



## Feeling joy from the bottom of my heart

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# KOCHI IYEO 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Newsletter vol.2



*Ubame Oak at Muroto Geopark*

I am writing this article at a café within a hospital. This is the place where, in 2018, while struggling with health concerns, I deeply pondered whether to continue my activities with KOCHI IYEO and ultimately resolved to continue not for anyone else, but for my own sake.

I've spent nearly half of my life with KOCHI IYEO, but remaining a core member requires strong will and determination. Why is that? Allow me to share a bit of my story.

KOCHI IYEO is a voluntary organization aimed at youth development through international exchange. It highly values creating "spaces where a wide range of young people can interact on a daily basis" and "everyone growing together through mutual encouragement, regardless of age."

Unlike easy-to-understand common themes, like "joining a team because I love Yosakoi dance", the people gathered here are truly diverse. However, if there's one commonality, it's that everyone firmly believes in and acts on their own and others' growth.

I believe the following attitudes are necessary to continue engaging with youth.

Firstly, when speaking to youth, always use "sincere" words. Even if you're praising them, unless it's heartfelt, it won't resonate with them. Young people have an uncanny ability to discern whether adults' words are genuine, and they seem to crave authentic interactions with adults.

Secondly, convey messages not only through words but also through actions. When confronting young people, I always feel like I'm putting my entire life on the line. I openly share embarrassing failures and setbacks from my past. This is because I've learned through experience that an adult's way of living is the best lesson for youth.

Thirdly, constantly update and improve yourself. In KOCHI IYEO, children and adults are equals. Everyone engages in serious debates on various topics. However, I strive to be just a step ahead of the youth and want to have something valuable to convey to them. For this, it's crucial to continually learn and grow from daily life experiences.

KOCHI IYEO is undoubtedly a warm organization often described by youth as a "place overflowing with love." Yet, for me, it also serves as a "training ground" where I'm continuously tested. I vividly remember the view of the ceiling from a hospital bed in my mid-30s, feeling that struggle keenly. Now, in my 40s, I deeply appreciate the moments of witnessing youth growth, feeling a profound joy in my heart.

## Reflection

### ♠ My 20s

Experiences such as "graduating from an American university", "sailing to India and Africa on a luxury liner", "attending JICA training in Tanzania", "passing the Snowboarding Level 2 certification" were unique accomplishments that garnered "amazing" reactions from others. Collecting these "amazings" from others, whether for my personality or various achievements, was the fuel for my 20s. However, no matter how many "amazings" I gathered, I always felt unfulfilled and restless, constantly searching and wondering, "Is this enough?"

### ♠ My 30s

In the early 30s, similar to my 20s, I continued collecting "amazings". During my five years at the JICA Kochi Desk, I conducted about 200 outreach classes for educational institutions and the "Silver University" (learning opportunities for elderly), receiving high evaluations. However, in my mid-30s, praise from others began to feel empty. I realized I wasn't superior to anyone, nor did I need to be. It was then that I started admiring people who could help others without seeking praise, those who naturally performed good deeds out of their own joy.

### ♠ My 40s

Now in my 40s, since April, I've been working at the Muroto Global Geopark Center. Promoting the Geopark is directly linked to the promotion of Muroto, my hometown, and part of my identity. Working for the Geopark equates to working for my own enrichment. This clarity of "my own path" became more apparent, and the uncertainties and restlessness I experienced in my 20s and 30s seem to have dissipated. I feel like I've finally become someone I can genuinely find impressive.

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