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The Candle Night Newsletter--#7
February 28, Copyright (c) 2006
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 government organizations or NGOs.

<http://www.candle-night.org/>

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

On the night of the winter solstice 2005, we received the following message from Canada:

"I celebrated Candle Night in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. My husband and sister and I turned off the lights, lit dozens of tealights and sang songs and laughed."

On winter solstice, the Candle Night events were held in many places in Japan. The registered events on our website totaled 157.

How did you spend your Candle Night?

This issue features the following stories:

A report from the Candle Night 2005 Winter Solstice--Candle Night in Rikkyo University

Beeswax candle workshop and Candle Night volunteer meeting at Japan for Sustainability

A report from the Candle Night 2005 Winter Solstice--Candle
Night in Rikkyo University

The Ikebukuro Campus of Rikkyo University, Tokyo, held a Candle Night event on December 22, 2006, under the title of "Candle Night Winter Solstice in Rikkyo--Turn off the lights and light a fire in your mind." This was the second Candle Night at the university. The first event was held the summer of the same year. Gaining support from university organizations such as the Office of the Chaplains and the Volunteer Center, students established an organizing committee for the event. Making plans and preparations for the event took over several months.

How has the Candle Night in Rikkyo taken its form? In the spring of 2005, a poet who graduated from the university made a proposal to have a poetry workshop during a Candle Night event. It would be an opportunity to think about and share "our happiness" together. The proposal inspired the student environmental groups to hold the first Candle Night event in the summer of 2005, hoping to spark environmental awareness in their community.

The 2005 winter event was held on the last day of class, just before the winter holidays. Every year, Rikkyo University's symbol, a cedar tree, is decorated with illumination lights about a month before Christmas. It has been one of Tokyo's tourist spots in winter. The famous Christmas illumination was turned off on one night, and instead a tree made of candles was supposed to be lit. Since this is the second Candle Night event in Rikkyo, many people supported and helped the event. Thus, the winter event focused on the people who gathered there, their reflections over the year 2005, and their feelings. Requiem was also one of the focuses of the event. So many lives were lost due to devastating natural disasters in 2004 and 2005, as well as, war and terrorism, despite the world's wish for peace.

The event started at 17:00 with candle service at the chapel. Compared to the summer event, it was already dark at 17:00, and all participants realized how short the day on the winter solstice. After the service, participants moved to a classroom, and joined a poetry workshop over fair-trade coffee. The theme of the workshop was "meets Memory." All the participants looked into their mind and to make poems. Then, they watched an interview with the promoters of the Candle Night Committee, Ms. Miyako Maekita, Mr. Shinichi Tsuji, Mr. Kazuyoshi Fujita and Mr. Shinichi Takemura and the video footages of Aceh in Indonesia, which was devastated from the Indian Ocean Earthquake and Tsunami, and the places ruined by large earthquake in northern Pakistan. Watching these images, each participant thought about the year's events on their own.

Then, the participants went outside for the countdown event--turning off the lights of the symbolic cedar tree, university buildings and facilities and streetlights. They were supposed to light the tree made of candles, but the winds were too strong. Each participant held a candle with a wind screen attached while listening to the student's hand bell performance.

Rikkyo University is located in Ikebukuro, Tokyo, one of Japan's major downtown areas. It is always surrounded by hustle and bustle, completely opposite from a "slow world." Twice a year, spending slow nights under the theme of "Turn off the lights, take it slow" has been very important. It would be a great pleasure if the Candle Night event could help change people's lives as well as the environment in the surrounding area.

(Article: courtesy of Rikkyo University Candle Night Committee)

Beeswax candle workshop and Candle Night volunteer meeting
at Japan for Sustainability

Japan for Sustainability (JFS) is a non-profit organization created to disseminate information on the environmental initiatives of citizens, businesses and local governments of Japan to the world via e-mail newsletters. Ms. Junko Edahiro, one of the promoters of Candle Night, is also the co-founder of JFS. Using its know-how and network, JFS supports Candle Night as an organization, sending information on the move both in and outside of Japan to the world.

<http://www.japanfs.org/index.html>

JFS's activities, such as gathering information and translating it into English are supported by many volunteer teams. Because most of the work is done via e-mail and the Internet, the volunteer meetings held several times a year are important occasions to meet in person and communicate with each other.

On the evening of December 23, one night after the winter solstice in 2006, JFS held a Candle Night volunteer meeting. At the meeting, participants enjoyed a variety of dishes cooked by volunteers. They turned off the lights and lit the brand-new beeswax candles made at the workshop that was held prior to the meeting.

Ms. Megu'u Ogata of Yukkurido Co. was an instructor at the workshop. Yukkurido originated from

the Sloth Club, whose founder is Mr. Shinichi Tuji, another Candle Night promoter. Yukkanido intends to nurture "slow" culture, opposite from a culture represented by "fast" life, and to improve the ways of addressing environmental issues from an economic perspective.

<http://www.yukkanido.com/>

Beeswax candles have distinctive sweet smells, very different from those made from petroleum-derived paraffin. Looking carefully, you can see the colors of the flames are also different. We would like to show you how to make beeswax candles and explain the difference between warousoku (Japanese candles) and candles in general.

What is beeswax?

Beeswax, as you can imagine from the term, is produced when honeybees make honey. It is said that honeybees make hexagon-shaped cells using their antennas as rulers. If you boil honeycomb in water after collecting honey and leave it overnight, the beeswax will be separated from the honeycomb. In Japan, it is said that the first candles were made from beeswax. When Buddhism was introduced to Japan from China, beeswax was introduced as well. At that time, beeswax candles were high-end goods. Ordinary candles were made of pine resin, rolled with the leaves of plants. The story of "warousoku"--Japanese candles

Japan has its own distinctive candles called warousoku ("wa" means Japanese and "rousoku" means candles), which were made in the Edo Period (1603-1867). Besides beeswax, Japanese candles were also made from plant-derived materials, such as Japanese lacquer trees, Japanese wax trees, or rice bran. One of the distinguishing characteristics of Japanese candles is their shape. They are tall, like a taper, but slightly wider and flat on top. The center of the body is curved slightly inward, making a distinctive line. The reasons are not clear, but someone once said that it is because the wax is applied by the palms of craftsmen. The wick is made from rush fibers, which are wrapped around a bamboo stick. Then, after the wax has dried, the stick is pulled away from the body, making the wick hollow.

Flowers are painted on many Japanese candles because Japanese people enjoy flowers, even during the seasons when flowers are not blooming. This represents part of Japanese views on nature--Japanese people want to feel nature in their daily lives.

Dipping beeswax candles

The flames of beeswax candles are yellowish because the temperature is lower than that made from

paraffin.

At this workshop, the participants tried dipping candles, which takes more time than any other candle making technique. The easiest way is to pour melted wax in a paper cup, put in a wick and cool it.

--How to make a beeswax candle--

You will need the following:

Beeswax 150 gram

Cotton wicks

Steamer pot

Dipping can

1. Put beeswax into a dipping can. Fill the water into the steamer pot and warm it. The water level should be half of the dipping can's height.
2. When the water in the steamer pot begins to boil, turn off the burner. Place the dipping can in the pot and melt the beeswax. It melts at 60 to 65 degrees Celsius. If the water begins to cool down, warm it up again.
3. Cut the length of wick as you like. Hold the end of the wick and dip it into the melted beeswax as straight as possible.
4. After one moment, pull the wick out quickly. When the surface of the wax hardens and turns white, re-submerge it. Repeat the process again and again, and build up the wax little by little. When the wax in the dipping can hardens, warm it up and melt the wax again.

After repeating the dipping, the candle creates its own shape. Each candle is unique--one is thick while another may look like a pear.

When it reaches the desired diameter and shape, the candle is decorated with colored beeswax. This process adds a distinguished look to each candle. You can melt shaved crayon into the melted beeswax and color it before dipping.

Twenty people who participated in the workshop say, "It is the first experience for me. I enjoyed it,"

"I have come to know there are many kinds of wax,"
"The smell is good, and I like kneading the colored beeswax."

The candle making workshop gives participants an opportunity to use their senses. It may give them a chance to consider their own culture while enjoying the process.

(Staff writer: Yuko Kisikami)

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

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