mamorukai, though it was raining during the event, some 4,000 people gathered at Shiba Park and the event was successful.

One of the features of the event was "food mileage stands." Seventeen stands, including safe finger foods, curry and brown rice bowls were always crowded with people. Many vendors ran out of food before dark.

Through talking with organic food producers who ran the stands, I found they are all enthusiastic about their cause. Japan's self-sufficiency rate for food (in terms of calories) is only 39 percent. These producers use only safe fertilizers. I was surprised that they also use domestically grown soy beans, whose sufficiency rate is only 3 to 4 percent, for feeding livestock which then produces manure.

I realized that Daichi-O-Mamorukai is supported by very sincere food producers. I was impressed with that, and enjoyed eating the food.

The most impressive people I met at the event were a mother and her five-year old daughter. They were at the booth that deals with issues of Rokkasho Village in northern Japan and the Rokkasho Nuclear Waste Reprocessing Plant. Rokkasho Village has many nuclear fuel related facilities including the reprocessing plant. There is a harsh controversy over the safety of the reprocessing plant. The plant started its operation in the middle of this controversy. The mother explained to her daughter that the reprocessing plant is emitting vast amounts of nuclear substances--incomparably much more than ordinary nuclear power plants. These emissions have a negative effect on the fish and agricultural produce near the plant.

Noticing the child's sincere face while listening to the story, I came to realize that joining the event can give people a good opportunity for education.

There were also interesting attractions--a solar-powered stage car, reusable food dishes, and a hundred coin refund system and so on. They were fun and at the same time, eco-friendly.

At 19:40, the countdown event started. Ichiro Kamoshita, Japanese Minister of the Environment, was on the stage as a special guest where he joined in the count down of the Tokyo Tower's lights-out.

After the lights of Tokyo Tower were turned off, "noh", a Japanese classic musical drama, was performed by Tsunao Yamai, with the collaboration of piano music, played by Kentaro Kihara. The performance was beautiful in the candlelight. People enjoyed the beauty of the Japanese traditional performance.

The event included not only music, but also Japanese traditions, eco-friendly ways of life, and the importance of consuming locally grown food. It shares the principle of Candle Night: enjoy the moment when we turn off the lights, and learn from nature. (Reported by Akiko Kawagoe)

In Japan, the lights of major facilities across the nation will be turned off again on July 7, the first day of the G8 Hokkaido Toyako Summit, from 20:00 to 22:00. Other event reports held in Japan can be read at <http://event.candle-night.org/> (Only in Japanese)

*Reports from the world

On June 21, lights-out events were also held in Seoul, Hong Kong, and various cities in Taiwan and China.

*Candle Night Korea

In Seoul, a countdown event was held from 18:00 to 22:00 at the foot of the N Seoul Tower. One of the events was to support and encourage people who wanted to express their love for someone, but had not yet done so. At the public event, people brought flowers to say "I love you" to their special person for the first time.

Some streetlights were turned off in the downtown area for an hour from 20:00 to 21:00.

*Dim It--Hong Kong

Over 142 buildings in the Victoria Harbor area turned out their lights for one hour from 20:30 to 21:30. The lights-out event was held at Charter Garden. You can view how people spent their time in the dark.

Friends of the Earth Hong Kong, a leading organizer of the event uploaded the movie on Youtube. http://jp.youtube.com/watch?v=hcjKF_tj6ek

Aviva Life Insurance Co., a supporter of the campaign also provided a short movie. You can enjoy it at the following URL. <http://www.dragontc.com/aviva/>

*Lights Out Day--Taiwan

Over 130,000 people joined "Lights Out Day" in Taiwan on June 21. Lights were turned off from 20:00 to 21:00 in Taipei, Taoyuan, Hsinchu, Taichung, Tainan, Kaohsiung, Hualien and Yilan. The 101 Tower and Mirama Ferris Wheel turned off their lights too. <http://www.lightsoutday.org.tw/index1.htm>

*Lights Out Day in China

In Beijing, the lights-out action was dedicated to the victims of the Sichuan earthquake. Neighborhoods in Dongsi, Xin Tiandi and Nanluogu joined the movement.

In Sichuan Province, where the great earthquake hit, people in Chengdu City turned their lights out for one hour. They prayed for the victims of the great earthquake that devastated the area on May 12, 2008.

In Zhengzhou City, Henan Province, streetlights of main roads were turned off after 20:00. They extended the lights-out period from one hour to four hours.

Collaborated Efforts with the Japanese Ministry of the Environment

This year, the Japanese Ministry of the Environment has called for businesses and public

and private organizations to turn off their building's lights from 20:00 to 22:00 on June 21 and July 7, the first day of the G8 Hokkaido Toyako Summit. Major landmarks such as the Tokyo Tower and the Rainbow Bridge turned their lights off on June 21, and will join the campaign on July 7 as well.

On June 21, 71,756 facilities and buildings joined the lights-down campaign. According to the ministry about 1,114,000 kilowatts per hour of electricity was saved.

As of July 2, 72,667 places have registered to participate in the campaign on July 7. It is estimated that around 1,085,000 kilowatts per hour of electricity will be saved.

For more information, visit <http://www.wanokurashi.ne.jp/act/campaign/> (Only in Japanese)

Messages have been posted on Candlescape

We have many messages from Japan and the world.

Post your message to Candlescape at: <http://feel.candle-night.org/scape/>

*Turning off the lights, I can see sentiment of my loved one sitting in front of me. And I can hear the sound of rain and chirping of insects. Our small voices prove our respect for nature. How pleasant!--the feeling I had not had for years.

*Slow is beautiful. Certain things can be seen only in darkness. Let's put lights in our hearts.

*I want to start from what I can. We don't have to overdo, but we can begin whenever we feel like!

*Global warming has become an issue. Let's think about how we've wasted electricity by turning off the lights for two hours and enjoying the candlelight. Let Candle Night be a start, instead of an aim.

*It is a magical feeling to be able to connect with someone, whom we have never met and who lives far away, through candlelight. I feel warm and happy.

*Live in peace with nature

(Translated by Candle Night Committee)

Candle Stories--Brighten up Afghanistan with Used Candles

You may find it difficult to burn a candle up to the last drop of wax. Many people have candles they have used only a few times, or some that become short but still usable.

To make good use of these used candles, the Japanese Organization for International Cooperation in Family Planning (JOICFP) collects them to deliver to Afghanistan. Since the daily electricity supply is not large enough for the residents, Afghanistan suffers a lack

of lighting. Local people use oil lamps in addition to electric lights, but it has become difficult to buy fuel due to escalating oil prices. Lights after sunset are precious in that country.

Kobori Inc, a major Japanese manufacturer of Buddhist altars, started collecting Japanese candles (wa-rousoku) in August 2004, calling on 197 Shin Buddhism temples across the country for donations. Japanese candles used in rituals are famous for their size - they are bigger than western candles. They are also brighter because they burn at a higher heat. After Buddhist rituals take place, 90 percent of those candles are discarded, even though they are still useable.

In January 2006, a total of 10,000 Japanese candles that Kobori had collected were delivered to Afghanistan by JOICFP. Thanks to the donation of these candles, children can study and mothers can cook and sew in the light. The candles from Japan help to brighten the hope for the future in Afghanistan.

JOICFP's project to contribute used candles to Afghanistan has been expanding with the cooperation of not only Kobori but also individual donors. From January 2006 to April 2008, a total of 44,432 candles were delivered to Afghanistan and Cambodia.

Isn't it nice to imagine the candles you used bring a ray of hope to people in other parts of the world and that the quality time you had by candlelight is also passed on to them?

(Keiko Hoshino)

On/Off Museum-- Join us by sending your photos!

Send us photos taken using the same composition when the lights were on and when they were off.

We would like to share what it looks like when the lights are off during Candle Night. When you turn off the lights and take photos of lights-out facilities, offices, schools, and home, you can find something that you don't notice in the light.

Take a photo of the usual setting. Then take another in the same composition, after turning the lights off. Please attach your message to each photo.

For more information, please visit <http://www.candle-night.org/on-off-museum/english/>

Editor's note:

On June 14, just one week before the summer solstice on June 21, a big earthquake hit northern Japan. Twelve people died and about 300 people had to be evacuated. Whenever I watch the TV news footage, I feel helpless.

We are extending Candle Night week to July 7 this year. Please send your message to Candlescape. <http://feel.candle-night.org/scape/>

(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/candlenight-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

This newsletter is funded by the Japan Fund for Global Environment.

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