

30 years-long activity of Sobetsu Kids Program at Usu Volcano, Japan

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Shortly after the Usu-Shinzan doming activity became to the end in 1982, Sobetsu Municipal Education Office conducted Sobetsu Town Collage Program. It was consist of 9 days weekend programs including various lectures and field visits to Usu Volcano Observatory (UVO) and newly uplifted crypto-dome at the summit. We realize now that many participants who took this Collage later became regional key persons during the decade-long safety culture preparedness. Because the Collage was so successful and all the 60 participants insisted their interests and the importance for everybody in the town, the Education Office found a new sustainable way for children as a Sobetsu Kids Program (hereafter SKP). Hence, SKP was created in 1983, and we, four authors of this paper, had participated in SKP over past 30 years. It is officially named Children's Study Program on the History of Sobetsu Town, and is consisting of several weekend programs. Two programs are field studies on Usu volcano (1) Showa-Shinzan lava dome and (2) the summit area of the main edifice. Mr. Mimatsu, the curator of Mimatsu Museum, participated the guide to Showa-Shinzan, and UVO staffs took the guide to the summit. Kid's parents are also welcomed. Both areas are officially closed for public access, because of the possible accidents, so we planned carefully to maintain special safety with the help of supporting staffs. Why this SKP program lasts so long. The answer is very simple and reasonable. Because it is always pleasant and enjoyable to walk, climb a little bit in the nature rich field, and listen the stories of the changing mountain over the decades. This is true not only for the children, but also for the adults. Most of them were born and grown up here, so they look the volcano upwards almost every day from their home or school. But, this is the first time to look down reversely from rugged dome peaks. Steam cooking is another attract. So, repeaters are also very common. Children grow up so fast. For example, some disaster officials during the 2000 eruption were the past SKP participants. Sometimes, university students willingly joined and enjoyed SKP. Now we realized several such members later became professionals, and took doctors degree in volcanology or relating sciences. The past US volcanologist, Harry Glicken was the one of 1987 participants. He gave a short talk in the beginners Japanese on his exciting experiences on Mt. St. Helens. Tragically, he passed away by Mt. Unzen pyroclastic surge four years later. We often talk this story with the children in the field, and try to think together what he wanted to talk to us now. In 2011 summer, Sobetsu Bosai Camp was conducted successfully despite of its short noticed schedule. This is because the area had accumulated a reservoir of supporting man powers and necessary knowledge of effective collaboration, as the result of decades-long continuing efforts during the past volcano dormancy.