

NGO Outreach

NGO アウトリーチ

One year after the NGO Outreach team was formed, with the 20th Anniversary Conference lurking just around the corner, now is the perfect time to update you on our activities and experiences so far, as well as the experiences of some of our student volunteers who volunteered for our newly launched Student Ambassador programme, which sought to recruit students willing to work with an NGO during the summer vacation.

Through this programme eight university students successfully found volunteering opportunities and will be representing the following NGOs at the conference:

- Japan Tent, <<http://www.japantent.com/index.html>>
- Free the Children Japan,(FTCJ), <<http://www.ftcj.com/>>
- Shanti Volunteer Association, (SVA), <<http://sva.or.jp/>>

Recently I sent an email to these student volunteers, asking some open-ended questions to gain a better understanding of their motivation for joining the *Student Ambassador* programme and their volunteering experiences over summer.

Students decided to join the NGO Outreach programme for diverse reasons. While some students' priority was to use and improve their English skills, others were more interested in the valuable work experience that volunteering or completing an internship provides. Manami (Japan Tent) is interested in medical training abroad, and stated *"I think it's important to communicate with*

people from other countries". Cathy (FTCJ) is interested in pursuing a career with an NGO; *"the goal that I wanted to achieve was to have a job experience in an NGO."*

With three very different NGOs accepting student volunteers, the work students have completed varies widely. Miu (Japan Tent) explained that she *"supported foreign students to know Japanese culture, for example sado, wagashi making, kimono wearing and so on"*. After Minako joined the programme, her work was invaluable helping to recruit and coordinate two more students to work with her at SVA. Minako, Natsumi and Misaki were responsible for creating a display to introduce SVA at the conference, deciding on the content of the exhibition and translating when required, including producing an original catchphrase. At FTCJ, Fuka, Yuko and Cathy have been doing a whole range of work, including *"collecting information for FTCJ's website, making presentations, reports, and translating."* Depending on the kind of tasks students were required to do, the time that they spent with their NGO also differed significantly, from two or three days of intensive work, to regular weekly volunteering spanning a few weeks to a month or more. One encouraging outcome is that some students have already expressed an interest in continuing an internship position after the conference.

One of our original goals was to engage students in real world situations which necessitate the use of a foreign language. A number of students described encountering language difficulties during their volunteering activities, which suggests that this goal is indeed being met. Of course, the conference

in November will provide further opportunities to use English and Japanese. Students have expressed feeling nervous, worried and uneasy about the approaching conference. However, these same students also said they feel excited and are looking forward to taking part!

With the NGO Outreach team still in its infancy, we have also encountered our own set of challenges. One significant issue is simply finding students willing to volunteer. Membership in a university club entails an enormous commitment of time and energy and many students also have a part time job. With all of this on top of a full-time student's study load, such demands leave little to no time for volunteering. We tried to be as open and flexible as possible with students' availabilities, but NGOs also have their own policies regarding a minimum time commitment for volunteers or interns. In addition, students had to prepare a CV and cover letter; for many, this was a first. This revealed that often, students had never been taught about CV writing norms and expectations, while potentially increasing the workload involved in finding students a placement.

As previously mentioned in last issue's column, a wide variety of NGOs will be involved in the Learner Development SIG's 20th Anniversary Conference on Saturday November 23 and Sunday November 24 2013, and along with the NGO's mentioned above, there will also be the following NGOs participating in the conference:

- Shine On <<http://www.sokids.org/>>
- Social Enterprise English Language School, (SEELS), <<http://seels.jp/>>

While the NGO Outreach Forum itself will be taking place on Saturday afternoon from 16:00 – 17:25, in room 206. Here, you will be able to learn more about these NGOs, and their histories,

missions and activities by speaking with our student volunteers or NGO representatives in Japanese or English. We hope that this relaxed forum will lead to further and wider collaboration between learners, teachers, NGOs, and anyone else interested in facilitating the creation of sustainable links beyond our classrooms. We also hope that members of the LD SIG and other conference participants will come to join us in what promises to be a unique and innovative forum. The Learner Development SIG's 20th Anniversary Conference has always been a major focus point for the evolving NGO Outreach team and we are very excited to see how it pulls together, and what comes out of it! We look forward to seeing you all there!

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DEFINITION OF NGOs

A non-governmental organization (NGO) is any non-profit, voluntary citizens' group which is organized on a local, national or international level. Task-oriented and driven by people with a common interest, NGOs perform a variety of service and humanitarian functions, bring citizen concerns to Governments, advocate and monitor policies and encourage political participation through provision of information. Some are organized around specific issues, such as human rights, environment or health. They provide analysis and expertise, serve as early warning mechanisms and help monitor and implement international agreements. Their relationship with offices and agencies of the United Nations system differs depending on their goals, their venue and the mandate of a particular institution.

Source: <http://www.ngo.org/ngoinfo/define.html>