

## An Initiative for Mutual Support That Generates Joie de Vivre Hotto Bank



▲ Minamisanriku residents who came to help out after hearing that a farmer inland was short of hands for the harvesting turnips.

Photo courtesy of Minamisanriku Social Welfare Council

On May 13th, 2015, the Minamisanriku Social Welfare Council established a resident volunteer registration system known as Hotto Bank. Minamisanriku residents register themselves with the system, whose aim it is to have people within the community support each other by volunteering for tasks they feel they can manage, thereby giving them a sense of purpose in life. Hotto Bank was selected as the name because even helping others a small amount can be self-enriching, creating a “savings of the heart,” a “hot bank,” so to speak. Hotto Bank is a coined word that combines the English word “hot” with the Japanese word “hotto,” meaning to feel relieved.

When registering, volunteers receive a Hotto Bank registration card which equates to a letter of appointment and also serves as ID. Proudly wearing their Hotto Bank name tag, volunteers, who may be aged anywhere between their 20s and their 90s, help other citizens with their daily life activities. These may include keeping an eye on or chatting with elderly people, running tea salons, watching over children with disabilities during their summer vacation time, carpentry, or any other task that the volunteer feels personally able to perform.

As of 2021, more than 30 of the approximately 200 volunteers who registered with Hotto Bank have experience as life support advisers. The Hotto Bank initiative serves not only to assist people with their daily life activities, but also to alleviate loneliness and emotional trauma in members of the community.