

Radio “Mutual Assistance”

The Japan Journal's *Osamu Sawaji* meets with members of the *Bayanihan Kesennuma Filipino Community* in Miyagi Prefecture, whose activities include broadcasting information in Tagalog to listeners in Japan and overseas.

“Bayanihan Kesennuma Radio!”

The program starts with the cheerful voice of DJ Ivy (Charito Ito). Bayanihan Kesennuma Radio is the radio program of the Bayanihan Kesennuma Filipino Community whose members are Filipinos living in Kesennuma. “Bayanihan” means “mutual assistance” in Tagalog. The content of the one-hour-long program is varied, including earthquake information, information on daily living, and Filipino pop hits.

Using a mix of Japanese, English and Tagalog, the program is recorded at the home of Ito, and distributed through FMYY, the multilingual community broadcasting station in Kobe, Hyogo Prefecture, to Internet broadcasting stations and regional radio stations nationwide.

The Bayanihan Kesennuma Filipino Community was established after the Great East Japan Earthquake by around seventy Filipinos living in the coastal town. Most are Filipino women married to Japanese men. At first, their main activity was to distribute the relief supplies sent from around Japan to Filipinos and their families. Then someone involved in FMYY who was aware of what they were doing suggested that they transmit information through the radio.

“I hesitated at first as I had absolutely no experience of radio, but then for the sake of my Filipino friends I decided to begin,” says Ito. “Now I really enjoy making the programs.”

With the support of FMYY and several other groups, Bayanihan Kesennuma Radio has broadcast roughly once a month since July last year. When the broad-



Radio broadcasters Charito Ito (right) and Rachel Takahashi (center) at Ito's home in Kesennuma

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casts began, messages of support and encouragement came in not only from Japan, but also from countries such as Indonesia and the United States, as well as the Philippines.

“When I hear these words of support, it really makes me want to give it everything I have,” says Rachel Takahashi, who co-produces the program with Ito. “My circle of friends has grown, and connections between people have become stronger.”

The activities of the Bayanihan Kesennuma Filipino Community are now expanding even further. They include working together with local Japanese to plant flowers at the side of the roads damaged by the tsunami, and supporting Filipino women who are aiming to become careworkers or English teachers.

“I’m happy because some Filipinos who used to work in the factories that were swept away by the tsunami have since received licenses and found jobs as careworkers. Our everyday lives are returning to normal,” says Takahashi. “The people of Kesennuma are kind and the town is quiet, so it’s really easy to live here. Despite the tsunami, I don’t want to leave.” **HJ**