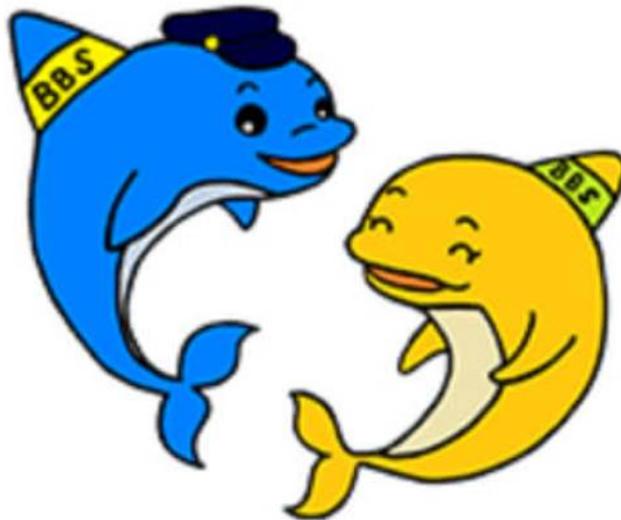


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Examples of BBS Activities in Japan



Japan Federation of Big Brothers and Sisters

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(About the cover illustration)

In order to raise public interest and understanding of the seemingly distant rehabilitation system, each related volunteer organization has its own endearing character. BBS uses this pair of dolphins, representing an older brother and sister. Whale and stoat characters are used by volunteer probation officers and the Women’s Association for Rehabilitation Aid respectively, appearing on posters and other promotional materials.

1 Support for the rehabilitation of juvenile delinquents

Ex.1 “Tomodachi” (friendship) activities (1)

(Report from BBS member in Fukuoka Prefecture)



Subject profile

- 15-year-old girl parolee from a juvenile training school
- Often went out on the town with friends late at night, and was seen as in need of better social relationships.
- Constantly used her smartphone during the day and was often absent from school.

Description of activities

1 Circumstances leading to the start of activities

During an interview with the juvenile and her mother, the girl's probation officer at the time suggested that she should try to develop a positive interpersonal relationship by spending time with a BBS member. With the consent of both the juvenile and her mother, the probation office made a request to the BBS association.

2 Activity plan

Accompanied by a senior colleague, the BBS member initially met with the juvenile and her mother at a nearby café to discuss the activity plan. At the girl's suggestion, it was decided that they would go shopping and chat together; the girl's mother also requested that the juvenile receive support with personal relationships and studies to help her attend school.

Comments from participating BBS member

My impression of the juvenile changed over the course of our activities. At first, she seemed anxious, perhaps due to having just been released from the training school. But after meeting up a few times to go shopping or share a meal, I realized that she was just an ordinary girl who loved to chat. She told me about the things she enjoyed each day, her favorite foods, and even about the cool boys at school.

As our conversations expanded to new topics, she began to confide in me about her deeper concerns. The age difference between us was just right for her to feel that she could open up to me. Even though six years may feel like a considerable age gap in Japan, we could still see each other as part of the same generation. I sensed that she looked up to me as a slightly older sister and a role model.

Being of the same generation as the juveniles, as BBS members we are able to see things from their perspective and to build good relationships. Many juvenile delinquents have trouble communicating with others. The trust that grows between BBS members and juveniles helps them to develop their communication skills, gradually dispelling their sense of loneliness.

In this way, interacting with BBS members seems to make juveniles feel less alone and improves their ability to create bonds with the people around them.

Ex.2 “Tomodachi” (friendship) activities (2) (Report from BBS member in Tokyo)

Subject profile

- 15-year-old boy parolee from a juvenile training school



Description of activities

1 Circumstances leading to the start of activities

Wishing for her son to go on to high school, the juvenile’s mother requested “tomodachi” activities to support his studies for the entrance exams. The request was made via the probation office, which arranged the first meeting between the juvenile, his mother, the probation officer, and a volunteer probation officer. Despite not appearing very keen on the idea, the boy agreed to take part in “tomodachi” activities.

2 Activities

Initially, I tried to provide learning support as requested by the probation office, but the boy lacked motivation and often did not show up as arranged. Instead, I decided to first build our relationship by doing things that he liked. We played soccer in the park and joined in group activities with other BBS members and volunteer probation officers, which helped him to gradually relax.

After some time, we were meeting with a volunteer probation officer when the boy indicated that he would rather get a job instead of going to high school. The idea was discussed with his mother, probation officer, and a volunteer probation officer, and we reached the conclusion that he would work while also studying via a correspondence course. Given these changes, I worked with the juvenile and the requester to revise the original goal of providing learning support. We agreed that we would use this as an opportunity to jointly explore his options for the future while continuing to build a close relationship.

Eventually, despite some reservations the juvenile decided to keep working and quit his correspondence high school. Setting aside the appropriateness of this decision, I supported his stance because I was pleased to see the boy earnestly thinking about his future, given the previous indifference about his life’s direction.

Within six months, the juvenile had settled into a routine and began to go out with workmates on days off. He had set up a life of his own and no longer needed my involvement as before. For me this was a bittersweet moment, but it seemed that the time had come to think about wrapping up our “tomodachi” activities.

Comments from participating BBS member

During my activities, I was able to receive supervision and to sit in on some of the juvenile’s meetings with his volunteer probation officer, which was very helpful. In particular, when the boy was struggling to decide on his future direction, I wavered too, wondering which option would be best and what support I could offer. At that point, I shared the following with the volunteer probation officer:

“I’ve been asked to provide learning support, but his motivation is weakening. Having received little recognition in his life, he has now found a workplace where he is valued and senior colleagues are eager to show him the ropes. This job seems very important to him because it offers prospects for the future. I’m afraid that forcing him to study as he is gaining independence will not do him good. At some point in his life he may embrace the need to study, or perhaps he never will, but I feel that the choice is his. As part of the wider community outside his work, I see my role now as creating opportunities for us to enjoy these activities together, serving as a window through which he can discover that life has a lot more to offer beyond his current job, and lending an ear in the hope that it helps him to grow by confronting his own feelings and experiences.”

The experienced volunteer probation officer listened sympathetically to what I shared, which allowed me to look back on my relationship with the juvenile, organize my thoughts, and gain confidence in moving forward. This proved a pivotal point in our activities.

Ex.3 Three-way collaborative project (BBS, local government, national employment support center)

(Report from local BBS association in Sapporo)



Hokkaido is home to a state-run facility that offers practical agricultural training as part of the rehabilitation process for juveniles on probation. The local town where the facility resides, strives as a community to aid the recovery of juvenile delinquents. With support from the Ministry of Justice and our federation, the three organizations listed above organized a joint project in the town, planned and run mainly by university student BBS members from around the prefecture. In addition to these Hokkaido-based members, the 4-day, 3-night event encouraged involvement from BBS associations across Japan. Although the project ended after two years in 2019, the BBS association has raised money through crowdfunding and continued to be involved with the juveniles in new ways, such as providing learning support as well as agricultural training.

- Objectives

Promote juvenile rehabilitation, energize the BBS movement and publicize the town's efforts by creating opportunities for BBS members to interact with the facility's juvenile residents through agricultural training and other activities. In doing so, boost public understanding and support for community involvement in rehabilitation.

- Program

Group work focused on sports, including dodgebee and soft volleyball; agricultural training, including shiitake mushroom harvesting; meeting with community members, etc.

- Comments from members and the probation officer

Member 1: I enjoyed the chance to experience new things, like the agricultural training, along with playing sports and talking with the juveniles. The local people explained that, rather than giving them special treatment, they regard the youths as regular townspeople. I realized that this is what community support is all about. This project made me reconsider the idea of rehabilitation, and I realized that true rehabilitation comes not from a structured life in an isolated facility, but from the warmth of human interaction.

Member 2: Hanging out with the youths, I found them all to be gentle at heart, far from the common image of juvenile delinquents. It made those images feel like nothing more than discriminatory labeling, while the true problem is the bad environments that surround these young people. These BBS activities made me eager to reach out to socially-isolated youths and prevent them from going down the wrong path.

Probation officer: Despite the project's short duration, interacting with peers in the same generation greatly energized the juveniles. They seemed to thoroughly enjoy the training and group work, and the chance to share their concerns. For youths who are usually surrounded by adults, this would certainly have been a refreshing and liberating experience. It revealed a side of them that remains hidden when among adults, which underscored the necessity and importance of receiving support from other young people.



Ex.4 Learning support at juvenile training schools

(Report from local BBS association in Kyoto)



Objectives

- Improve students' academic performance.
- Stimulate students through engagement with people outside the facility.
- Alleviate students' anxiety by demonstrating, through the visits of BBS members, that there are people ready to support their rehabilitation.

Activity overview

BBS members participate in training school classes and provide the following learning support:

- Sit with students who struggle to keep up with classwork and explain difficult areas
- Assist students who are studying for high school entrance exams
- Explain difficult areas in the students' self-study

Comments from participating BBS member

In the beginning, both the BBS members and students were nervous, but gradually they began to respond with smiles and actively ask questions when they didn't understand, which was very pleasing to see.

Given the different levels of progress, motivation and aptitude between students, I felt that it is significant for BBS members to assist their studies by participating in classes and tailoring our support to each individual, in the hope that they would begin to enjoy schoolwork.

We will continue to hone our approach to ensure that our learning support is a pleasant and enjoyable experience for students, allowing them to focus on their studies

Ex.5 Recreation at children's self-reliance support facilities*

(Report from local BBS association in Hiroshima)



Objective

- Improve communication skills and adherence to rules through recreation.

活動概要

Conduct recreational activities with elementary and junior high school students residing at the facility.

- Organize icebreakers, games, sweets-making activities.
- On the day, juveniles and BBS members enjoy the activities together in groups.
- At Christmas time, BBS members give each student a handmade present

* Children's self-reliance support facilities are welfare facilities that assist children who are considered at risk of delinquency or who require mentoring due to adverse household environments, etc. Either through admission or visiting arrangements, these children receive the necessary guidance and support to become independent.

Comments from participating BBS member

The children seemed to enjoy their recreation time. Nervousness gradually turned to smiles when talking with BBS members, and they became immersed in the games, even those aimed at slightly younger kids.

According to facility staff, the children had been looking forward to a visit by volunteers as a rare chance to interact with people other than the staff themselves. Especially in the case of an organization like BBS, whose members are mainly university students close to the children's age, hearing our stories and playing together provides positive stimulation.

Some of them even became interested in university and began to dream bigger after learning about different professions.

Besides the fun of recreational activities, I hope this involvement with BBS gives the children a good opportunity to think about their lives.



(Trialing recreational activities)
※Juveniles not pictured

2 Delinquency Prevention Activities

(1) Youth development and delinquency prevention activities

Ex.1 “Kodomo Shokudo” (Children’s Cafeteria)

(Report from a school district BBS association in Tokyo)

One in seven Japanese children are said to live in relative poverty. In such households, children often eat alone for reasons such as their parents being at work.

In response to this situation, we set up a reservation-based cafeteria for children from disadvantaged households



Objectives

- Convey the enjoyment and importance of meals
- Create a place where the children feel that they belong, with BBS members as older brothers and sisters.

Activity overview

- Provide a free dinner for the children.
- Play ball games, hide-and-seek, drawing, etc.

Comments from participating BBS member

One of the changes we saw in the children was improved communication skills.

Initially, some of the children would only speak among themselves or to particular BBS members, or need a particular member to accompany them. However, after a few visits to the cafeteria the children seem better able to communicate, talking and playing with members and kids they hadn't spoken to before.

After finding out about the generally low academic performance of disadvantaged children, I feel that the next challenge is to help with their studies.



(子ども食堂の様子)

Ex.2 Online learning support for juveniles not attending school

(Report from a school district BBS association in Ibaraki)

At the request of a group of Ibaraki parents whose children do not attend school, since 2020 the prefecture's BBS association has partnered with private volunteer organizations to provide online learning support to 14 students, ranging from elementary to high school.



This project is a collaborative effort between several organizations. Working with the volunteer staff and parents, we search for the best ways to help each juvenile.

After an initial interview with the child and their parents, we tailor our support based on their wishes, using weekly hour-long Zoom meetings as our communication tool, along with the self-learning website "NETTORE"

If children who wish to attend school are unable to do so, the learning gap with their peers widens. Through our activities, we help the juveniles create good study habits to ensure they don't fall behind. Our relationship with the juveniles is not that of a student and instructor, nor that of true equals, but rather a unique position that allows us to both aid their studies and discuss their concerns. We hope to continue engaging with these children to create a brighter society free from crime and delinquency, where no one gets left behind, either at school or in the community.

BBS member comments

With COVID-19 disrupting in-person activities, we found ourselves at a standstill at the local association level. Then the prefectural association reached out with this opportunity. Having no experience with online work I was uncertain at first, but decided to take part because I was interested in learning support.



For the past six months or so, I have been working via Zoom with a junior high school-aged boy who has learning difficulties. Initially, we would simply go through the online materials and answer any questions he had, starting and finishing at the allocated times. Then little by little, we started to chat before and after studying, and he began to look more relaxed. He is even becoming comfortable with reading and writing kanji, an area in which he previously struggled but is now gradually gaining confidence.

One of the best things about providing learning support is the chance to directly witness the child mastering something they couldn't do before. Since we began, a growing number of members have put their hands up to take part in learning support, which enables us to assist more juveniles.

As this is a new initiative amid the pandemic, participating members have had to figure many aspects out for themselves. Various challenges and difficulties have also cropped up. To deal with these, we hold weekly meetings where members report on their activities, share problems, and work together to find solutions. This initiative is suited to the COVID era, and I hope we can build on these experiences for future activities.

(2) PR & public awareness activities

Ex.1 Activities as part of

the 70th “Campaign to Give Society a Brighter Future”

(Report from the Tokyo BBS Association)

As part of the above initiative, on Thursday 26 November 2020 we held an event at a hall in Shibuya, Tokyo, to tell the public about our BBS Association with the help of Yoshimoto comedians.

This publicity event was planned and run by our BBS Association, with full support from the entertainment production company. Incidentally, the company mainly uses this hall for performances by young comedians, and it has become a gathering place for their young fans. We took every possible precaution to prevent COVID-19 infections, including leaving every second seat empty. Many young people in particular turned out to view the event.

Since we had never before attempted to hold a BBS members-led event, in the beginning there was much chaos and confusion about what to do and how. Outside of our regular volunteer activities we had no experience in organizing an event, so there was also a fair amount of uncertainty. Thankfully, the weekly meetings with representatives from the Ministry of Justice and the production company helped in various ways, as we sought out ways to broadly promote and generate interest in our activities.

As we discussed our ideas and what we wanted to convey, the details gradually fell into place and the event took shape. We decided to focus on the people behind BBS activities, rather than the activities themselves, including a segment for sharing member experiences. While we had showcased our activities in the past, I believe this was the first time to shine the spotlight on our people. Among them, one member told of their shock at trying to offer learning support only to realize that what they had learned as a student was of little use in today’s classrooms. Another spoke about a tug-of-war contest against students at a training school sports day, when the BBS members unwittingly got too serious and ended up winning.

This series of somewhat silly yet heartwarming episodes provided a laugh and filled the venue with a friendly atmosphere. Feedback forms after the event also showed that people wanted to hear more such stories. I hope this event spurs greater interest in BBS and the rehabilitation system.



Ex.2 Drug abuse prevention campaign

(Report from the Wakayama BBS Association)

Objective

Raise awareness to prevent drug abuse

Activity overview

BBS members learn about the problems of drug use and addiction through relevant training and collaborations with related organizations, enabling them to take part in counseling and awareness-raising activities aimed at preventing drug abuse.

- Serve as drug abuse prevention advisors in the prefecture
- Operate a nighttime drug counseling hotline, the Drug Recovery Line

The federation also supports a drug abuse prevention campaign and fundraising effort held across Japan for the UN’s International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking. BBS associations around the country assist with awareness-raising activities and UN donation drives. Each year, the collected money is presented to UNODC by the Drug Abuse Prevention Center (DAPC Grant).

