

***The Extraordinary Voyage of Kamome:
How a tsunami, a boat, Facebook and high school students
built an unlikely pan-Pacific connection***

Lori Dengler, Professor Emerita, Humboldt State University

The March 2011 Japan tsunami swept an estimated 5 million tons of debris into the ocean, 1.5 million tons of which were swept far offshore and into the great Pacific-wide current circulation pattern. One of those items of debris was a small boat that beached in Crescent City on the Northern California coast. The boat was traced to a school in Japan, and through the efforts of high school students, was returned to Japan six months later. The return of the boat became a symbol of resilience and began a series of student exchanges between California and Japanese high school students, leading to a sister school relationship between Del Norte and Takata High Schools. This presentation traces the story of Kamome, how Dr. Dengler first became acquainted with the town of Rikuzentakata during a 2011 post-tsunami field investigation, and how those connections led to a children's book, a formal Sister City agreement between Rikuzentakata and Crescent City, a curriculum and became the featured documentary in NBC's coverage of the Japan Olympic Games.

Biography: Lori Dengler is an expert in earthquake and tsunami hazards and hazard mitigation. She received her Bachelor's, Master's and Ph.D degrees in Geophysics from the University of California at Berkeley and taught in the HSU Geology Department from 1978 to 2015. She was a member of the team that developed the U.S. National Tsunami Hazards Program and has participated in six International Post Tsunami Survey Teams and was co-author of the UNESCO's Post Tsunami Survey field guide. She was recognized as HSU Scholar of the Year in 2008, received California's Alquist medal for earthquake mitigation efforts in 2009 and was recognized with the Frank Press Award from the Seismological Society of America for public service in 2017. In 2015, she published a children's book about a tsunami debris boat that connected cities in Japan and California. Since retiring from teaching, Lori continues to provide scientific advice to the Redwood Coast Tsunami Work Group, engage in earthquake and tsunami outreach projects with CalOES, write a weekly column for the Eureka Times-Standard and has developed a K-12 curriculum based on the tsunami boat (visit Kamome.humboldt.edu).