Please support us in building a vegetable processing factory to help disaster survivors get back on their feet!

Thanks for visiting O.G.A. For Aid’s Green Farmers Miyagi Project page!

My name is Angela Ortiz. I am a director of O.G.A. For Aid, a non-profit disaster relief organization. O.G.A For Aid has been actively involved in relief aid and recovery work in a remote town called Minamisanriku of Miyagi Prefecture (in Tohoku Region or Northeastern Japan) since immediately after the great earthquake and tsunami which struck Eastern Japan in March 2011. Our current focuses are: 1) to expand local job market; 2) to revive local industry; and 3) to revitalize the local community.

About O.G.A. For Aid

I was born in San Francisco, California, and I moved to Japan with my family when I was 4 years old. In the wake of the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake, my father Erwin Ortiz rushed to Minamisanriku from Aomori to check on his friends in the area. There, he saw a devastating sight of the aftermath of tsunami. Immediately after the incident, he called and gathered all of us family members and our close friends from all over Japan and overseas to provide an emergency aid to the survivors. This is how O.G.A. For Aid was formed and started.

(Angela (Left), her sister-in-law Aika (Right) with a tsunami survivor Rikako (Middle): The sign says “Our hearts are one. Let’s get through it together.”)
About Green Farmers Miyagi Project

Following the devastating tsunami in Tohoku, fresh food and vegetables were hard to come by. Because most of the local residents lost their cars, they had no choice but to eat processed breads, cup noodles and rice balls daily. Even for the ones with cars, it was difficult to drive around, as there were rubble and destruction everywhere in town. After 3 months, it was beginning to take its toll physically and emotionally for many survivors.

Mr. Abe was a local farmer and the former JA’s (Central Union of Agricultural Cooperatives) regional director. As is many others in the region, Mr. Abe also lost his house and land in the disaster, however, regardless of his difficult circumstances, he worked with O.G.A. for Aid in disaster relief activities. As he continued to participate in relief aid, he realized that he wanted to provide fresh food to his fellow local residents by cultivating a small land and growing vegetables locally.

Mr. & Mrs. Abe along with O.G.A. For Aid Operation Director, Peter Watabe and I planted eggplants, green peppers, tomatoes and okra in the summer of 2011. We worked together to grow, cultivate and harvest the vegetables. The farmers’ wives helped us package and sell them at the local temporary housing.

After a few months, Mr. & Mrs. Abe decided to continue and expand the project to something that could possibly give them a livelihood. O.G.A. for Aid said “We will help you.” Soon after that, volunteers were called from all over the world. With a help of volunteers, we were able to cut fields, to clear trees, bushes and thorns. Mr. Abe tilled the ground with the tractor and taught Peter how to use the equipment.

Slowly, but surely fields were prepared, land was reclaimed, and seeds were planted. Broccoli, tomatoes, spinach, okra, broad beans, daikon raddish, cucumbers, potatoes, chrysanthemums and nabana were harvested and sold to JA. It was hard and tiring work, so O.G.A. for Aid asked friends from Tokyo, Aomori, the U.S., Australia, Canada and Europe, “Please come and help us!”

(International volunteers on the Green Farmers Miyagi farm field)
Minamisanriku was heavily devastated, and many communities were hanging by sheer strength of will. To expand and to make a greater impact for the long term, we realized that we needed to do something new. Moreover, these residents needed jobs!

(Mr. & Mrs. Abe (Left) with local farmers at the first harvesting.)

Mr. Abe’s dream, before the tsunami struck Minamisanriku, was to own a pickle factory. Just as he was about to start working toward his dream, Mr. Abe fell sick in April of 2013. He had to be hospitalized, and he could no longer work in the farm. Peter, who was a supporting role and was still in training, had to be in charge of the entire farm by organizing and leading the new season, as it was already underway. Daisuke, a 30-year old young trainee from Higashi Matsushima, stepped up to the position of a Site Manager, Yu, a 29-year old girl joined the team as a Driver, Harvester & Packager. Soon after she joined, she grew into the position of Operations Manager. Koto, a 26-year old single mother of one, joined the team as a Staff Manager.

The entire team works every aspect of the project through cross-learning and consolidation of skills development. Each member of the team has taken up where Mr. Abe left off, and each of them has been focusing on completing Mr. Abe’s goal of building a new farming business in Minamisanriku.

**Expected Impact of The Green Farmers Miyagi Factory:**

Building this pickle factory will have multiple positive impacts: 1) It will offer training and jobs locally; 2) It will allow volunteers from around the world to visit Japan and learn about Japanese culture; and 3) It will create a Minamisanriku’s local brand made with locally-grown produce. We will be selling those products at hotels, restaurants, airports, gift shops, and various places all over Japan to spread the name of Minamisanriku brand.

The Green Farmers Miyagi factory will have a kitchen to produce pickled vegetables and sake (rice wine) cake made with local ingredients and other ingredients from Tohoku region. All of our members also share a dream of building a café and Bar & Grill in Minamisanriku in the future, using the local produces and the processed goods from the Factory. Imagine the variety of jobs this project could offer the next generation!

Children in Minamisanriku have homestay programs between the Australia and Japan board of Educations. There are also other programs throughout Tohoku promoting language exchange. If Minamisanriku does not provide attractive job opportunities for these
individuals, many may opt to head to larger cities, and the cycle and pattern of declination in population will continue. In the long run, Green Farmers Miyagi can provide valuable opportunities to the region.

**How The Fund Will Be Used:**

3,500,000 JPY will be used: 1) To start up the vegetable processing factory; 2) To create a kitchen in which we can work toward this dream by combining the best of local flavors with the new and interesting ingredients that the world offers; 3) To install equipment such as refrigerators, sinks, ovens, stoves, sewage system, gas, and electricity; and 4) To apply for the governmental registration and to complete various paper works.

The money will pay for transportation and gasoline, repairing the tractor and other farm equipment, purchasing kitchen materials and tools. We will need to pay salaries to the local staff for the first few months, until sales of our ‘brand’ begin to generate revenue.

**Who Can Benefit and Be Happy?**

There are many local residents who are connected to this project, and the impact spans surrounding neighborhoods and towns. Our part-time workers are predominantly local grandmothers and housewives, who live near the site. The Green Farms Miyagi’s tents and warehouses are always filled with families and children who come by daily to chat and play with the volunteers and local staff. The children practice speaking English with O.G.A. for Aid international volunteers. Also, there are the other farmers who sit, drink, eat and talk with us and take the time to teach us what they know. The Green Farms Miyagi is becoming a small new community.

Please help us build the factory to recreate a self-sufficient town and to save the local community for the survivors and the next generations of Minamisanriku!

(Peter Watabe (Right) and the Green Farmers Miyagi local staff)
Perks For Your Contribution:

A. For financial contributions of 3,000 JPY, our staff will send you a handwritten thank you card with local designs.

B. For financial contributions of 10,000 JPY, our staff will send you a piece of fresh vegetable or a piece of processed vegetable. (Note: Item may vary depending on the season or availability.)

C. For financial contributions of 30,000 JPY, our staff will send you a pair of O.G.A. For Aid original sunglasses + an original laptop sticker. (Note: The color of sunglasses will be chosen at random by O.G.A. For Aid staff.)

D. For financial contributions of 50,000 JPY, a specially framed photo and plaque of appreciation will be sent to your door + your photo will be put on our FB page.

E. For financial contributions of 100,000 JPY, a box of specially assorted Green Farmer pickles, made with the first batch of the seasons, will be sent to you. (Note: Item may vary depending on the season or availability.)

F. For financial contributions of 300,000 JPY, a special invitation to join our 2014 Harvest Celebration in Minamisanriku will be sent to your door. (Note: Transportations and accommodations are not included.)

G. For financial contributions of 500,000 JPY, a very special invitation to 2014 Fourth Annual Holiday Ball in Minamisanriku will be sent to you. This gala will be held at Hotel Kanyo in Minamisanriku and hosted by O.G.A. for Aid. (Note: Transportations and accommodations are not included.)

H. For financial contributions of 1,000,000 JPY, you will receive a Plaque of Appreciation on our website, your company/personal website will be featured as a sponsor on our website and you will be mentioned by name in all our promotional DVD’s & printed materials published in FY2014.