

Details of Optional Tours in Full-Day Programme

[Group 1] Toumi-no-ie Course

Facility overview:

This is one of the community workshops organized for people suffering from Minamata disease and is operated by an incorporated non-profit organization (NPO), The Collaboration Center for Minamata Disease Victims.

In 1996, when the media reported that Minamata disease were "finally given a comprehensive settlement," Minamata Hotaru-no-ie was founded near Yudegawa in Nanpukuji, Minamata City, as a place to highlight the never-ending Minamata disease case.

Since then, the facility has actively worked for independence and daily living support for congenital and infantile Minamata disease victims. As the Minamata Disease Mutual Aid Society's office, it provided assistance for the first lawsuit in 1969. Since the supreme court ruling in 2004, the Minamata Disease Victims' Mutual Aid Society's office which was founded mainly by the victims suffered from methylmercury in their fetal stage, has been involved in research, physical examination, and consultation for uncertified victims and has offered support for the lawsuit for the second generation in 2007. It also established an incorporated NPO in 2007 to provide daily living support to more than 10 congenital and infantile Minamata disease patients who need to go to hospital, shopping, or to offer rehabilitation services and communication opportunities. As Hotaru-no-ie was too small to accommodate these patients, Toumi-no-ie was founded in April 2012 in Toumi, Minamata City. This workshop is located near the area where many victims live, and provide a place every Monday and Thursday for communication with others or hobby activities.

Tour description:

Exchanging opinions with congenital and infantile Minamata disease patients and their families, and explaining the areas where Minamata disease broke out, all conducted at Toumi-no-ie

[Group 2] Hotto Hausu Course

Visual materials (to be presented on the bus):

"Hotto Hausu" was established in 1998 to fulfill congenital Minamata disease patients' long-cherished wish that they want to work.

Ever since its establishment, they have been engaged in making original business cards with pressed flowers from Minamata, or shopping bags made of used local newspaper. You can also find original baked breads sold at Minamata city office and other locations.

One of their most important work is to transmit information and stories about Minamata disease. Highlighting the tragedy of the Minamata disease is not the only way, but they also reflect on every life of each patient and tell how they overcame the difficulties, sharing their experience as "treasures" that came along with Minamata disease.

Their actions and visits are not limited only to local elementary schools and junior highschools, but they also visit universities for special lectures, researchers, and other NGOs from outside of Kumamoto, ever overseas to transmit information about Minamata disease.

Tour description:

"Hotto Hausu" offers opportunities and a place to work, meet other people and live for congenital Minamata disease patients. They give talks about Minamata disease issues and their life stories (along with the Hotto Hausu staff) to offer opportunities to learn about environmental issues and human rights. (Songs, handshakes and other workshops are offered as well.)

[Group 3] Minamata Meisui-en Course

Visual materials (to be presented on the bus):

Since the government officially announced that Minamata disease is a disease resulting from pollution caused by a methyl mercury compound in 1968, it has been crucial to provide relief to people suffering from Minamata disease and to implement anti-pollution measures.

Thus, Minamata City opened "Meisui-en" in 1972, located on a hill facing the Yunoko Beach, a beautiful, deeply indented coastline facing Shiranui-sea. Meisui-en has been operating as a nursing home for the officially certified patients of Minamata disease.

In addition to medical care, it provides physical and social rehabilitation as well as daily living support programs for better living. It also offers short-stay and daily support services for persons with disabilities. It has 65 beds (as of April 2013).

Tour description:

Includes a tour of a facility founded by Minamata City that offers medical and nursing care, rehabilitation, and daily living support, etc., to the people suffering from Minamata disease for health maintenance.

[Group 4] Minamata Disease Museum Course

Facility overview:

The Minamata Disease Museum was founded to ensure awareness about the Minamata disease case and to provide opportunities to consider what society should learn based on the experience of Minamata disease.

The museum exhibits include the wooden ship and fishing equipment used by fishermen suffering from Minamata disease, the cage of "cat experiments" used to investigate the cause of Minamata disease, and photos and panels showing the history of conflict between the patients and the government and Chisso Corporation all toward helping others understand Minamata disease.

The Minamata Disease Center "Soshisha" which operates the Minamata Disease Museum and which is named after the concept of "giving thought to each other," started its activities in 1974. It was founded by Minamata disease patients and their families & supporters in order to support campaigns seeking compensation for Minamata disease patients and their daily lives.

The center has seen severe conflict with the government and Chisso, the company that caused Minamata disease, but it now collaborates with the Minamata city government to transmit information about Minamata disease and to promote town planning based on the lessons of the past.

Tour description:

Explaining what Shiranui-sea was like before Minamata disease, the substances causing Minamata disease, and the history of the court battle from the victims' viewpoints, etc., by "Soshisha", which regularly provides consultation, researches and studies the disease and raises public awareness on Minamata disease.