



Connections are Mysterious and Warm

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Guide



🍀 Unforgettable Year-End Part

When I was living with my 8-year-old son, I worked as a cashier at a supermarket in Sakawa Town and attended a year-end party held at the long-established eel restaurant "Taishoken." My son cheerfully sent me off, saying, "I can stay home alone for a little while."

While enjoying the delicious food, the thought, "I feel guilty enjoying this while my son is at home," kept crossing my mind. As the party was nearing its end, I saw the leftover food and thought, "It would be a waste; I want to give this to my son who is waiting alone." So, I asked for a pack and started to pack the leftover food. Suddenly, someone shouted, "Stop doing such disgraceful and dirty things!" My hands froze in the middle of packing, and the atmosphere became tense.

At that moment, a woman suddenly sat in front of my table and said, "My grandmother is waiting alone, so I also..." and began to pack the leftover food. It turned out that this woman was the wife of the company's president. She was in charge of cooking in the deli department and rarely appeared in public. Therefore, I didn't know that she was the president's wife.

That day, my son and I gave thanks, and we enjoyed the food with gratitude and happiness. The memory of that day left a strong impression on me, and it became a source of strength to overcome any challenge in life. However, I had one regret: I never got the chance to express my gratitude to the president's wife.

🍀 Volunteer Guide Relay

In December 2007, the main house of Tsukasabotan, a sake brewery company in Sakawa Town, known as the Takemura Residence, was designated as a national important cultural property. As part of the town's tourism promotion measures, Sakawa Town began recruiting volunteer tourist guides, and I applied. Thus began my journey as a guide introducing Dr. Makino. As time passed, I was blessed with two granddaughters. When my elder granddaughter, Rufu, was in the first grade, a training session was held to help children in Kochi disseminate information about Kochi's great figures, history, and food. Rufu participated in this training, and among the participating elementary school students, she was the only one who showed a special interest in Dr. Makino. She successfully completed the final assignment of the training, a presentation about Dr. Makino, and became a "Kochi Children's Tourism Ambassador."

Seeking opportunities for Rufu to perform her role as a "Kochi Children's Tourism Ambassador," we soon visited the Kochi Prefectural Makino Botanical Garden. The garden kindly provided Rufu with a place to share her stories, and for six years, she continued to speak about Dr. Makino without missing a single session. Initially, there were only two or three visitors, but the number gradually increased. Visitors from both inside and outside the prefecture, including from Kanagawa, Hyogo, and Kagawa, gave Rufu many gifts, such as ice cream, bouquets, and origami flowers, saying, "I want to give this child a present" and "You did a great job." We deeply appreciate the countless people who have invisibly supported Rufu over the years. Additionally, following a local TV station interview when Rufu was in the third grade, we received interview requests from national TV stations, newspapers, and radio stations, and understanding of her activities spread widely.

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One day, after finishing my talk at the botanical garden, I was approached by someone who said, "I saw you on TV and came from Sakawa Town. My name is Makino." It turned out that this person was the great-grandchild of Dr. Makino and a curator at the Makino Memorial Garden in Tokyo. They had returned to Sakawa for a family gathering and invited me to join them. I was surprised, but even more astonishing was that this person was the brother of the president's wife from that unforgettable day. Both the president and his wife had passed away. Several years after meeting the president's wife, I learned about Dr. Tomitaro Makino and began my journey as a guide, sharing his story for 20 years. My older granddaughter, Rufu, has been doing it for seven years, and my younger granddaughter, Kizuna, for one year. Together, we have spent a total of 28 years unknowingly continuing the legacy of Dr. Makino, a relative of the president's wife. My connections have been mysterious and very warm. From April 2023, the much-anticipated NHK morning drama "Ranman," modeled on Dr. Makino, began airing, and the number of visitors to the Makino Botanical Garden rapidly increased, breaking records since its opening. In February 2024, the regional practical activities of the "Ship for World Youth" program, a Cabinet Office youth international exchange project, will be held in Kochi Prefecture. Both Rufu and Kizuna have the opportunity to present in English and Japanese. As I watched them complete their important roles at the Makino Botanical Garden on the 12th, I felt gratitude for the precious connections we have made and hope to cherish them in the future.

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