



SOPHIA 100th ANNIVERSARY  
SOPHIA JUNIOR COLLEGE 40th ANNIVERSARY  
SOPHIA SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WELFARE 50th ANNIVERSARY



The Service Learning Center and Activities in the Local Hadano Area  
No .21

### 1. What exactly is the Service Learning Center (SLC)?

The Service Learning Center at the Junior College Division of Sophia University was opened on November 15<sup>th</sup> 2008 on the second floor of Building 2 on the Hadano campus. It serves as a doorway for social service activities in the Hadano area. The staff members of the Center assist the junior college students in carrying out a variety of activities in the neighborhood, many of which involve language education. Inside the SLC, we can find a place for students and visitors to gather, called the student lounge. There is a resources



The Service Learning Center opened in 2008. This picture shows Chancellor Koso leading the opening ceremony; he was concurrently the president of Sophia Junior College.

room where printed and loose-leaf teaching materials and textbooks are kept in good order, and dedicated computers are available. Finally, there is space for coordinators and adult tutors. These are faculty members and staff members, whose busy jobs include assisting the activities of the student volunteers and keeping in fruitful contact with various groups and individuals in the local community.

The chance to start the SLC came to the junior college in 2008, when it was selected by the Ministry of Education and Science to receive a ‘good practice’ award for student support as part of the “Student Support Programs that try to respond to new social needs.” The title of the application filed successfully by the junior college was “Coordination of student support through service learning – education for life design and for basic skills needed by contemporary Japanese adults”.

The goal of constructing this educational program is to fully organize the service activities to the local community that the junior college students will participate in. Junior College students were to learn about English education for small children, Japanese education, acquisition of a second language, theories of multiculturalism, international relations, and similar subjects. The students would first acquire basic theoretical background. Then, they would participate under guidance in service activities with people in the local communities. For example, the SLC supports efforts for English education of little children in neighborhood kindergartens and primary

schools. Another example is the support offered by junior college students to citizens of Hadano who do not have Japanese citizenship. The junior college students help these citizens with Japanese language improvement and tutor some student-age residents in various school subjects. These support programs sometimes take place in the international classrooms of primary schools; at other times, the junior college students are allowed to use local community program buildings. After the junior college students have experience in some volunteer activities outside of their class times, they receive feedback during their on-campus classes. As the junior college students participate in human interactions that involve residents of various ages and from various cultural backgrounds, the students learn communication and social integration skills. The SLC is where all this student support is organized.

## 2. The functions of the Service Learning Center

At the center, faculty and staff coordinators and tutors support the volunteer activities of the junior college students. The team plans and carries out programs to train student volunteers and the team members take care of the basic formation of the junior college students as they begin to participate in volunteer activities. Lectures are arranged to improve the success of the volunteer activities as they are going forward. At the same time, the coordinators and tutors



Based on good communication links between the SLC and local schools and organizations, the volunteer activities that promote the learning of English or Japanese proceed smoothly.

have conferences with individual student volunteers. The junior college students submit written reports on their volunteer activities, and the coordinators and tutors comment in detail on these reports, giving valuable reaction feedback. The coordinators and tutors manage the SNS, an open forum for all involved in the SL activities. In this forum, exchanges of opinions and experiences can take place. After the conclusion of each volunteering experience, the coordinators and tutors arrange a session where students report orally on their experiences. Such follow-up programs strive to enrich the learning experiences that the students have already started by their participation in these local service activities.

Another task of the SLC is to deepen the human contacts at the institutions where the junior college students carry out their volunteer activities. These include continuing contacts with organizations and groups already present in the local community. The

center continues to improve such human contacts and arranges for exchanges of opinions. Central among these contacts are those with the city of Hadano, with which Sophia Junior College concluded an official agreement in 2007. Among the individuals and institutions that need continual contacts are the Hadano City Board of Education, the officials in each individual educational institution where junior college students do volunteer work, the Hadano libraries, the social meetings of people interested in education, NGO groups, and citizens of Hadano who hold citizenships other than Japanese. At the same time, the SLC functions as the overall headquarters for the comprehensive program of educational support activities. The center's operations are always directed at assisting the junior college students in their general education courses and their specialized courses and in their various writing assignments.

### **3. How the Service Learning Center supports the activities of the junior college students who volunteer in local community assistance programs.**



The Service Learning Center is often the site for the volunteer activities that improve the Japanese ability of young people or assist them with their studies and homework

Two programs constitute the core of the volunteer activities that junior college division students participate in. One is teaching English to kindergarten and primary school students in the Hadano area. The other core program is helping the local citizens who do not have Japanese citizenship to improve their Japanese language skills and to understand their school subjects (those taught in Japanese) more adequately. In the cases when these tutoring activities are scheduled at a local educational institution or in

a building connected to the Hadano city government, the coordinators or tutors of the SLC go to the locations to support the junior college division students.

For the English teaching activities, a teacher or staff member of the SLC will go to the primary school or kindergarten with the junior college student volunteers. The teacher will observe the flow of the class managed by the students, will collect the opinions and feedback from the schoolteachers and administrators, and will help with the overall direction of the student volunteers. These English education activities of the volunteer programs in the local communities date back to 2002. As the years have advanced, the number of institutions where junior college division students can go to help has steadily increased and various plans to raise the level of the teaching activities have been implemented.

The programs in teaching Japanese and in helping students with their schoolwork were

first carried out on-site at the SLC. With the growing cooperation of the city officials, however, the junior college students received city financial support and cooperative programs could be carried out at city-sponsored facilities. Some teachers at the center function as intercultural facilitators. They help with the communications with the adult leaders in the area and provide general support for the volunteer activities. The coordinators take responsibility for the administration of the basic aspects of the learning and teaching. While they are leading the junior college students to more precise educational procedures, they support all the activities. This volunteer activity started with a home teacher volunteer program from 1988. Junior college students often went to the homes or apartments of local Hadano residents without Japanese citizenship. In 2003, the Ministry of Education and Science chose this volunteer program as one that supported university education in some noteworthy way (Special Characteristics Good Practice Award).

The activities and human connections fostered by the SLC have steadily expanded since its foundations. Now, one can count at least eight different types of activities where junior college division students are welcomed and depended upon.

- ① Mental friends program, where junior college students assist young people who experience some learning difficulty.
- ② The English training camp started by the city of Hadano.
- ③ Educational programs for children that are sponsored by locations dedicated to youth gatherings.
- ④ Halloween English events.
- ⑤ The annual tabako festival in Hadano.
- ⑥ Local safety awareness programs, especially traffic safety promotions.
- ⑦ Events at facilities for the elderly.
- ⑧ The school life support programs sponsored by the Kanagawa Prefectural Board of Education.



The picture on the left shows the Halloween English event. The picture in the center shows junior college students helping with a traffic safety campaign in the city of Hadano. The picture on the right shows volunteer activity at the Southern Community Center of the city of Hadano.