

## Professor Yoshikazu Tomiyasu



Yoshikazu Tomiyasu was born on March 23, 1938. As a youth, he had tuberculosis, which was a fairly common disease in Japan at that time. Lacking adequate medicine, patients were isolated in the hope that they would recover naturally. Tomiyasu often explained that this gave him a deep personal insight into the feelings of people who were disadvantaged for any reason, including developmental disabilities.

After majoring in educational psychology at Nagoya University, his main positions were on the faculty of the Department of Education at the University of Kanazawa; then, as head of a research unit at the Aichi Prefectural Colony, a large public residential and research institution for people with developmental disabilities; and finally starting in 1984, as Professor of Developmental Psychology and Developmental Disability at Keio University in Tokyo.

Tomiyasu spent his sabbatical year, 1991-1992, as a Visiting Professor at the School of Education, Virginia Commonwealth University, in Richmond, collaborating with Profs. Paul Wehman and John Kregel on various projects relating to supported employment.

Throughout his career, Tomiyasu worked as an agent of social change on behalf of people with developmental disabilities. He was always concerned that people with developmental disabilities should be understood as well as possible through research, and that their lives as members of society should be as comfortable and normal as possible.

In the early 1970's, as a step toward that goal, Tomiyasu brought the Adaptive Behavior Scale to Japan, so that a broader spectrum of behavior would be measured, and not just the intelligence quotient.

In the mid-1980s, after Tomiyasu married Stephanie B. Stolz, an American psychologist, he initiated a major struggle to modify Japanese society so that people with developmental disabilities could live in ordinary circumstances and hold regular jobs, rather than being permanently institutionalized. Working together, he and Stephanie obtained up-to-date information about services programs in the U.S., and then translated and disseminated it to professionals in the field of mental retardation in

Japan.

As a result of efforts that Tomiyasu initiated, the government began to fund small group homes. Another change that he brought about was in the term used in Japanese to refer to people with developmental disabilities. The Japanese expression that had long been in use could be translated "feeble-minded people"; this has now been replaced throughout Japanese society with the term "people with intellectual disabilities."

Tomiyasu was a Board Member of the IASSID, and was active in many other professional organizations, both within Japan and internationally. He was a Board Member and also Executive Director of the Japan League for the Mentally Retarded (now, as a result of his efforts, renamed the Japanese Association on Intellectual Disability). He founded the Japan Association for Human Services.

Tomiyasu fell ill in December 1999, and from then until his death on November 14, 2007, was unable to communicate. His followers continue to promote social change for people with disabilities, saying that even in 1999, the seeds that he had planted were already blooming plants.