



Creating the New KOCHI IYEO

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Monobegawa River flowing through Birafu(180-degree rotated photo)

◆ Profile

After serving as the Executive Committee Chair for the "30th National Convention of IYEO" held in Kochi in August 2015, I have been the President of KOCHI IYEO since April 2016. As a youth development organization manager, I introduced the "**youth first method**" and have planned and implemented leadership training programs for young people, including hosting the YOUTH FORUM and welcoming the Cabinet Office's International Youth Exchange Program (regional programs).

◆ Life is Unpredictable

Anyone involved in education is sensitive to the word "career path." For principals and teachers, the ultimate parental response is the guarantee of a career path. However, people often begin to walk paths different from those they once envisioned. Due to encounters and partings, the gap between reality (home or academic constraints) and dreams, and unexpected accidents that become "walls" in life.

Before these "life walls," people may give up, challenge themselves, struggle, or try to overcome them. Through small experiences, we learn that all these aspects enrich life.

"Life is unpredictable." Indeed. The issue is not just that fact, but accepting "**how this fact can create a wonderful life,**" and "**whether one can discover and continue walking such a life.**"

◆ Becoming Someone's Mentor

Young people are sensitive, fickle, and give unreservedly harsh evaluations to adults, keeping in mind cost performance and time efficiency. The same goes for **YOUTH FORUM**. Without fruitful or enjoyable experiences, they won't participate a second time. Young people intuitively evaluate the adults in front of them, based on whether they are good or not good for them, **regardless of academic background, status, income, or career**. This is where the rigor and excellence of youth development activities lie.

In KOCHI IYEO events, including the YOUTH FORUM, we do not conduct surveys. The necessary feedback always comes through the staff. The main reason is that our results do not fit into evaluations.

"Becoming someone's mentor" is the outcome I seek. University students become a bit older siblings for high school students, and working adults for university and high school students. The ultimate goal is to become adults admired and respected by their juniors as "**someone I want to be like.**"

◆ YOUTH FORUM 100 and 30

Generally, when more than 100 people participate in an exchange event, the training effect decreases. YOUTH FORUM had over 220 participants until 2019 because it was arranged based on the IYEO National Convention in Kochi with 430 participants. The winds of change began blowing in 2020. The spread of online tools and DX started, and by 2022, "**online × in-person**" exchanges emerged, creating a new stage for "**creating an exchange space that only exists here and now.**"

KOCHI IYEO designates 2025 as the "**Year of Creating New KOCHI IYEO**" and launches the new FORUM "**YOUTH FORUM 100 and 30.**" The capacity will be 100 and 30 participants, optimizing training efficiency. If desired, junior high school students can take staff positions based on their enthusiasm and ability. Let's co-create "an exchange space that only exists here and now" with university students and working staff.

◆ Thoughts Today

I was born in Birafu, Kami City. My family ran a manju (Japanese sweet bun) shop in the middle of the old shopping street, surrounded by the bank, chamber of commerce, town hall, and agricultural cooperative. Back then (1950s), the area was bustling with people, including two kimono shops, two pachinko parlors, and even a movie theater. The autumn festival's "Onabare" (a sacred procession) between the Shinmeigu Shrine and Ookawakami Shrine was grand, with people of all ages parading through the town, and the shopping street was filled with spectators.

I love the scenery of Birafu, filled with such memories, and visit the Monobegawa River area to "stroll through time" whenever I have the chance. There are endless things to do daily: reading newspapers, watching recorded international news and current affairs debates at double speed, and enjoying morning and trendy dramas. Plus, reading general education books and reflecting is essential, of course, alongside KOCHI IYEO activities and some work.

Still, beyond that, there is nothing, and humans are indeed wonderful beings.
Ah! Indeed... The nature of my hometown is always peaceful and beautiful.

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