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The Candle Night Newsletter--#5
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Candle Night Committee

The Candle Night is an event under the slogan of "Turn off lights and take it slow" on the night of summer solstice. This is a voluntary participatory event, initiated by Japan's environmental non-governmental organizations.

The Candle Night Committee hopes to extend this event from Japan to the world, to the "Global Candle Night" event. We will provide readers with information and activities of the Candle Night.

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*This year's Candle Night Winter Solstice 2005 will be enjoyed on the evening of December 22nd, eight to 10 p. m.

*The contents of the website are to be updated as the night of Winter Solstice approaches.
Stay tuned at <http://www.candle-night.org/>

*A total of 311 registered events in Japan were held in summer 2005. We have also received reports from China and South Korea.

*According to Japanese Ministry of the Environment, the number of participating facilities in the "Light Down" event on June 19, 2005, was 22,716, which surpassed by far last year's 6,088.

This issue features the following stories:

Candle Night in Shanghai, China

Fostering a Sense of Unity—Candle Night in Kumagaya, Japan

Candle Night in Shanghai

Candle Night Committee

Shanghai, China is a city full of brightly lit high rises equipped with many electric appliances. Like the Japanese, the people in Shanghai have realized the importance of saving energy. They are learning about the effects of global warming, due in part to a series of hot summers in past years. The first Candle Night event was held in Shanghai in June 2005. We interviewed Ms. Fan Li, Executive Director of Global Links Initiative (GLI). GLI is a non-governmental organization that supports communications between China, Japan and the United Kingdom.

"Although we have had 'Candle Nights' so far, the GLI is the first organization in China that promotes the campaign by putting much needed focus on the environment. On June 21, 2005, more than 20 children gathered at the Shanghai Discovery Children's Museum (SDCM), an NGO that supports children's education. At the event, children had a short lecture on the global CO₂ increase and decrease caused by human activities such as driving automobiles and cutting down forest trees. Plastic bottles were used as models of the earth to illustrate changing volumes of CO₂. They then spent the evening under the candlelight. They seldom use candles in their daily lives and I'm sure they felt something—peace or the environment—under a romantic atmosphere created by candles, something different from their lives filled with artificial electric lights."

The first Candle Night event was triggered by the Ecology Earth Art 21 International Exhibition at the National Chinese Art Academy Museum in Shanghai in April 2005. At this event, more than 200 Japanese artists exhibited their works of calligraphy, paintings and modeling/sculptures, to educate the public on the principles of environmental conservation. During the exhibition, Mr. Yokozawa Yoshitaka, one of the organizing members of the EEA 21 and a producer of the art exhibition, asked Ms. Li how they could exchange with NGOs in Shanghai. Ms. Li proposed a joint Candle Night in Shanghai, which could stand for mutual understanding between the citizens of China and Japan, led by private sectors, not the government.

Along with the exhibition, a candle making workshop was held. The workshop had around 60 participants including 15 adults. Mr. Yokozawa showed how to make candles using waste cooking oil. "At the workshop," Ms. Li said, "we learned how to make waste cooking oil candles. It was good preparation for the Candle Night event in June." While they were making candles with waste cooking oil, the differences between Shanghai and Japan came up. "In Shanghai, it is difficult to collect waste cooking oil, compared to Japan. People tend to think that Chinese cooking uses a lot of cooking oil. However, oil is mainly used for stir frying, not deep frying. We used expired cooking oil

instead.” The workshop was broadcast by the media. It was also included in the Oriental Morning Post and the Shanghai Evening Post.

By spreading information of the Candle Night event world-wide, it will be interesting to know how each country will respond. Ms. Li has something in mind to expand the Candle Night events in Shanghai. "I would like the NGO's in China to learn the way the Candle Night campaign evolves in Japan, where it is supported by various sectors together with mass media. In Shanghai, there are environmental campaigns, for example setting the air conditioner to 28 degrees Celsius in the summer. However, all of them are government-led campaigns. We want to learn how the Candle Night event can be successful by involving the citizens in the campaign."

How will candlelight be spread in Shanghai? We are all looking forward to finding out.

Related articles are found at the GLI website:

<http://www.glinet.org/online/news.php?lng=en&pg=768>

Fostering a Sense of Unity—Candle Night in Kumagaya, Japan
Candle Night Committee

Kumagaya City, with a population of around 200,000, is located in the Northern part of Saitama Prefecture, Japan. It is a one-hour commute from Tokyo by bullet train. It is a historic city that originated from an old posting station in the Edo Period in the 17th century.

The first Candle Night event in Kumagaya city was in 2004. It was initiated by members of the Kumagaya Junior Chamber, Inc. At the event, 12,000 candles were lit and 3,800 residents gathered at Central Park in Kumagaya City. It was one of the biggest events in Candle Night Summer Solstice 2004, in terms of the number of participants and number of candles lit on that night.

Although the event was successful, the other parts of the city were still full of electric lights. Mr. Motohiko Goto of the Kumagaya JC thought that the Candle Night should be a town-wide event, involving more households, stores and companies.

The following year, on the night of June 18, 2005, the Candle Night in Kumagaya was held under the following slogan:

"Have you ever looked up and watched a night sky in Kumagaya?

We wish to leave the beautiful sky to our children.

Cherish the nature, save our resources.

Spend time tonight with your loved ones and families—under the candle lights.”

Artists and writers living in Kumagaya city spread the message to the residents. On that night, 10,000 candles were lit in the venue. Around 4,000 people gathered to support Candle Night and enjoy a concert where people played the shakuhachi (Japanese flute), the ocarina, the guitar and sang in a chorus. In addition, a symbolic tower made of 500 candles and lanterns caught the people's attention.

The organizing committee of the 2005 event was a citizen's network in Kumagaya city, consisting of the Kumagaya JC, citizen's organizations and non-profit organizations, as well as the city's social welfare council. It was supported by city and prefectural governments. Businesses in Kumagaya supported the events too. In addition to delivering candles and flyers, they participated in the events in their unique ways. For example, a rice company donated 300 rice balls and a bee farm contributed 150 honey drinks and beeswax candles.

The committee conducted a door-to-door campaign, encouraging the neighboring companies, stores and residents to voluntarily turn off the lights during the events, to include more people and businesses to participate, adding much more to the last year's event.

Mr. Goto told of his hope for next year.

"The Candle Night in Kumagaya has been held twice, and it has been spreading among citizens in the city. People in Kumagaya are very interested in environmental issues, so naturally they are interested in the Candle Night event, too. Moreover, since Kumagaya is one of the hottest towns in Japan, they may try to cool down the town on the longest summer day, by turning off the lights. The event in Kumagaya takes advantage of its unique local concerns, and promotes the concern into an enjoyable event. By sharing a "slow" time together, various types of cooperation and collaborations have been developed. The event was successful, but it should not be temporary. Changing our lifestyle to be environmentally friendly is very important. I'm looking forward to the 2006 summer event, wondering how many more people will join us. I believe the Candle Night in Kumagaya will be the hottest seasonal event on the night of summer solstice in the hottest town in Japan."

We hope you enjoyed this issue of the Candle Night Newsletter.

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