

Celebrating Deafblindness in Osaka



Osaka Big Stage performers

The Deafblind Service Center "SMILE" was established in 1999 in Osaka Japan for people with deafblindness. Organizers at SMILE have developed various services so that people with deafblindness can lead active lives and can be accepted as equal member of society.

We celebrated our 10th anniversary at Kadoma City Hall in Osaka, Japan, 13 November, 2010. We held four commemorative events during this year to raise public awareness about this disability in our region. Our message is that people with deafblindness are all around us, they have potential and the ability to live on their own. During each event we featured performances by people with deafblindness, to highlight their abilities.

In the event "5th Big Stage of People with Deafblindness in OSAKA 2010" we four-walled (self-created) a movie featuring people with deafblindness who provided musical performances

using Japanese drums as well as traditional Japanese dancing. This 'four-wall' movie, demonstrated to the audience the challenges and needs facing these individuals.

While practicing for these performances, the most difficult part was attempting to have the individuals understand the sounds and the movements. Music and dance evoke various emotions, which were then associated with figurative expressions. This demanded of them much patience and creativity until they learned what was a 'sharp' sound, how to make a 'free' sound, what is 'loose' movement and how to make 'easy' movements. It was a great challenge to explain to these individuals what we, as hearing and seeing individuals, can actually hear and see! To do this we had to make a lot of body contacts using the tactile senses.

With a great deal of effort, these people with deafblindness were successful in gaining positive experiences through playing

drums and dancing. What they had obtained through these experiences was not only new skills but also new confidence. Big Stage was indeed a wonderful opportunity for self expression and self realization for these individuals.

We are happy and proud that the audience enjoyed our Big Stage and that the deafblind individuals were able to achieve their goals.

Truly it is a disadvantage to live in a world without sight and sound. At the same time, this theatrical experience was a wonderful opportunity for these deafblind people to 'step into the other side!'

In closing, we extend our appreciation to William Green, President of DbI, who contributed a message for our commemorative publication.

Akemi Fujii

SMILE

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