



A song about small moments of happiness that were experienced by each of the children



▲February 2012

Each day, students in Togura Elementary School, Grade 4, Class 1 practiced singing the song as they read the lyrics that had been written on the blackboard by their teacher. (Photo taken at Zennoji Elementary School in Tome, which was hosting their classes at the time)

Photo courtesy of TOYOTA 'Children meet artists' Committee in Sendai / Miyagi

### Small Things But Big Happiness

Music and words by  
Togura Elementary School, Grade 4, Class 1

Happiness when I was reunited with my family  
Happiness when the power came back on  
Happiness when the water came back on  
I escaped with my friends, and we ate some food  
I took a slow bath in a tub  
from the Self-Defense Forces  
Happiness when school started up again  
Happiness when they gave me a school bag  
Happiness when the soup kitchen people came

Ramen, curry, shaved ice, octopus dumplings  
Beef rice bowls, soft-serve ice cream,  
fried chicken, baked sweet potato  
Exile, AKB, Kiyohara, Judy Ongg  
Sandwichman, Croket, Sunplaza, Esorabito  
Happiness being able to meet different people

Skipping rope with double unders, triple unders;  
the migratory birds have left

Monkey bars, mats, exercise;  
the seasons have passed  
Happiness in working hard together  
Happiness in living for tomorrow  
Thank you, thank you

On March 11, 2011, the children of Togura Elementary School, which stood right on the coast, evacuated to a nearby hill. As the tsunami approached,

they moved to a small shrine further up the hill, making a narrow escape. The children spent a bitterly cold night in the shrine grounds, which were now like an island, surrounded by the dark waters.

The fear produced by the pitch blackness and the earthquake tremors was traumatizing. Damage to the Togura area was severe. Most of the children lost their homes, and daily life was severely affected. In winter that year, Togura Elementary School fourth graders took part in a workshop whose aim it was to reflect on the events of the past year and write a song. Concerned about triggering the children's fears by asking them to remember the earthquake, the teachers gave careful consideration to the value of running such a workshop. After much discussion, the decision was made to go ahead. They felt that the act of reflecting on how the children, together with their friends, teachers, family members, and others in the community, had all survived the year after the quake, and the act of looking back on the small moments of happiness that everyone felt from time to time would be self-affirmative and of value in integrating memories.

Each line of the final lyrics of the song that was written reflects a small moment of happiness experienced by someone in the class. The song, which is one of sharing happiness with others, became deeply engraved into the children's hearts, where it continued to perform healing. The teachers feel that the workshop and the song were a valuable part of the children's emotional recovery.

The song was performed during the Minamisanriku memorial ceremony held on March 11, 2012, sung with children from four other local schools. The words "Arigato, arigato," which come at the end of the song that the children had composed, were sung as a refrain by all 135 children. As they listened, people in the audience could not stop the tears from running down their cheeks.