



### **Dr. Makino and My Empowerment**

Ruka Kawamoto

The First Children's Guide

at the Makino Botanical Garden



Konkonyama at Kochi Prefectural Makino Botanical Garden↑

### **◆ Becoming a "Kochi Children's Tourism Ambassador"**

When I was in the first grade of elementary school, I participated in the "Kochi Children's Tourism Ambassador" course. The eligibility to participate was for children from the first to the sixth grade of elementary school. About 30 elementary school students participated, but I was the only first grader, so I felt a bit lonely.

There were a total of 8 sessions in the course, where we learned about various things including Kochi's nature, history, people, and cuisine. If you missed even one session, you wouldn't receive the "Kochi Children's Tourism Ambassador" certification, so everyone worked hard and attended without missing any sessions. However, less than 20 people received the certification after attending all the sessions.

The final test was to choose a notable figure from Kochi that we had found interesting during the course and present on them. Most students chose samurais from the late Edo period. However, I chose the botanist Tomitaro Makino, which surprised everyone.

I think this was because Dr. Tomitaro Makino's daily activities were rather understated and not very popular among elementary school students. But for me, I had a strong inspiration that "this is the person."

### **◆ Feeling and Conveying the Charm of Dr. Makino**

As I continued studying Dr. Makino, I began to feel captivated by his thoughts and way of life.

What I love about Dr. Makino's philosophy is his humble belief that "humans are a part of nature." This way of thinking makes me feel more compassionate towards both nature and people.

Next, the human charm of Dr. Makino that I admire is his "genuine and straightforward personality." It's easy to say, but having a "genuine and straightforward personality" is challenging for both children and adults. Living an entire life with such a personality is almost miraculous, in my opinion.

Lastly, I also love Dr. Makino's playful and dandy side.

I wanted to share more about Dr. Makino's personality and way of life with others, so when I was in the second grade, I went to ask at the Kochi Prefectural Makino Botanical Garden.

"As a Kochi Children's Tourism Ambassador, I would like to hold a storytelling session about Dr. Tomitaro Makino here." Fortunately, the staff at the Makino Botanical Garden kindly accepted my request.

Starting from the second grade of elementary school, I began holding a monthly or bi-monthly storytelling session about Dr. Tomitaro Makino at the Makino Botanical Garden.

It wasn't always easy; friends who had started with me quit along the way, and there were times when I wasn't feeling well.

But with the support of my family and the encouragement and cooperation of the botanical garden staff,

I managed to continue without missing a single session for five years.

Whether there were only three people in the audience or more than a hundred, I never forgot my initial motivation.

As four years passed and I began preparing

for junior high school entrance exams, I decided to "graduate" from the storytelling sessions when I graduated from elementary school.

At that time, the happiest moment of my life occurred. I found my successor. It was my little sister, Kizuna, who had watched my children's guide sessions from the moment she became aware of her surroundings. It must have been a very big decision for my five-year-old sister.

In fact, there was no script for the children's guide; I memorized the stories about Dr. Makino from what my grandmother told me.

My sister, Kizuna, also learned by listening, gradually memorizing the stories bit by bit, repeating them over and over.

In April 2023, the day finally came for the debut of the second-generation children's guide.

"Hello, everyone. I am Kizuna Kawamoto, the children's guide...".

Many people had gathered. Kizuna's voice was loud and clear, and she did better than during practice,

which relieved the tension for both me and my grandmother.



Children's Guide: Dr. Makino's Storytelling Session↑



↑ Second-Generation Children's Guide: Kizuna Kawamoto

Kizuna's second year as a children's guide has begun. There is still a slightly difficult part in the latter half, so I continue to support her even after entering junior high school. Thanks to this, my grandmother, Kizuna, and I still visit the Makino Botanical Garden every month.

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