



Press release

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The Göttingen region helps Japan directly

Science, business, city, culture and sports support students and young scientists

(pug) Göttingen University would like to help Japanese students affected by the catastrophe with an ambitious charity program. Tohoku University, Göttingen University's partner school, suffered significant damage during the earthquake – many university buildings were damaged, classes have been cancelled and students and employees have lost family members or are currently homeless. Japanese students in Germany have also been affected – for instance, a Japanese student at Göttingen University no longer receives financial support from his home country. He requires a bridge scholarship in order to continue his studies. The Georgia Augusta International association was founded to organise the aid efforts. The city of Göttingen as well as numerous partners from science, business, culture and sports are also contributing to the program.

"Göttingen University and the entire region were shocked by the catastrophe in Japan. The earthquake and tsunami destroyed large swaths of land and created great distress. Our sympathy goes out to those affected. We want to help support the futures of students and young researchers in Japan – and especially those at Tohoku, our partner university – with such things as bridge scholarships. We would also like to invite 20 students to summer school at Göttingen at no charge to allow them to continue their studies while recovering from the effects of the catastrophe," said Prof. Dr. Hiltraud Casper-Hehne, Göttingen University Vice President for Research and International Affairs.

A series of events following the motto "The Göttingen region helps Japan directly" will be held in the coming months with proceeds directly benefitting young people affected by the catastrophe. The Sparkasse Göttingen savings bank was the first institution to make a financial commitment to the program. KWS Saat AG will also make a major contribution. The aid program will kick off with a public event on March 25, 2011 from 4 p.m. to 5.30 p.m. in the historic Aula of the university. The university has invited experts on Japan and eyewitnesses who were in Japan during the earthquake. They will provide an update on the current situation in Japan. The main speaker will be Prof. Harald Fuess from the Centre of East Asian Studies at Heidelberg University. Attendees will also have an opportunity to ask personal questions. Berlin musician Dietmar Herriger, who plays the Japanese bamboo shakuhachi flute, will provide musical entertainment. "We will also collect donations during the event. The university and its partners are hoping for strong participation. Every donation is important, regardless of size," says Dr. Uwe Muus, director of Göttingen University's international department. "Other activities are also planned during the year to offer effective, long-term aid to students in need."

A solidarity concert by the Göttingen Symphony Orchestra (GSO) and the Göttingen Lutheran church district on Sunday, April 3 is among the events planned by university partners. Together with the Göttingen city church choir, the GSO, directed by Musical Director Christoph-Mathias Mueller, will play a Mozart requiem.

The concert will begin at 6 p.m. in the Johanniskirche in Göttingen. Olaf Feuerstein, General Manager of the restaurant Bullerjahn, will organise a charity dinner for up to 250 people, and the BG Göttingen will ask for donations during home games. The Göttingen student association is going to offer Japanese food in the main cafeteria and collect donations for the aid program at the cash registers. Precision measuring equipment company Mahr, which also has activities in Japan, will sponsor a Japanese student. The Japanese student association "For Japan" is planning events in Göttingen to support the program and the Catholic community at the university will take part in the charitable activities. Other partners in addition to the city of Göttingen, the Sparkasse Göttingen bank and KWS Saat AG are currently the Hannover Chamber of Commerce's Göttingen office, the southern Lower Saxony craftsmen association, Novelis Deutschland, the THIMM group, the Göttingen alumni association, the scientific institutions at the Göttingen Research Campus and the Göttingen technical colleges.

Helmut Takahiro Uchida, a scientist at the Institute for Materials Science at Göttingen University and a former student of Tohoku University, was in Japan at the time of the earthquake. "The situation in the Tohoku region around Sendai is very difficult," he says. "The land along the coast was destroyed by the tsunami. Most of the damage from the earthquake occurred inland – train lines and streets will have to be carefully rebuilt and reconstructing the houses will take months. Providing just the basics is difficult. A ship with food docked in Sendai on Tuesday to meet needs for the next few days. Since power lines and transmission towers were destroyed, it's very difficult to communicate and receive information. In many regions in Japan, cellular calls are not possible and there isn't enough power or access to computers for e-mail."

The Georgia Augusta International association will ensure that all donations directly benefit those affected. A committee of experts from the participating institutions will determine how to distribute the funds. "As an active member, the city of Göttingen will do all it can to support the association," says Göttingen mayor Wolfgang Meyer. "I am very pleased at the willingness to help and especially the desire to provide support to Japanese students in our city during this difficult time." Donations can be made directly to the association's account at the Sparkasse Göttingen – account number 15 1000 19, bank routing code 260 500 01 – please note "Direkthilfe Japan" when making donations. Additional information is available from Tanja Falkowsky, Göttingen University international department, phone (0551) 39-12482 as well as on the Internet at www.uni-goettingen.de/direkthilfejapan.

Scientific institutions around the country are also offering Japanese scientists research stays. Göttingen University, Göttingen University Hospital, the Max Planck Institute for Experimental Medicine and the German Primate Centre are among these institutions. Additional information is available at www.nipponsciencesupport.net.

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"The Göttingen region helps Japan directly" – Partners:

- Academy of Sciences and Humanities
- Alumni Göttingen e.V.
- BG Göttingen
- Bullerjahn – bar and restaurant in the cellar of the Göttingen town hall
- German Primate Centre
- Göttingen Lutheran church district
- Göttingen protestant student community
- Göttingen Symphony Orchestra
- HAWK University of Applied Sciences and Arts
- Hannover Chamber of Commerce, Göttingen office
- KWS Saat AG
- Göttingen Catholic university community
- Southern Lower Saxony craftsmen association
- Mahr GmbH
- Max Planck Institute for biophysical Chemistry
- Max Planck Institute for experimental Medicine
- Measurement Valley e.V.
- Novelis Deutschland
- Otto Bock HealthCare
- PHYWE Systems
- Private University of Applied Sciences (PFH)
- Sparkasse Göttingen
- City of Göttingen
- City church choir of Göttingen
- Göttingen student association
- Japanese student association "For Japan"
- THIMM – The Highpack Group
- Göttingen University
- Göttingen University Hospital

Additional partners desired.