

“The Shining Star of Losers Everywhere” : Teamwork Brings Haru-urara Movie Screening to Kochi

By Kiyoko Nakamura

When I became a senior student at Kochi University, an idea popped into my mind. “Well”, I thought, “I feel like I’ve become a family member of Kochi, and now I’m eager to contribute something to Kochi out of my gratitude before I head back to my hometown of Nara”. When I came upon this idea, I was actually studying in Sweden as an exchange student at Gothenburg University and, quite fortunately, I received an offer to hold a movie screening in Kochi for a wonderful story which originated in Kochi.

Perhaps our readers are wondering what the movie is about? Have you heard the name “Haru-urara”? She was a racehorse who debuted in 1998 at the Kochi Racetrack. In June 2003, after her 80th consecutive loss, her story caught the interest of the national Japanese media, and she suddenly became very popular, actually somewhat of a star. In fact, she came to be called “the shining star of losers everywhere” for continuing to run with all her heart with a motto of “never give up” despite her seemingly endless losing streak.



world, and the film won the Best Short Documentary Award for 2016 at the Hot Docs Film Festival in

Canada.

At the one of the movie festivals held in South America, Mr. Duzyj met Agustin Suarez who is a third-generation Argentinean of Japanese descent, and



his great-grand mother was from Kochi. They thought it would be a great idea to hold a screening of the film in Kochi to encourage people there to bring back the story. They sought a Japanese person to help out with the screening.

Mr. Hiroki Shindo, who works at the Japanese embassy in Argentina and knows Agustin, introduced me to them when we met at a language café in Gothenburg during his vacation in Sweden. This was a great opportunity for me to fulfill my plan about contributing something to Kochi.

Of course, I felt it was like destiny, and I held screenings at Kochi University and the Kochi Racetrack on October 21st and 23rd 2016. Here I gladly share the whole story about what I discovered through this journey.

After I finished my exchange program in June 2016, we started to discuss the project in more detail over Skype. The three of us had many conflicts. Not just cultural differences, but also we didn’t have a common goal, or a shared vision for the project. I really struggled to understand exactly what they wanted. On the other hand, our negotiations seemed to succeed.

The people who work at the Kochi Racetrack helped us a lot through promotion and advertising support. Also, many student volunteers at Kochi University joined our team, and worked very hard to make the project a success.

To promote the event, writers from several newspapers took up the story and wrote about this event. I couldn’t have overcome the many obstacles we faced in Kochi without their support to make the event happen. How curious it was to get such strong support from so many people! This may be because I was passionate and tried to actually start something. When you show your passion and hard work for something, it is amazing how much people will support you.

The day of the screening at Kochi University, an elderly lady came along, and she shared with us how she got power from Haru-urara during the time when the horse was regularly losing races. She told us that once again she was encouraged by the movie, and this was evident by the big smile on her face. There was nothing except a euphoric feeling in my mind when I heard her story.

I want to express my appreciation to everyone who was involved in this amazing journey again. Everyone from the Director, Mickey Duzyj, to the staff at Kochi Racetrack to our energetic student supporters and, finally, Prof. Noriko Imai who helped a lot in arranging things for the Kochi University screening. What a fantastic event and experience it was!

I’m actually not sure that I could contribute something valuable to Kochi, or more selfishly if I was yet again given something wonderful from Kochi. However, I acquired a valuable chance through this effort and it made me quite strong. What if you encountered such an opportunity? What would you do with a chance like this? I hope that you would “seize the day” and make the most of what is in front of you.