

Aid to Japan: Investing in a Healthier Future



Two years after the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami devastated northeastern Japan, an estimated 300,000 survivors are still living in temporary homes.

AmeriCares is helping communities bridge the gap between the disaster and a healthy future. While people wait for large-scale government rebuilding projects, we are supporting health programs that benefit them immediately.

Today, we have provided close to \$6 million in aid to Japan. Our aid brings health services, rebuilds communities and creates lasting security for the elderly and people with disabilities. We are focused on helping families and local groups deal with the stress of displacement and the trauma of loss.

“Two years after the disaster, AmeriCares continues to invest in a healthy future for this devastated

region,” says AmeriCares President and CEO Curt Welling.

AmeriCares is working to:

- Restore access to health services
- Provide counseling to help survivors cope with trauma and loss
- Assist evacuees
- Support people with disabilities



Gardens for Healing

“Find the butterflies!” a teacher tells a class of young students at Sumiyoshi Kindergarten; the children quickly spread throughout the playground. One month earlier, teachers wouldn’t have allowed such a search: The area had been exposed to the polluted tsunami wave. But with new flower beds and trees funded by AmeriCares, the youngsters can freely explore the restored landscape.

This playground replanting is one of more than one hundred large and small garden projects AmeriCares has funded for more than 5,000 earthquake and tsunami survivors in Japan.

Other gardens give elderly survivors a place to be physically active and meet and work with others. All are part of the \$1.5 million in aid we’ve provided to improve survivors’ mental well-being. “Any way you can get people out of their temporary homes reduces the risk of depression and suicide,” says Peace Boat program coordinator Maho Takahashi.

After his home and business were destroyed in the disaster, Shinji Akifuji was in a deep depression. Now Mr. Akifuji rises early each day to water his vegetables in the Hope World Wide Japan community plot. Growing vegetables, he says, has changed his life and given him motivation.

For elderly residents who lost everything in the disaster, gardening rebuilds hope and community (top). Children have a clean and safe playground (right), thanks to AmeriCares funding.

Support to Reduce Stress



Photo by Kazusiji Kataoka

While temporary homes give survivors the basics to live, many residents are isolated and lack the social opportunities that reduce stress and give life meaning. AmeriCares is working with local organizations to rebuild community life, funding events and programs that benefit residents throughout the region.

Rebuilding community: In two years, AmeriCares has funded 59 community activities, providing what's needed to gather relocated residents and reinstate seasonal celebrations, some centuries old. Men especially are at risk for depression and alcohol abuse due to the stress of isolation. For the Shinchi Fishery Association in radiation-affected Fukushima, the AmeriCares-funded barbecue last summer was a chance to meet and talk about the future.

Help for young mothers: Not only did many young mothers in Ishinomaki struggle with relocation after losing their homes, but the women had to care for traumatized children while they themselves were in shock. With partner Baby Smile Ishinomaki, AmeriCares is giving 1,400 women in Ishinomaki the support they need. The mothers attend talks by child-care experts and join in “mommy and me” exercises. The programs are effective: More than 80 percent of participants felt less anxious after being in the program and 95 percent felt closer to their child. Now, Baby Smile is looked at as a model of care throughout the region.

Health Care that Travels

When Sachio Miura last saw his dentist, he didn't have to go far — just to his living room. Mr. Miura's dentist, Dr. Michio Uchidate, treated the 83-year-old using portable dental equipment donated by AmeriCares. Mr. Miura is one of 615 patients in Iwate Prefecture who have received care in their homes from seven traveling dental teams using the portable x-ray and tools from AmeriCares.



Photo by Kyoko Sakurai/AmeriCares

After the earthquake and tsunami damaged 60 dental clinics in Iwate, the local dentists' association formed mobile teams to bring dental care to their elderly patients, many of whom now live, like Mr. Miura, far from a clinic.

The portable dental tools are just part of the more than \$650,000 in AmeriCares funding for dental care — including temporary clinics and equipment — benefiting survivors in Miyagi and Iwate.

Group exercise relieves anxiety in young mothers (top), while our portable dental tools bring care to isolated patients (above). Mr. Teruo Nakamura (right) is glad to be moving back into a group home, made possible with our funding.

AmeriCares

AmeriCares is a nonprofit global health and disaster relief organization that delivers medicines, medical supplies and aid to people in crisis around the world and across the United States.

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Together at Home Once Again

When the giant wave hit Ofunato City, the residents of the Momiji home were miles away at their jobs. But the disaster ripped the tight-knit group apart. Their home was destroyed and the men, each of whom has a disability, had to live separately with elderly parents, in cramped temporary housing or with other relatives ill-equipped to serve as caretakers.

Now, the group is living together again in a brand new home built with funding from AmeriCares. To date, we have invested nearly \$1.3 million to fund dozens of projects that support evacuees and assist people with disabilities.

For relatives not accustomed to caring full-time for adults with disabilities, moving day marked the end of a stressful chapter. Some of the men were living temporarily in apartments near schools where schoolchildren taunted them. Others stayed inside all day, too fearful to venture outside.

“Thanks to the great assistance from AmeriCares and warm cooperation from people in the community, I am sure that the men of Group Home Momiji will enjoy their new life,” says Sayako Nogiwa of the Association for Aid and Relief, Japan, our partner for the project.



Photo by Ramona Bajema/AmeriCares