



THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY'S BULLETIN BOARD

HANDS ON TOKYO

SIGN UP NOW TO HELP THE LOCAL COMMUNITY VIA A ONE-DAY VOLUNTEER PROJECT

BY KARRYN MILLER

IT'S TOUGH TO VOLUNTEER FOR COMMUNITY PROJECTS

when you're feeling the pressure of the clock. Making time for friends and family can be a struggle in itself, without adding another commitment to your schedule. But what if you were able to do some good by donating just a few hours of your time? Would volunteering still seem so difficult?

Hands on Tokyo (HOT), a bilingual clearinghouse for volunteers, will hold its second annual "day of service" next month. Tokyoites will have the chance to experience volunteering without having to commit to a long-term assignment. After a bite-sized sampling of helping their community—and the people who reside in it—participants who want to continue can sign up for one of HOT's long-term projects, committing as much or as little time as they like.

This year's event is expected to draw 250 volunteers to take part in five different projects. Most participants will be regular volunteers or employees from HOT's corporate sponsors, but interested newcomers are also welcome.

The various projects aim to help all members of the community, starting with local youth. The playground at the Wakaba-ryo Children's Home in Meguro-ku will become a safer and more enjoyable place after HOT teams lay down AstroTurf, install a volleyball court, and plant some flowers at the entrance. While the playground is under construction, kids can tap into their creative side as artist Liane Wakabayashi and her team of helpers provide art lessons.

At the National Olympics Memorial Youth Center in Yoyogi, HOT will be putting on its own version of the Special Olympics. Participants will join in

six different athletic activities, and after completing each one, they'll collect a stamp so that they can receive a medal and certificate at the end.

The International Festival, meanwhile, will provide members of the Japan Federation of the Blind with an exciting opportunity to experience aspects of different cultures. At a number of country-themed stands, participants can learn about the music, language and food of various nations through sound, smell and touch.

Tokyo's older generation has not been forgotten, either—a nighttime market will entertain residents of the Hakuju-sou Senior Home in Meguro-ku with a lineup of special activities, including a crafts booth and a massage, makeup and manicure station.

With a number of volunteers already eager to join, HOT Director Marcela Campos has high hopes for this year's event. "Most of the people who participated in 2007 were the first ones to sign up for this year's service day," she says. "This goes to show what a fabulous day the volunteers have when they are having fun with friends and family, as well as with total strangers, helping others in Tokyo."

The Tokyo affiliate of the global Hands On organization was started up in December 2006. Since then the group has begun a number of projects, each of which stays true to the mission of serving the local community. "We want to provide volunteers with a wide variety of options so they can choose between volunteering with children, seniors, special needs children and adults, and hopefully soon with animals," Campos explains. Environmental projects are also on the horizon.

For both the day of service and other ongoing projects, HOT provides organizational assistance to ensure that volunteers can offer the most help in the time they've allotted. Says Campos: "We are incredibly responsible in making sure our volunteers are well prepared for the project—being on time, wearing the proper clothes, and understanding the sensitivities of the community we will be serving."

To find out more about the service day on October 4, or the other projects HOT currently needs help with, see www.handsontokyo.org, email info@handsontokyo.org, or call 03-5404-3563.

village voices

Are you coffee-conscious? Network with other fair-trade advocates at an upcoming event hosted by Oxfam Japan. The NPO, which focuses mainly on fighting poverty worldwide, will hold the event at its office in Ueno on Saturday, September 27. Titled **Mugged: Poverty in Your Coffee Cup**, the workshop looks at the damage being done to the lives of millions of coffee producers and their families, all while Western multinational corporations turn a tidy profit.

¥1,000 (donated to Oxfam Japan). Sep 27, 2-4pm. Oxfam Japan Office: 2F Maruko Bldg, 1-20-6 Higashi-Ueno, Taito-ku. Email oxfamjp.ivg.awareness@gmail.com to reserve. See www.oxfam.jp for more information.

Following on from the success of Tokyo English Lifeline's workshop for women held in April, Dr Patricia Jaegerman will offer the series **Nurturing a Portable Identity** again this October. Jaegerman is a US-licensed clinical psychologist who specializes in life-cycle transitions, immigration and cultural values. She will use her areas of expertise to help expat women find their place in the city. The interactive series will help participants recognize their strengths, challenges, opportunities and goals—then build on those to help each person find a true sense of self here in Tokyo.

The four sessions are ¥16,000 and will be held the first four Wednesdays in October from 11-12:30pm at the TELL office in Omotesando. Call 03-3498-0231 to reserve or find out more.