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On the January 2016 Fukushima Study Tour, I saw many new things, and it changed my opinion about the Prefecture.

I had been living in Aizu-Wakamatsu for 3 months before the tour, and so I had already come to call it home. I enjoy Kitakata ramen and Aizu's basashi, and I had visited Tsuruga castle many times. I already thought of Fukushima as a prefecture rich in history and culture before the tour. But I thought that the legacy of the 2011 disaster would always cast a shadow on the traditions and accomplishments of Fukushima. During the tour I changed my mind. We saw the damage of the disaster and the problems it still causes for the residents of Fukushima. But we also heard stories of bravery and courage, saw how swiftly reconstruction took place, and came to know the unbreakable people of Fukushima.

On the tour one place that really stood out to me was Aquamarine Fukushima. At the aquarium we listened to a talk by an aquarium employee who told us the story of the events during and after the 2011 disaster. He described how the employees safely evacuated all of the museum guests, and then how the employees took shelter in the highest part of the building. In the aftermath of the tsunami when the are had to be evacuated, employees took aquatic animals with them to evacuation shelters and cared for them as best they could. The employees went above and beyond their duty in this and showed a great resourcefulness in a time of crisis. After this I was very glad to learn that the aquarium reopened to the public mere months after the disaster.

Fukushima has many wonderful things, and it would be a shame if they were hidden by fear. Instead of being scarred by the past, Fukushima can be proud of its future. It is a shining example of recovery from disaster and of the unconquerable human spirit.