

E-Mail Newsletter from Mayor of Okayama City “Challenge of Legendary Okayama” (13)  
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[Joji Tsubota Award]

Hello, I'm Omori, Mayor of Okayama.

The 29th Joji Tsubota Award celebration was held in Tokyo on March 26 and I attended it as host.

Joji Tsubota was born in Okayama City in 1890 and died in 1982. He is one of Japan's leading children's literature writer and left behind many works. In his works including “Obake-no-sekai (the world of ghosts)”, “Kaze-no-naka-no-kodomo (children in the wind)”, “Kodomo-no-shiki (Children's four seasons)”, the view of the world is unique and impressive because children's free world and adult anxieties or worldly things are mixed.

The Joji Tsubota Award was established to improve the culture in Okayama City while honoring the great achievement of Mr. Tsubota. The award is presented every year to an excellent literary work about the world which adults and children can share. This time, “Sekaichizu-no-shitagaki (Draft for the map of the world)” by Ryo Asai, 24-year-old Naoki-Award-winning writer, won the award.

In the story, children including elementary school student Taisuke live in a foster home, experiencing loneliness and emotional pain. However, they are planning a “mission” for Saori, who is going to graduate from high school and leave the foster home. It reminds me of the children I met in a foster home in our city at the end of last year and I felt close to tears while reading the book.

I had an opportunity to talk with Mr. Asai in the celebration. He visited a foster home to collect information or material for the work. However, he never contact with children there.

The reason is he wanted to write the work in an objective way as possible as he can and was careful not to bother the children. I thought that he is very mature for 24 years old.

He also told me that he wanted to strongly tell “You don't need to always fight when you suffer a painful experience like bullying. You can escape from it.” to all children.

I hope that children read this story and their pain or hardship can be relieved.

This story must be interesting to adults as well as children. I strongly recommend that you read this.