Santa Cruz's Sister City, Shingu, Japan, is asking for help our for its own Sister City, Natori

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Santa Cruz, Calif. — The devastation of the recent Japanese earthquake and the tsunami have shaken the whole world and raised many profoundly unsettling issues. Yet, a key question for many people remains: "How can I help?"

The global outpouring of humanitarian aid is critical for the cleanup and rebuilding of Japan and its residents most impacted by the natural disaster. This is a time when having a Sister City in Japan is a direct route to provide much-needed relief.

"Natori City in Miyagi Prefecture, which is our domestic sister city, was one of the worst damaged places in this earthquake. The cities of Shingu and Natori made a cooperative agreement to provide assistance in the event of a disaster, so Shingu will soon set up a rescue team for Natori," said Taku Iwasawa, a Shingu City resident and Sister Cities contact, in an email with City of Santa Cruz officials.

"You may have seen videos of the Tsunami on CNN which looked like black clouds invading from the river to wide rice farms --- that was Natori City (Shingu's domestic Sister City)," wrote Iwasawa.

Shingu has sprung into action by organizing and sending rescue teams, collecting provisions and sending donations.

The Santa Cruz Sister Cities committee sent a check for \$3,000 to Shingu for aid efforts and it was received with tremendous gratitude: "We are so appreciative that people in our Sister City of Santa Cruz have made such great efforts to give this support for those in our domestic Sister City of Natori City who suffered severe damage from the enormous tsunami and earthquakes." Since then, an additional \$2500 from Santa Cruz donations has been received.

Yet in light of the massive destruction, more aid is needed.

To donate, please write a check made out to:

Santa Cruz Sister Cities Support (tax id #77-0575231)

323 Church St

Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Write: Shingu/Natori on the memo line of the check.

"The goal is to fundraise as much as we can to send to Shingu to support them in helping their sister city of Natori City," said Roxi Goin of Sister Cities Support.

"An old Japanese proverb says that rain makes the ground firm, meaning some immense happening may give a good turning point for the future," wrote Iwasawa, a Japanese translator who has been key in helping with email correspondence between Santa Cruz and Shingu. "Sharing the experience of this disaster with sympathy can lead us to reconsider issues of life and death and each view of life."

Sister Cities Program

The Sister Cities Committee is a city advisory body consisting of unpaid volunteers who are appointed by the Santa Cruz City Council. Any citizen of the city of Santa Cruz who demonstrates an interest in the activities of the Committee is eligible for appointment.

Sister Cities Support

A 501c 3 organization formed in 2001 to support the activities of the Santa Cruz Sister Cities Committee.

Sister Cities History

In 1956, President Eisenhower officially proclaimed the establishment of the People-to-People Program (later called the Sister City Program) to promote understanding and strengthen international ties. To accomplish this goal, Sister Cities International has helped link many U.S. cities and towns with localities abroad. These city-to-city affiliations provide the opportunity to build friendships, learn about other cultures, and foster international understanding.

Sister Cities of Santa Cruz, California:

- * Alushta, Ukraine
- * Jinotepe, Nicaragua
- * Puerto La Cruz, Venezuela
- * Sestri Levante, Italy
- * Shingu, Japan

For more information: http://www.cityofsantacruz.com/index.aspx?page=712