

KCTV English News with Nik Brontas

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Nik: Hello again, Todd. So, Christmas has come and gone, and we saw some interesting seasonal charity events take place.

This week we're talking about one of these charities -- The Jeju Furey Foundation. Could you tell us more about how it got started?

Todd: Certainly, Nik. Well, the Furey Foundation is a volunteer organization that was set up in March 2009.

Initially it was a small group of friends fundraising for a 36-year-old Canadian English teacher named Nathan Furey who had fallen gravely ill and was in the hospital.

Tragically, he died within a week, leaving behind a wife from Jeju and two infant sons.

Nik: That's truly awful.

Todd: Yes, it really was. And yet, as we'll see, there's an incredibly heartwarming story here, one of philanthropy, community spirit, and hope.

Nik: I'm sure our viewers would like to know how the Foundation has developed and grown into what it is today.

Todd: Well, according to their Web site, the fundraising initiative "shifted gears" and began putting together a post-secondary education fund for Nathan's two sons.

This, as it turns out, was the genesis of the Furey Foundation.

Nik: So, they set a new fundraising target for the sons' educations.

Todd: Right. They achieved their objective of 20 million won in just three months, thanks to the outpouring of support from friends and family both here and in Canada, but also friends who had since left Jeju but who had kept in touch.

One of the foundation's founders, Dan Nabben, said in a newspaper interview a couple of years ago that he and the other friends made the decision to continue charity work in Nathan's memory.

This was in part due to the influence of another non-Korean philanthropist on Jeju, Fred Dustin, who has lived and worked on Jeju for over four decades.

Nik: I believe we'll be profiling Mr. Dustin on Talk Jeju early in the New Year.

Todd: Yes, that's right.

Nik: So, Todd, what has the Foundation been up to in 2013?

Todd: Well, I spoke with Mary Summers, the current president of Foundation. She told me there were 11 Furey events in 2013 which raised nearly 28 million won.

Nik: That's amazing. What will the money be used for?

Todd: Well, to start, the Foundation sponsors local families in need.

Two Furey Families as they're called -- one in Iho and the other in Nohyeong -- will receive about 13 million won, and another dozen or so families and their children will also receive financial aid.

Nik: How did the foundation find these families?

Todd: The Foundation first contacted a local charity organization in 2009 called the Conference of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society.

It helps poor people with their basic needs.

In an interview with Arirang Radio in 2011, Mr. Nabben said they found a family with a similar story to Nathan's, where quote, "It was a pair of kids who had lost their parents, and they were living with their grandmother in a very very difficult situation."

Nik: I see. And I believe the foundation held a very successful funding drive this year to help the island's orphans and sick kids?

Todd: Ms. Summers told me that the 2013 Christmas Orphanage Drive raised 11.1 million won, which includes an additional contribution from the JDC of 4.5 million won.

This money was used in part to buy Christmas presents for these kids.

That's 304 orphans in four orphanages in Oedo, Samyang, Daejeong and Seogwipo City and about 290 sick kids in seven hospitals around the island.

If you're keeping track, that's about 600 happy kids!

Nik: Ah yes, we mentioned the gift wrapping event at the end of last week's Talk Jeju.

Todd: Yes, about 40 people from the expat and Korean community showed up at Bagdad Cafe last Sunday to donate their time gift wrapping all the gifts all those boys and girls.

Amazingly, a large number of the kids actually got to request and receive a particular gift. I was at the event on Sunday, and believe me, the logistics of keeping track of all this

information appeared daunting, but well managed.

Nik: I saw that one of the organizers, Troy MacLellan, was posting on Facebook on the 24th about the status of the deliveries of these wrapped presents he and 18 other volunteers were making to the various orphanages and hospitals around the island.

Todd: It was a really impressive effort.

Nik: Yes, it certainly was. Now, I'd like though to go back. You just mentioned the JDC. What's their role in Furey?

Todd: According to Albert Oh, a JDC manager, the two organizations began working together in 2011.

He told me in an email interview that, quote, "Since last year, JDC has held an Innovation Activity Competition.

Different teams compete with different ideas in innovation that could change the JDC."

Mr. Oh came up with a new idea of a Social Welfare Program, which entails:

- *Fundraising with JDC investors like the Berjaya Jeju Resort (Malaysia), Greenland Group (China) and Landing Group (China).

- *Holding a JDC bowling tournament which raised 4.5 million won (1.5 million won more than their target).

- *Working closely with "a local foreigner group" (in this case the Furey Foundation) to help support the Jeju community.

He emphasised that the JDC hopes to continue to hold this type of event next year as well.

Nik: That's great. And every year the numbers of volunteers, events, sponsors, and contributions have increased.

Todd: Right, over the years, they've been added events, like a beach frisbee tournament, a beach dance party, bowling tournaments, a screen golf tournament, auctions, and much more.

Nik: Excellent. Now if our viewers would like join an upcoming event, volunteer or make a donation, where can they go to learn more?

Todd: Well, the Furey Foundation Web site is very impressive.

It lists a detailed history and mission statement, all the foundation's past and upcoming events, and is completely transparent about how much money is raised and how that is used.

The address is jejufurey.weebly.com.

Nik: Now, can you give us a preview of what we'll be discussing next week on Talk Jeju?

Todd: Sure. Next time we'll look ahead and give our viewers a rundown of some of the big stories to watch in 2014.

Nik: Sounds interesting. Thank you, Todd.

Todd: My pleasure.