An aerial photograph of a lush green landscape, featuring a river flowing through a valley. A large dam is visible in the lower right quadrant, with water cascading over its spillways. The surrounding terrain is covered in dense green vegetation, and the overall scene is bathed in a soft, natural light.

Today's Education Shapes Tomorrow's Future

# NPO GREENWOOD

# I Want to Go Camping All Year!

"I want to go camping all year!  
Then we can make our own food, carve our own dinnerware, and maybe even build our own house!"  
Words like these from children living in the city are what led us to establish the *Daidarabotchi* life lessons classroom.

Four children and three adults came together with the intent to "live by their own efforts."  
Every night, we got together and shared our hopes and fears with the group.  
We talked about what kind of house we wanted to build and how we would build it.  
However, building a house is not the same as building a life. Every day, the children made their meals,  
did their own cleaning and laundry, and went to school.

We used our combined knowledge and skills in order to make our dream a reality, trying and failing over and over again.  
NPO Greenwood, as well as the core values that we uphold, started from this life that we built together.



The original main building, built out of thinned wood and wood from telephone poles and railroad ties  
Photographed at the 1997 *Daidarabotchi* Fare-welcome Party

In order to build a community where everyone can live in peace,  
we raise children to become well-rounded human beings.



### We Aim for An *Anjane* (Worry-Free) Community

We think that a community where everyone can live safely is one in which all members respect one another, cultivate joy, and delight in the wonders of being alive.

The elementary and middle school students who participate in the *Daidarabotchi* program are the center of a community that provides mutual acceptance and support, transcending things like hometown, gender, and age. They live with a diverse staff ranging from recent college grads to the community's founding members.

One person's weakness is another's strength. We all go through times of trouble, so we can understand each other's joy and hardships. This is precisely what we mean by "a community where everyone can live in peace."

Precisely because we share our responsibilities and help each other out, our group can work together to tackle any problems we face. Conflict and trouble naturally occur in all societies, and ours is no different. However, a community where everyone can live in peace can only be formed when all of its members have the awareness of how issues affect them, as well as the intention to help create a better place.

*\*Anjane* means "Don't worry!" in the dialect of the Shimoina region.

### Raising Independent People (*Hitoneru*)

Nobody is going to go out and prepare a worry-free community for us all. Rather, it must be made by respecting each other and striking a balance between freedom and responsibility. We here at Greenwood are not trying to change the way society works; instead, we think it's important to focus on nurturing the people who will make up our society. We need capable people who can actively participate in any system or environment and come up with creative solutions wherever they go, but we don't need desks to raise them. It's more important to learn from the experience of meeting people, challenging oneself, failing and then learning from one's mistakes, getting help, giving help, and feeling both the joy and frustration that come along with it all. We nurture our students by teaching them how to "live" through their connections with others.

*\*Hitoneru* means "to raise someone well" in the dialect of the Shimoina region.



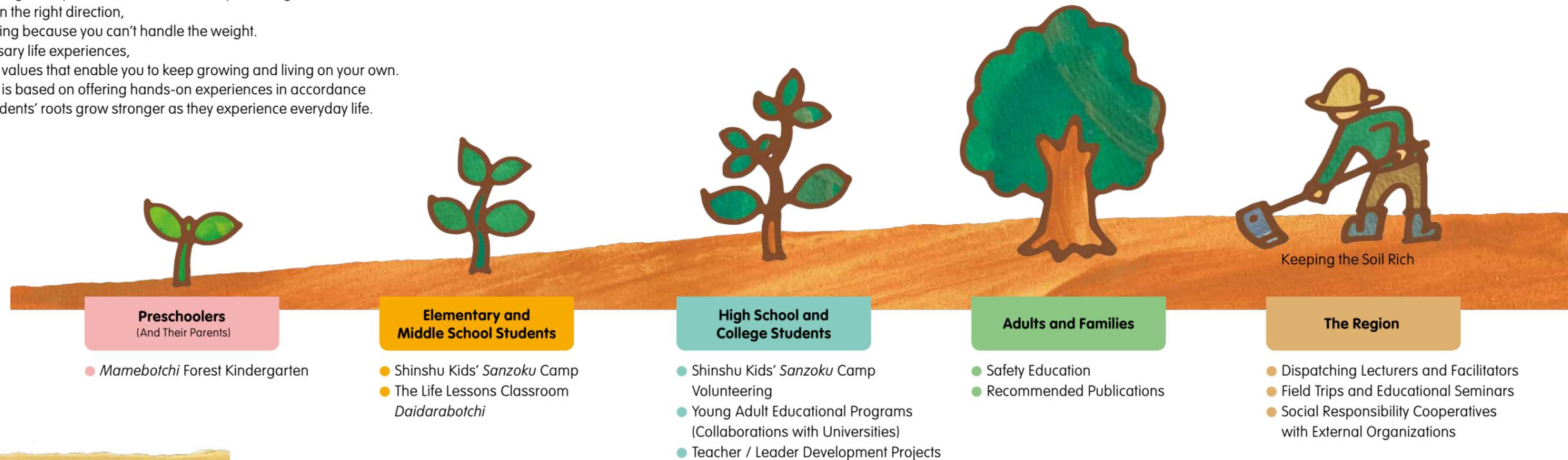
The current main building, rebuilt in 2004  
Photographed at the 2014 *Daidarabotchi* Fare-welcome Party

# NPO Greenwood's Well-Rooted Education

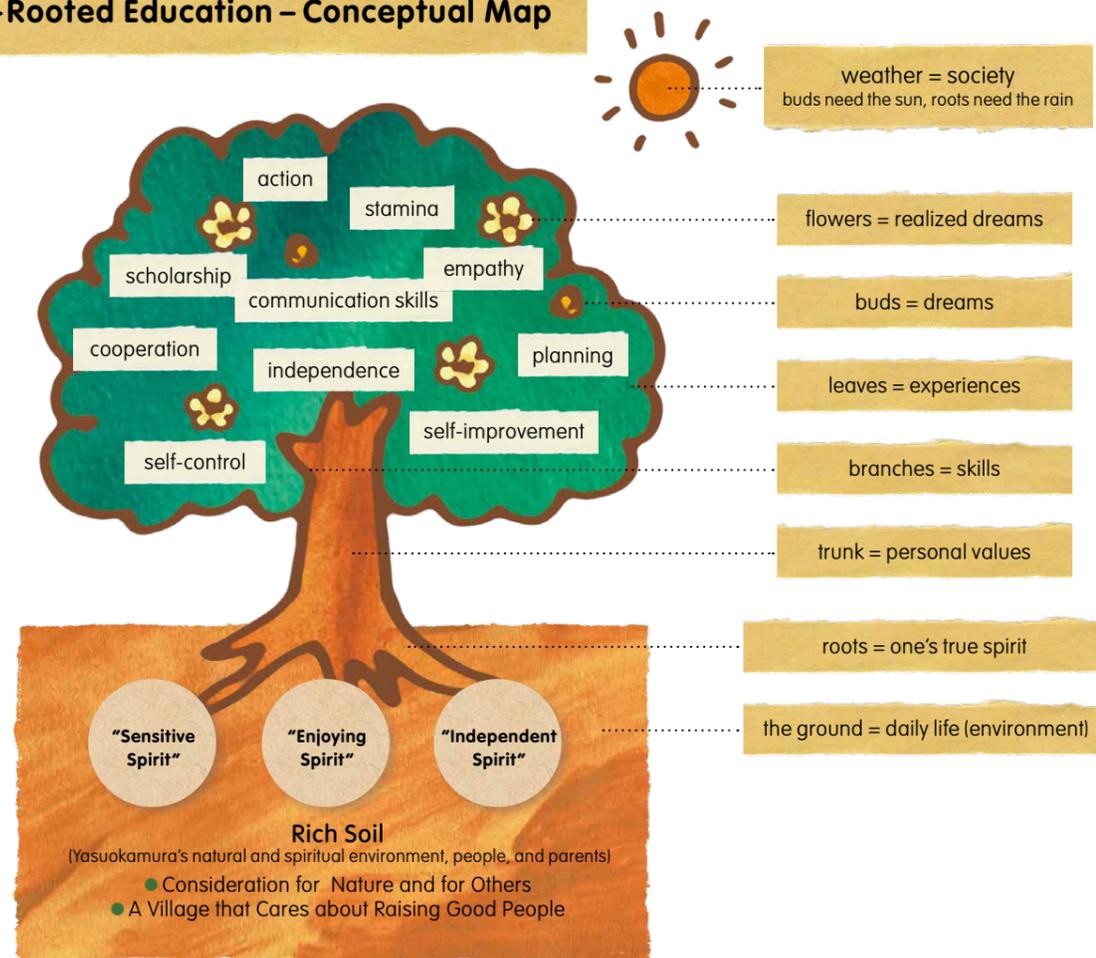
Trees that grow nothing but foliage and fruit will end up breaking under their weight. They need strong roots and a trunk to support them. We believe that people are the same. Skills, academic ability, and the knowledge that you learn in school are all just "foliage." If you don't have a heart to guide you in the right direction, you make mistakes, or end up collapsing because you can't handle the weight. Your roots grow when you gain necessary life experiences, and from this growth you gain a set of values that enable you to keep growing and living on your own. Greenwood's "well-rooted" education is based on offering hands-on experiences in accordance with students' age level so that the students' roots grow stronger as they experience everyday life.



## Education Well-Rooted in Life Lessons



## A Well-Rooted Education – Conceptual Map



## The Three Tenets of a Well-Rooted Education

### “Sensitive Spirit”

The power to learn intuitively from people and from nature – that is what we call “emotional intelligence.” This kind of intelligence teaches children how to show kindness and affection towards both things and other people. Greenwood takes great care in offering a program that connects nature to everyday life. Students gather firewood from the mountains, cultivate the rice fields, and make their own pottery that they use as dinnerware. Through this way of life, they gain a sense of gratitude towards nature for supporting them and fulfilling their basic needs.

Such a way of life cannot be accomplished alone – our students all live and work together, which affords them the opportunity to learn how to both disagree with each other and help one another out. This in turn teaches them how to be considerate, how to understand the differing values of others, and how to cooperate with others and with society.

### “Enjoying Spirit”

We teach our students how to be proactive and enjoy whatever they are doing. Students in all of our programs are entrusted with difficult chores that may take them a lot of time, such as preparing meals and heating bathwater. When doing these chores, we ask ourselves “how can we make this more fun?” By making our struggles into fun experiences, we learn that overcoming hardship is the source of true pleasure.

Sometimes we fail, but failure is part of the process of success. It is precisely because of our failures that our successes give us the utmost joy. We build up our resistance to failure through trial and error and learn the joy of triumph. Failure can become the driving force that compels us to overcome any barriers that we may encounter in the future.

### “Independent Spirit”

In today's society, it is becoming more and more common that children learn how to play and amuse themselves through video games and the Internet. Thus, these children end up unable to make the choices that would allow them to succeed academically or professionally without extensive support from those around them. In order to become the protagonists of our own lives, we must have the initiative to shape our own future.

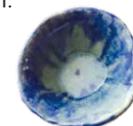
All of Greenwood's programs take great care to develop our students' ability to make independent decisions. When children realize that they are in charge of their own lives, they develop the power to participate actively and take responsibility for everything that they do. The freedom they enjoy when they take on these responsibilities is what allows them to keep challenging themselves.



Spend an entire year with friends as your colleagues  
A place where you can make your dreams a reality

### The Daidarabotchi Life Lessons Classroom

It all began in 1986, from the words  
"I want to go camping all year!"  
In the rich, natural environment of our mountain village,  
friends of different ages, genders, and backgrounds  
can work together in a community full of people  
who warmly watch over them.



だいだら  
ぼっち

The *Daidarabotchi* life lessons classroom is the place where eighteen children from around the country came together with the shared dream of making their own way of life, which they did for a year while also attending a local elementary and middle school. Meals, laundry, cleaning, wood-chopping, and bath-heating, as well as any other tasks related to our daily life are all, of course, carried out daily by the children. The children are the ones who make the schedule for the year, talk through and resolve daily problems, grow our rice and vegetables, and make the tableware. It's up to them to decide what kind of year they will have. *Daidarabotchi* is a place where you can make the dreams you want to accomplish a reality.

Open to children from around the country, from 4th grade elementary school up to 3rd grade middle school  
Program period: Each year from 4/1-3/31  
Participant cap: Approximately 18 people



Planting trees with your children

### Mamebotchi Forest Kindergarten

As soon as you step into this abundant forest and feel the breeze blowing in from the Inadani Valley, you will find a playground full of treasures. Interacting with others helps both parents and children cultivate the seed of healthy interpersonal relationships while basking in the forest light and immersed in nature.



まめぼっち

This interactive program enables children from 3 to 6 years old and their guardians to interact with nature once a month. Small children can pick up fallen acorns while navigating through the forest's bumpy, muddy paths. Children can have a lot of fun in the forest as they learn to control their bodies through the act of playing. This program helps them develop empathy while they experience surprise and joy.

The most important thing about *Mamebotchi* Forest Kindergarten is that everyone participating in the program works together to support the children's growth. In order to create an environment in which both children and parents can be themselves, parents strive to treat every child equally so that all of the children can play freely and be themselves.

Open to young children (3-6 years old) from across the nation and their families  
Program structure consists of day trips and overnights approximately 10 times a year



Over 1,000 kids in a village of 1,700 people!?  
Our secret: the kids are the leaders!

## Shinshu Kids' Sanzoku Camp

It could be said that these camps consist of nothing more than eating, sleeping, playing, and working, but their appeal lies in the children's ability to decide the program's activities and rules for themselves. No two camp sessions are identical. The set-up is simple, which is precisely why this camp can expand at the children's discretion, and the depth of this approach is the secret to its popularity.



There's no set program for Kids' Sanzoku Camp. At the "Sanzoku Meeting," everyone suggests activities they would like to do at camp, and from there they decide the course of the program. In the summer, there are outings to the river, tests of courage, hiking, crafts, and campfires. In the winter, they pick things like mountain climbing, sledding, and mochi-making. In the heart of nature, children can play to their heart's content. With a focus on daily responsibilities such as meals and cleaning, this camp becomes a place that fosters cooperative labor and gives the feeling that "individual differences are a source of richness."

Open to student across the country from 1st grade elementary school up to 3rd grade middle school  
Program period: Primary school summer and winter vacation  
Participant cap: Summer...around 1000 people (26-28 courses offered),  
Winter...around 150 people (6-7 courses offered)



Yasuokamura as a venue for hands-on experience

## Young Adult Educational Programs

In today's world, more and more young people are worried about always having to come up with the right answer. While building on personal experiences of community life, the educational value of Yasuokamura and Greenwood is used in activities that foster students' sense of personal value and concern about others and society.



### Collaborations with Universities

We offer 2 to 3 day, custom-designed programs set in college classes and seminars that meet in small groups. Participants take charge of their own studies, and rather than learn how to merely arrive at the "correct" answer, they learn how to derive answers from dialogue with their peers and further the cycle of learning.

Program structure: Participation in college seminars and classes  
Program content: Schedule and term both decided after consulting with the instructor in charge  
Participant cap: Approximately 6-18

### A One-Year Teaching and Leadership Developing Project

A program in which counselors and staff interact with the *Daidarabotchi* students. A place where they eat and sleep together with students, and a lifestyle connected to the rich nature of Yasuokamura all help cultivate a set of fundamental life values that cannot be learned in a classroom.

Open to young adults who want diverse learning experiences, not just those aiming to become teachers or leaders  
This program is held annually for the one-year period from April 1st - March 31st  
Participant cap: 1-2 people



### Shinshu Kids' Sanzoku Camp Volunteering

Young adults, ranging from high school students to those already in the workforce, can participate as volunteers for the Shinshu Kids' Sanzoku Camp. Through volunteering in these activities, participants must work to promote the children's mental and physical safety, which in turn teaches them the importance of leading by example as an adult leader. The feelings of doubt, confusion, and accomplishment that participants experience while living with the children out in the middle of nature are also what teach them how to rethink the way they conduct their daily lives, as well as how to both make their own decisions and follow through on them.

Open to young adults, from high school students to employees across the nation  
Program period: at least one course when Sanzoku Camp is held  
Participant cap: about 300 in summer and about 50 in winter



Nurturing hearts that respect all forms of life

## Safety Education

Without prior training, people cannot prevent natural disasters or accidents in the wilderness, much less save lives in such an event. Here at Greenwood, we train people to be mentors and leaders through the risk management methods developed at the Kids' *Sanzoku* Camp, so that children can play safely while in their care.

We offer training in the Medical First Aid (MFA) international emergency life-saving method program that instills in its participants emergency preparedness skills and the courage to lend a hand to those in need. Greenwood's safety education approach is based in backing up confidence with real-life skills, as well as nurturing empathetic people who can create a safe and secure society.



Building a society by nurturing local community leaders

## Dispatching Lectures and Lecturers

Currently, small communities all over Japan are facing problems caused by dwindling local populations, declining local industries, and the effects of recent natural disasters. Nevertheless, Yasuokamura, which we call home, has been able to attract more than 1,000 children and more than 20,000 visitors every year, even though we have often been ridiculed for being a village where there is nothing to do. This is because our activities make full use of the natural environment, culture and people of the community around us.

We offer lectures, field trips, and cooperative projects for outside organizations in order to share the educational philosophies and know-how that we developed in Yasuokamura. Through these activities, we share our perspectives on how to recognize and raise awareness about local issues, organize communities, maximize local human resources, and rediscover our unique local culture and knowledge.

When people in every region come to recognize the good qualities of their communities and make the most of them, we all come closer to becoming a "worry-free society."



## Field Trips and Educational Seminars

At Greenwood, we hold observation field trip programs in which outside participants can visit active facilities and meet directly with operations staff, as well as educational seminars where we share the experiences gained and methodologies employed in our local projects. A picture is worth a thousand words; thus, through hands-on experience with our project, our energetic students, and our educational philosophy, observers can learn in a way that makes sense to them.



## Dispatching Lecturers and Facilitators

"A sustainable society is made through education." Each region of Japan, as well as the nature, ways of life, and cultures found there, is valuable. By re-evaluating these treasures around us, we can revive our local communities and create a new set of values. We believe that having more proactive regions will create a brighter future for Japan. In the past thirty years, we have been disseminating the "thoughts" and "know-how" that took root in our area to various outside regions, groups, and PTAs.

## Social Responsibility Cooperatives with External Organizations

Nowadays, young people who became full-fledged members of society are expected to have communication skills, task-solving skills, and perseverance. However, a lack of personal hands-on experiences that build a foundation for these skills has turned out to be a challenge. Thus, we have begun to restructure programs originally comprised of educational activities for children into adult-oriented programs and offer these programs as training sessions for new employees.



Eating together enriches the time we spend together

## Daily Life Café *Itadakimashita*

In the Southern Shinshu dialect, the phrase *Itadakimashita* is said after meals to express gratitude towards the people who prepared the food, the ingredients used in the dish, the hard work of the people who cultivated the land where the ingredients were grown, and also towards Mother Nature who nurtures both land and people.

The concept of the Daily Life Café *Itadakimashita* is based in this gratitude. The tables, the chairs, and even the utensils are all handcrafted, and the café is naturally powered by a combination of firewood and solar energy. The café is meant to be a starting point for the creation of a future society in which people form bonds with one another through coming together and sharing a meal.



# Introducing Yasuokamura: Our Home Base



## Data

Population of Yasuokamura  
 699 families, 1646 total population (as of September 1st, 2018)  
 Yasuoka Village Elementary School: 79 students  
 Yasuoka Village Middle School: 45 students

## Yasuokamura

Yasuokamura is a village located in the Shimoina District in southern Nagano Prefecture. The residential area is a deep valley that ranges in altitude from the riverfront of the Tenryugawa River (320 m) to the foot of Mount Bungaizan (770 m).

Yasuokamura has a population of around 1,700, with an aging population rate (residents 65 or older) of 39%. 86% of Yasuokamura is covered in forest.

Due to its valleys, arid land is abundant, while resources for tourist attractions are limited. Because of this, Yasuokamura experienced an economic depression in the Edo period, paying its tribute to the feudal lord in timber instead of rice, which was traditional.

Yasuokamura is a typical remote mountain village about a five-hour drive from Tokyo, along roads with no national highways, traffic signals, or convenience stores.

The name of Yasuokamura (泰阜村) comes from “泰山丘阜,” which comes from a Chinese poem. The character “泰” means “to dig a waterway with one’s own hands,” and “阜” means “abundant” or “prosperous.”



## Yasuokamura’s Cultural Climate

### Never Greedy, Even in Times of Poverty

During the economic depression caused by the Showa Era Financial Crisis, a portion of teachers’ salaries were used for the construction of an educational art museum, with the thought that the public should still support the future of education. The people of Yasuokamura believe that no matter how scarce resources are, and no matter how difficult life is, people should continue to cultivate a rich, pure spirit. Even in poverty, we must not give in to greed. Respect for schools and academic study is also of the utmost importance for Yasuokamura residents.

### A Self-Reliant Village

Many cities, towns, and villages in Japan disappeared during the municipal mergers of the Heisei Era. During that time, Yasuokamura residents voted to be self-reliant in their management of regional affairs. Currently, endeavors such as road cleaning, parent-teacher association activities, and the village athletic festival are all organized by Yasuokamura residents in an effort to maintain a self-sufficient community.

### A Mountain of Treasure / Village Living

Since mountain villages have not generally been included in large-scale development plans, Yasuokamura has been excluded from the process of urbanization, and thus its residents have been able to preserve their rustic way of living. They prepare their own charcoal, fashion tools out of bamboo and straw, and plow and till their own land. Thus, they have maintained the culture of producing daily necessities that has vanished from other areas.



## Learning to Cooperate through Working and Living Together

The children of *Daidarabotchi* are also considered to be village members, so they participate in local road-cleaning and help families that lend their threshing machines to harvest the rice fields. Lending other villagers a hand when they need it is an important part of life in Yasuokamura, and this gives the children the opportunity to learn how to assist other people in times of trouble.

## The Bounty of Nature

90% of the vegetables at the Kids’ *Sanzoku* Camp are produced in Yasuokamura, and all of the firewood used for fueling stoves and heating bathwater is gathered locally by Greenwood students and local residents alike. This kindness that we receive from villagers helps to appreciate the value of nature’s precious and bountiful blessings.

## Learning from Local Roots

### Village Elders Are Village Experts

Sometimes hunters from the village come back carrying deer or boar on their trucks and then demonstrate how to butcher the animal. At other times, nearby farmers come to check out the rice fields where the students are working and give them advice. Village elders are all experts when it comes to village life, and their wisdom teaches the children how to think for themselves and live in harmony with nature.

### Every Child is The Village’s Child

When the children do something good, the villagers praise them, and when they do something bad, the villagers scold them. They greet the children when they see them on their way to school, and often attend events both at their school and for *Daidarabotchi*. In this way, they are always watching out for the *Daidarabotchi* students.

## New Possibilities Born from Regional Cooperation

# Educational Activities in Yasuokamura

Nowadays, children from around the country come to Yasuokamura to camp, and they praise the beauty of the river and the stars. However, there was a time in the past when people left the village because they felt there was nothing there for them. The population decreased rapidly, and the local culture was lost along the way.

The people of Yasuokamura grew up in a harsh but nurturing natural environment, cultivating a local wisdom and culture in the process. Though the village scenery is often trivialized and taken for granted, it is actually a great asset for the region. Together with local residents, we are going to design educational activities that teach local children to be proud of Yasuokamura and allow the region to continue nurturing its residents and enriching their lives.



### Anjane Support School

Approximately twenty volunteers, including school headmasters, PTA members, and members of the village assembly, will gather to brainstorm and implement events related to local education. With their wisdom and skills, people of different generations, ranging from young people to senior members of the village, can assemble to discuss early childhood education in Yasuokamura, as well as what parents and local residents should be doing to support it. This meeting supports the future of local children and will change the future of the village itself.



### Yasuoka Adventure Team Anjane Kids

A field trip for older students of the Yasuoka nursery school is held six times every year. This program was created so that children could enjoy themselves while playing in the mountains of the former school forest, climbing mountains in the village, and playing in the river.



### Anjane Nature School

This nature experience activity, which is aimed at elementary school students in the village, is carried out once a month. By conducting activities that focus on different aspects of the village, such as its natural environment, culture, history, industry, and lifestyle, local residents assume the role of teacher and explain the many charms of Yasuokamura to the children.



### Kids' Afterschool Program Ittekimashita

This ongoing project was commissioned by Yasuokamura to provide after-school childcare. Aimed at dual-income families, *Ittekimashita* offers a space that allows children to play safely and without worry. Not only does this space help children get to know each other and build their own "society," but also helps them develop independence and serves as a place where they can learn about their village's natural environment and culture.

\* *Ittekimashita* means "I'm back!" in the dialect of the Shimoina region.

Other projects Yasuoka Elementary School Nature Immersion Programs (River Safety Instructors)  
Anan High School's social welfare course includes field training at Yasuokamura.

# A New Society Born from 30 Years of Effort

Our initiative to bring new students to a mountain village started off small, but it has allowed us to gain the trust and praise of the local community. The abilities and skills we have honed through our various projects are changing the direction in which society will move.

## 1. Collaborations with Yasuokamura

### Building The Future from The Ground Up

Greenwood works to develop a promising future for the children of Yasuokamura through educational activities and comprehensive strategies planned in conjunction with the village leaders.

#### Selected List of Recent Endeavors

- Kids' Afterschool Program *Ittekimashita*
- Yasuoka Adventure Team - *Anjane Kids* - *Anjane Nature School*
- Yasuoka Elementary/Middle School Nature Exploration Class
- Training Programs at Anan High School in Nagano Prefecture
- Promotion of collaborative programs with Yasuokamura authorities
- Disaster relief efforts through education supported by Yasuokamura (Hanshin, Chuetsu, Eastern Japan, Kumamoto, etc.)

## 2. Collaborations with National, Prefectural, and Other Local Organizations

### Sharing Our Methods

We want to spread and communicate to as many people as we can the methods, skills, and values regarding safety, public relations, management, and staff training that we see as the core of "education."

#### Selected List of Recent Endeavors

##### National

- Morisato Kawaumi Project Subcommittee Member (Ministry of the Environment)
- Promotion, management and operations of Tenryugawa Cooperative Learning Center (MLIT)

##### Prefectural

- Nagano Prefecture 'School Camp' Leader Training Courses / On-site training for Nature-based Education programs

##### Local Organizations

- Sharing our know-how with Hita City, Nakatsue District (Oita Prefecture, Hita City)
- Advising Fukui City, Miyama District on project management (Fukui Prefecture, Fukui City)

## 3. Collaborations with Universities

### College Students Learn from Our Programs

We offer lessons that make sense to our students by drawing upon our actual experiences and accepting interns and trainees, as well as by turning our camp volunteer program, village events, and local activities into places where young people can learn.

#### Selected List of Recent Affiliates

- Sugiyama Jogakuen University
- Hokkaido University of Education
- Nagoya College
- Hosei University
- Kanto Gakuin University
- Tsuru University
- Osaka University of Health and Sport Sciences
- Japan Women's College of Physical Education

## 4. Hitoneru for The Next Generation

### Greenwood Students Nurture the Next Generation and Build Future Communities

Staff members who graduate from Greenwood go on to be active in their communities and contribute to the future of society and education. Former campers also come back as volunteers and staff members, contributing to our rich and multi-layered organization that transcends both generation and region.

#### Recent Endeavors

- GIA *Hitoneru Academy*  
Yohsei Sato (Oita Prefecture)
- Natural Living School *Tetsunagu*  
Kenta Katayama, Kaoruko Katayama (Nagasaki City, Nagasaki Prefecture)
- Hometown Pride Network  
Ryosuke Ikeda (Yoron Island, Kagoshima Prefecture)

## 5. Spreading A New Set of Values

### Greenwood's Esteemed Education Methods and Spreading A New Set of Values

The appreciation we have received over the past 30 years and the information that we have spread through the media have given Yasuokamura a renewed value, and this has had a ripple effect on other regions as well.

#### Selected List of Our 21 Total Awards

- 2012 Regional Development Minister of Internal Affairs and Communications Award
- 13th Annual (2009) RINRI Institute of Ethics Award, MEXT Award
- 58th Annual (2009) *Yomiuri Shimbun* Educational Award - Top Prize in Rural Social Education
- 37th Annual (2006) Hakuho Foundation Juvenile Education Promotion Committee Prize in Educational Revitalization
- 2006 Yasuokamura Mayor's Prize

#### Selected List of Our Media Appearances

NPO Greenwood has appeared in over 820 magazines, newspapers, documentaries and TV programs, including four separate programs broadcast by the Japan Broadcasting Corporation and articles on *Nikkei Kids Plus*, *AERA with Kids*, the *Asahi Shimbun*, *Yomiuri Shimbun*, the *Mainichi Shimbun*, *Sankei Shimbun*, *Tokyo Shimbun*, *Shinano Mainichi Shimbun*, *Chunichi Shimbun*, *Minami Shinshu Shimbun*, *Shinshu Nippo*, *Mapple Magazine*, and the official government publication *CabiNet*.

\* *Shimbun* means newspaper.



The Anjane Forest

Mount Omine

GREENWOOD MAP

グリーングッド ぐらしの地図

Tenryugawa River

Sakyogawa Campground

The Mamebotchi and Ittekimashita House

Daily Life Café Itadakimashita

Fields

Rokken House

The Daidarabotchi Main Building

The Chicken Coop

Anjane Nature School and Pottery Studio

The Climbing Kiln

Charcoal Kiln

Restrooms

Goemon Baths



## **NPO GREENWOOD**

6342-2 Yasuoka-mura Shimoina-gun  
Nagano 399-1801 Japan  
Tel: 0260-25-2851 Fax: 0260-25-2850  
E-mail: [info@greenwood.or.jp](mailto:info@greenwood.or.jp)  
[www.greenwood.or.jp](http://www.greenwood.or.jp)

Translated by  
Kathleen Cyr  
Yanchoo Dai  
Yiyao Ding  
Jenny Do  
Shane Healy  
Kyle Winger  
Shan Zeng

Department of Japanese Studies,  
Middlebury College

Thanks to Middlebury College faculty members  
Masahiro Takahashi, Stephen Snyder, and Akiyo Sasaki for their guidance,  
and Yoshiko Alba for proofreading

Designed by Fumiki Tomioka  
Painted by Raku Tomioka

56