

JET Program Bonds Japanese and American Hearts

– Beyond Tragedy of Great East Japan Earthquake –

Ms. Taylor Anderson, a U.S. citizen who passed away in the Great East Japan Earthquake, had been an assistant language teacher since 2008 under the Japan Exchange and Teaching Program (JET Program), teaching English at seven elementary and junior high schools, including Mangokuura Junior High School, in Ishinomaki City, Miyagi Prefecture, and endearing herself to schoolchildren. Ms. Anderson, teaching at Mangokuura Elementary School when the quake hit, headed home after confirming that parents took all children home, but was apparently swallowed by tsunami.

On September 6, 2011, her bereaved family and the Tokyo American Club donated a “Taylor Anderson Reading Corner” to each school in Ishinomaki City where she was teaching. A dedication ceremony was held at Mangokuura Elementary School. The “Taylor Anderson Reading Corner,” conceived in memory of Ms. Taylor, a book lover, comprises a collection of books she liked, a PC to run a DVD explaining the reading corner, and a bookshelf made by Mr. Shinichi Endo, a woodwork artist and resident of nearby Higashimatsushima City. Ms. Anderson's bereaved family and schoolchildren of Mangokuura Elementary School participated in the ceremony. Mr. Endo, who produced the bookshelf, lost three children in the disaster, two of whom were learning English with Ms. Anderson. Preceding the ceremony, Ishinomaki City hosted a reception where Ishinomaki Mayor Koichi Kameyama presented a letter of gratitude to her parents, Andy and Jean Anderson, saying, “I hope that the Taylor Anderson Reading Corner will become a bridge between Japan and the United States.”

Miss Haruka Kameyama, one of Ms. Anderson's students at Mangokuura Junior High School, recalls her fond memory of the teacher. “I have really learned a lot from teacher Taylor. I will never forget what I felt in her class such as the allure of English as well as fun and desire to learn more of the language,” she says. “I have a dream to become an English teacher. I will study harder to make the dream come true and, someday, I will be a teacher just as wonderful as teacher Taylor.”

Ms. Anderson, who deeply loved Japanese children, has left her aspiration behind her that bonded Japanese and American hearts. It has been handed down to her students, who keep it very much alive.