

## *Andre's Bench*

*Ishinomaki, Miyagi, Japan*

*Andre's Bench* is a true story of a gift that was given after The Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami of 2011. It is a story of a young girl in Ohio, who never met her grandmother from Ishinomaki, but honored her with a wish to rebuild the park in her grandmother's hometown. It is also the story of a volunteer, Andre, who helped this young girl rebuild Matsunami Park, but passed away suddenly a year after it was built, and a Japanese carpenter in Ishinomaki whose sorrow was channeled to create this bench.

While Andre's bench is an intersection of many lives today dealing with loss, the bench represents a refuge, perhaps in our hearts, that we all need to go to express sorrow, to be heard, and to be understood. The story is a beautiful example of how positive and healing things can come out of something tragic.

This introduction is written by Emiko Moore who is the young girl's mother and Andre's friend.

Naomi Chiba is one of the *Andre's Bench* program participants and the contact person in Ishinomaki,



