

Greetings from the President's Office

2019.09.24 NO.19

Unique Companies in Akita

I assume that most citizens of Akita have anxiety about the declining population and impeding local industries, and that we must do something about this. Nothing will change if we just remain idle in crisis. We are in need of producing human resources who can flip the situation on its head, such as to start local businesses and lead the revitalization of Akita.

The objective of our university is to produce human resources from Akita who can take initiatives in a globalized society with a mixture of many cultures, and I am happy to inform that several graduate students obtained opportunities to start their business locally in Akita.

Hiroshi Susaki, age 34, one of the sixth batch of AIU graduates, has launched a travel planning company called "Travel Design" while he was a student in 2014. The company aims to create sightseeing spots in Akita from new perspectives based on his knowledge and experiences he obtained from his study abroad. It can be said that his attempt is very new compared to the traditional style of tourism, providing unusual and rare opportunities for foreign tourists to experience rural Japanese life.

In collaboration with Ugo town, he developed a study-tour called "*Ugo-Machi Ryugaku*" (Study Abroad in Ugo Town) for Thai and Taiwanese people for the purpose of improving their Japanese skills through a local traditional event, the Nishimonai Bon Dance, and experiences at farmers-inns.

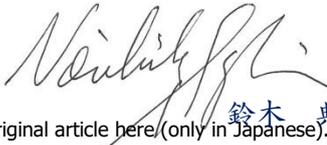
Shugo Ohashi, age 25, one of the 10th batch of AIU graduates, started his business of bicycle rental for those who love cycling, especially for those who want to deeply experience Akita's scenery, history, and culture on their own time. He is a "community-reactivating cooperator" in Oga city, focusing on touring by bicycle on numerous slopes in Oga, rather than by in cars. The number of visitors to Oga is increasing and Mr. Ohashi is humbly proud of working as a bridge in between Oga city and visitors from abroad.

In addition, the Oga Sightseeing Association has established a platform called "Oga for Cyclists," which is providing a variety of bicycles in response to the need from tourists to have options such as electric assist bicycles and road bikes.

And finally, Yuki Mizuno, the 1st batch of AIU graduates, who studied sport management while he was in Australia for his studying abroad, is the founder of a professional basketball team, the Akita Northern Happinets. With worthy experiences gained, he scrambled to find a way to make his dream come true with the great support from businesses that felt his incredible passion. In addition, in order to cover the shortage of sponsorship funds, he launched his original craft beer to help raise funds for the start-up of the team.

Many municipalities in Akita have formed similar "community-reactivating cooperator squads" to promote local tourism and the local industry, and I believe such projects require fresh ideas from the younger generations.

I think starting a business locally but with a global perspective represents a new direction for Japan's future. I very frequently attend various meetings and conferences related to higher education and often hear that other universities would like to take similar steps and approaches to those that AIU has achieved, which makes me so proud and grateful to our students.



鈴木 典比古

This article was originally posted on Asahi Shimbun local version dated September 24th, 2019. Read the original article here (only in Japanese).
<http://www.asahi.com/area/akita/articles/MTW20190924051550001.html>

President Norihiko Suzuki, DBA