

## **OPERATION BLESSING INTERNATIONAL ANNOUNCES LAUNCH OF JAPAN BUREAU FOR LONG TERM HUMANITARIAN EFFORTS**

VIRGINIA BEACH AND TOKYO (October 10, 2013) – Global humanitarian organization Operation Blessing International (OBI) announced today the official launch of its Japan bureau, Operation Blessing Japan (OBJ). Bill Horan, president of Operation Blessing International, and Don Thomson, president of Operation Blessing Japan, made the joint announcement from the Foreign Correspondents Club in Tokyo.

The establishment of OBJ follows two years of humanitarian relief efforts in Japan by Operation Blessing International, one of the largest charities in America. A first responder to the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami, OBI delivered tons of relief supplies and equipment to thousands of survivors in the immediate aftermath of the disaster.

Since then, OBI has provided many ongoing relief efforts including community support groups for survivors and microenterprise projects. One area of concerted efforts has been to help the Japanese fishing industry recover from the devastation, which wiped out thousands of boats and seaweed/oyster cultivation efforts. To help, OBI commissioned and distributed 30 new boats made specifically for Japanese fishermen, secured and distributed 60 used boats from around Japan that were donated to fishermen, and donated 20 industrial-grade electrical generators along with \$650,000 worth of seaweed and oyster cultivation equipment to the Urato Islands, including anchors, rope, shells used for cultivating oysters, floats, nets, small trucks, and computers, to help get the oyster fishing industry there back in operation. Due to OBI's swift action, the oystermen were able to harvest in the same year as the tsunami, a timeline that was unthinkable by most in the community. In recognition of this achievement, the Mayor of Shiogama City honored OBI for getting them back on their feet so quickly.

Operation Blessing Japan is registered as a Japanese non-profit (NPO) in Miyagi Prefecture. The organization's headquarters are located in Sendai, with a second office in Tokyo. The organization will focus on three areas of activity:

- “Remember Tohoku” - continued relief efforts in the Tohoku disaster zone including projects related to reviving the fishing industry, providing community support groups for survivors to share their stories and heal from the emotional damage caused by the disaster, and also an outreach in Fukushima Prefecture that will provide buses to transport children living there to areas that are safe for playing outdoors (due to high levels of radiation in Fukushima).
- Contribute to Japan – OBJ seeks to also contribute to Japanese society and will be responding to humanitarian needs as they arise in other parts of Japan.
- “Touch the World from Japan” - OBJ is launching a program to introduce OBI humanitarian projects around the world to the Japanese people, should they wish to support those efforts.

Bill Horan, president of Operation Blessing International, stated, “Operation Blessing International arrived in Japan to help in the aftermath of the 2011 disaster and we have been here ever since with a number of ongoing efforts. After these two years, the fact remains that the people of Tohoku still need help so that they may recover their livelihoods and become financially independent once again.”

Don Thomson, president of Operation Blessing Japan, stated, “Operation Blessing Japan is committed to helping the people of Japan as well as serving as a bridge to deliver the goodwill of the Japanese people to areas of need all around the world.”

For more information please visit [www.ob.org](http://www.ob.org) or (in Japanese) [www.objapan.org](http://www.objapan.org)

**ABOUT OPERATION BLESSING INTERNATIONAL:**

Operation Blessing International (OBI) is one of the largest charities in America, providing strategic disaster relief, medical aid, hunger relief, clean water and community development in 23 countries around the world on a daily basis. Currently, Forbes ranks OBI as one of its “100 Largest Charities” with an efficiency rating of 99%, and Consumers Digest also named OBI as one of “America’s Top Charities” in 2012. Founded in 1978, Operation Blessing International has touched the lives of more than 255 million people in more than 105 countries and 50 states, providing goods and services valued at over \$3.3 billion to date.

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