

# Flower of Hope

Tough time brings opportunity

## Helping Namie's Revitalization

Reporters of Team #2

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### Create the center of Lisianthus production

The non-profit organization "Jin" is helping to rebuild the town of Namie through the cultivation of Lisianthus in the aftermath of the Great East Japan Earthquake and the accident at Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO)'s Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station. Lisianthus attracted attention at the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic with the "Victory Bouquet" produced in the town. CEO Yukari Shimizu says emphatically, "We want to make Namie a center of flower production. On July 28, five members of team #2 of the Journalist School visited the NPO and spoke with CEO Shimizu.

Although she didn't receive any major damage by the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011, the nuclear power station accident forced the evacuation of the area. The welfare business she had run before the earthquake could not be resumed, and it was "Lisianthus" that she came across. CEO Shimizu says, "Flower production has changed my world."

When the flower farming business was going well, some people criticized and talked behind her back, saying that she was an agent of TEPCO, but she paid no at-

tention as all she was thinking was: "What am I going to do with the compensation money? I want to stand on my own feet and put the company in order as soon as possible."

Some people did not like her actions, but as the products such as the bouquet for the Tokyo 2020 Olympics with the tag "made in Namie Town" became well known, more and more people began to support her, and the brand began to grow. "Some people try to appeal the revitalization across the country through events using



CEO Shimizu taking care of the Lisianthus that she has been cultivating since the earthquake, believing that "tough time brings opportunity."

subsidies, but that does not mean the revitalization is complete. The real revitalization is for everyone to be in a position to pay taxes," she says.

The flower meaning of Lisianthus is "hope." "I feel that the earthquake was not

a crisis, but rather an opportunity. I have no regrets now," she continues. As for her future goal, she says: "I want to enter my Lisianthus in the Flower Olympics (international flower show) in the Netherlands and win a gold medal." (Nishizaka)

### Wanting to learn more

We tried out ikebana (flower arrangement). The moment I entered the greenhouse, I was struck by the beautiful pink Lisianthus. The house was filled with Lisianthus flowers, and I became engrossed in selecting my favorite color and the largest flower. After that, I put the cut flowers one by one on a sponge, forming a dome shape. The color of each flower was slightly different, making it difficult to find the right balance. The flower arrangement with accents of buds and leaves was very interesting and unique to each student.

What I found difficult was the placement and balance of flowers and buds. I was advised to add larger buds to make the flower arrangement look better. Even though it was difficult, I

tried my best to create my own flower arrangement, as it was very rewarding. It was my first time trying *ikebana*, but it was a lot of fun and made me feel like I wanted to learn more about flowers.

Above all, I was impressed by CEO Shimizu's determination to continue flower cultivation without giving up after the earthquake. The Lisianthus flowers grown by Ms. Shimizu last a long time and do not wilt much. I took some home, and was surprised that they lasted longer than I had expected. CEO Shimizu, who has been farming for more than five years, reminded me again of her passion for Lisianthus and Fukushima's amazing technology filled with hope. (Kawahara)

### Ikebana experience

A light pink glow

CEO Shimizu, who has grown numerous Lisianthus varieties, especially recommends "Julius Pink," as it is a popular variety among celebrities worldwide. It has a light pink color, and the largest flowers can grow to about 12 to 13 cm in diameter. The flowers last about two weeks in summer and six weeks in winter if well-watered. Julius Pink is available at "Aguria," a store in Koriyama City. Please check them out. (Hoshi)



A team of reporters with a unique ikebana of their own. (From left) Hoshi, Oikawa, Nishizaka, Kawahara, CEO Shimizu, and Suzuki

### Interview with CEO Shimizu

## Revitalization and Jin

We asked CEO Shimizu about the revitalization of Namie Town and the origin of her NPO's name, Jin.

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Q: What do you think is necessary for the revitalization of Namie Town? (Oikawa)

A: I don't believe that holding big events in the affected areas is the only way of revitalization. I

hope that many people will join us in flower farming with Jin taking the lead.

Q: What does "Jin," your NPO's name, mean? (Suzuki)

A: The Chinese character "Jin" means a heart of compassion and virtue. But the character looked a bit heavy, so I Romanized the name to make them look lighter. We value the spirit of compassion.