

# Art aid sent as therapy for disaster-zone kids



Mark Hollstein  
SPECIAL TO THE JAPAN TIMES

Fifth-grader Emiliano Renteria was sitting quietly in class on March 11 when his elementary school in Miyagi Prefecture began to shake violently.

"The earthquake was so strong that chairs were flying all around the room," he said. "I thought I was going to die. I hid under the table. The teacher told us to get under our tables."

Renteria said he returned home that day to find things in a state of disarray. But he considers himself lucky — a friend's house was washed away by the tsunami that followed the quake.

But with gas and electricity knocked out by the disaster, "we had to eat cold stuff all the time," he recalled. And as the danger from radiation leaking from the crippled Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant was growing, Renteria's father decided it would be safer for his family to move away from the area.

Nearly three months later, Emiliano is using his lunch break to help his new classmates at Osaka International School of Kwansai Gakuin (OIS) in Minoo, Osaka Prefecture, take part in an international effort to support other children from the Tohoku region still suffering in the aftermath of the catastrophe.

He picks up a brightly painted canvas tote bag from a large pile on the floor and begins to fill it with 20 different kinds of art and music supplies — paints, brushes, colored pencils, sketchbooks, erasers, a recorder and music to play — that are laid out in a row of boxes on tables set up at the school's front entrance.

The bag Renteria is filling was hand-painted with a message of hope by a child in Thailand. Some of his classmates are filling bags painted by children in Austria or ones they decorated themselves.

Most feature bright colors, flowers, rainbows and other symbols of hope and renewal. In addition to the art supplies, Renteria picks two or three messages of support to include in his bag, each colorfully illustrated by a child attending one of the 30 schools in 23 countries that have raised money, or contributed in other ways to make this gift possible.

When the 212 bags are ready, Renteria helps box and load them onto a truck that will deliver them to Kirikiri Elementary School in Otsuchi, Iwate Prefecture, which was created after the quake for children from four elementary schools that were destroyed.

Renteria said he's glad the children will have new school supplies. "I hope now they'll have something to do other than just worrying about what's going to happen to them," he



Lucky bags: Fifth-graders at Osaka International School of Kwansai Gakuin in Minoo, Osaka Prefecture, show off bags painted by students from around the world. MARK HOLLSTEIN

bags will soon be arriving from children in Spain.

"If we had a little bit more money we could fill those too," Henbest de Calvillo said, adding the most essential elements of the bags are the illustrated notes from children around the world, and the messages of hope painted on the sides.

"When the kids open these bags they are going to have all these things like paints and brushes and oil pastels and origami paper. They can cut and paste and glue, which is great," she said.

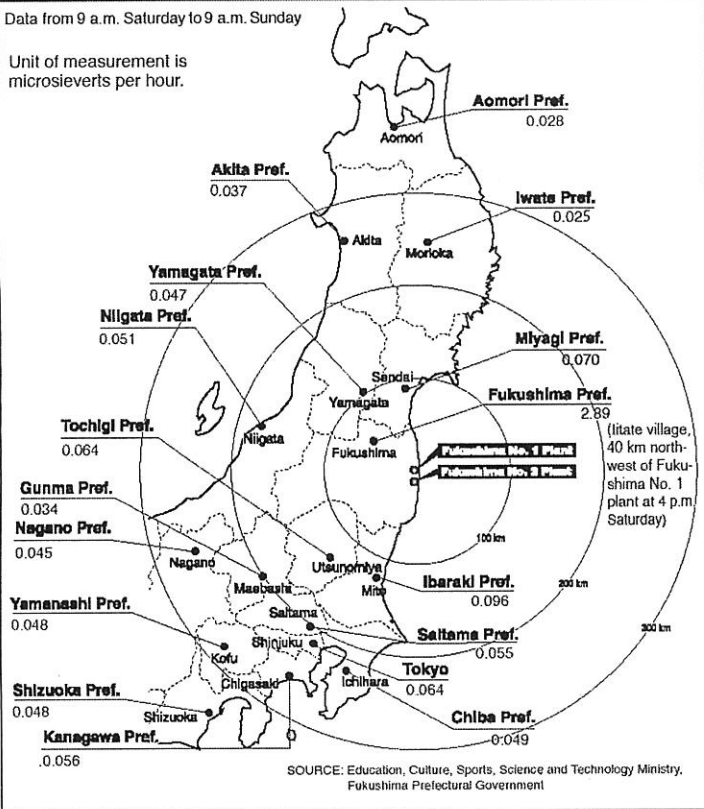
"But I hope they will also think about all the people around the world who are supporting them. I hope they say, 'Wow, someone really went to a lot of effort,' and it wasn't the Red Cross or other adults, it was kids. I hope they get a kind of mental support from that," she said.

"Art really has that deep aspect to it, people can look at it and understand things that just can't be said with words."

To contribute to Children's Wishes for Japan contact Jennifer Henbest de Calvillo at [jhcalvillo@senri.ed.jp](mailto:jhcalvillo@senri.ed.jp), or for more information visit the group's website at [web.me.com/jhcalvillo/ChildrensWishesForJapan/CWJ.html](http://web.me.com/jhcalvillo/ChildrensWishesForJapan/CWJ.html).

Playing Santa: Fifth-graders (from left) Rina Kawamura, Shoko Yamaji, Freya Kirwan and Kaya Freese stuff recorders into bags recently at Osaka International School of Kwansai Gakuin in Minoo, Osaka Prefecture. MARK HOLLSTEIN

## Maximum radiation levels in eastern Japan



said.

A similar idea inspired Renteria's new art teacher at OIS, Jennifer Henbest de Calvillo, to set up Children's Wishes for Japan in the days immediately after the quake.

By providing art and music supplies to children in the disaster-hit northeast, she hoped to give them a productive way to spend their time in evacuation shelters, as well as the tools necessary to express their emotions and "reconnect with humanity in a way that only art can provide."

"It's natural that after the earthquake the first donations people made were to the Red Cross," Henbest de Calvillo said. "The idea was to make sure people had clean water and food, shelter and heating oil and all those kinds of things. But after those immediate needs had been met, we still have people who might be in shelters for two years or more."

In such situations "the healing power of art and music can really make a difference," she said.

Children's Wishes for Japan began with a \$100 donation from Henbest de Calvillo's father, who doubted she could meet her goal of raising \$10,000.

"Thinking about how much money was needed, I was a little scared," she admitted. But she had one advantage: she had taught at international schools in Zimbabwe, Myanmar, Vietnam and Thailand and had also made connections with other schools around the world through art exchange programs.

"Soon after I contacted The Peterson School in Mexico City they had a poptastic sale and sent us \$1,000. The American School of Doha in Qatar sponsored 'Compassion Walk' and sent another \$1,000," she said.

A friend who teaches in Beijing asked her colleagues to do-

nate the money they had raised for her retirement gift, about \$500, to the project.

The OIS community also rallied around Henbest de Calvillo. A member of the school's faculty donated all the recorders, worth about \$3,000, and the PTA raised a further \$1,000.

Students gave up their allowances and bilingual parents spent hours translating into

Japanese the more than 1,000 illustrated notes sent from students around the world.

Children's Wishes for Japan has now raised more than \$20,000. In addition to the 212 bags sent to Kirikiri Elementary School in Iwate, another 180 bags will soon be sent to three schools in Miyagi Prefecture.

But donations are still needed, as another 300 hand-painted

**ジャパンタイムズの本**

効率的に覚える!

新刊 **TOEIC TEST 英単語**

スマート  
600

スマート  
800

ジャパンタイムズ編 定価各1,470円(税別) **CD2枚付き**

<p><b>TOEIC TEST 英単語 スマート600</b></p> <p>厳選された1000語句を効率的に覚える!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●30万語のデータベースから目標スコア突破に必要な約1000語句を厳選。</li> <li>●出題傾向を反映したシンプルで覚えやすい例文。</li> <li>●視覚的に記憶に残るイラストページ。</li> <li>●全見出し項目、第1訳語、例文を収録したCD付。</li> </ul>	<p><b>TOEIC TEST 英単語 スマート800</b></p> <p>厳選された1000語句を効率的に覚える!</p>
--	---	--

**ジャパンタイムズ出版局**

〒108-0023 東京都港区芝浦 4-5-4 TEL (03)3453-2013 FAX (03)3453-8023  
<http://bookclub.japantimes.co.jp/> ツイッター @japantimespub