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A FREE MONTHLY E-NEWSLETTER FOR FRIENDS OF JAPAN & TEACHERS OF JAPANESE



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Attempting to put my experience in Japan into words is basically impossible. For the past year I was a part of the Tohoku 2015 project in my area, and worked on projects to help bring tourism to the Tohoku region. I would have never imagined that just a few months later I would actually be in Tohoku. Starting from the bus ride from Hanamaki airport to

Rikuzentakata, I was shocked by what Japan was actually like. It wasn't just Tokyo, it's filled with miles of nature and with farms and fields everywhere. As a nature lover, this amazed me and this bus ride gave me a unique view that many tourists will never be able to see.

Once in Rikuzentakata, I finally understood that the disaster did a lot more than what I saw through pictures at the time. After 4 years the people of Rikuzentakata really made a difference. The fact that they so quickly came up with a plan to elevate the town truly impressed me. The two things that left the biggest impression on me from Rikuzentakata will be the Miracle Pine and the people. Seeing that one tree that survived is incredible. I cannot even attempt to imagine what the forest looked like before that day. It really did feel like a symbol of hope. Also, the people that we met in that town were the most cheerful people I met the whole time we were in Japan. Starting from the middle school, everyone was awkward at first, but we ended up getting to run around and act like regular kids. The kids I talked to were probably in fourth grade when the tsunami happened, but, from their "genki" attitude, it wasn't apparent at all. Next, the students at the high school summit were very focused on helping their town for the future instead of focusing on the past. The students I worked with at the summit were studious and helpful. We taught each other new words and shared our hopes for the future.

the town. Their idea of normalization did not sink into my mind until actually talking to the people who want that. This town and the cheerful students in it left a huge impression on me that will never go away.

When visiting Rikuzentakata we stayed at Hotel Boyo in the nearby town of Kessenuma.

Since this town was a lot smaller, the tsunami's effects were a lot more apparent. The showers in the hotel rooms were still unusable, and around the town there were still housing foundations from the houses that had washed away. Hearing about the story from the owner of Hotel Boyo was the most impactful part of this stay. His dedication to helping the town by rebuilt is truly inspiring. Next we visited Ishinomaki where Tayler Anderson's presence was very apparent. It seems that she is still a part of Ishinomaki and their school system.

Overall, the Tohoku study tour has had a huge impact on me. It was truly the best and most important part of this trip. I felt like going there made me want to try to help in any way I can. At this time, all I can do is tell people about what I saw, and I hope that in the future I can do more to help too.

Another very important part of this trip was the 31 other Mippers there with me. Connecting with these other students was surprisingly easy and interesting. Since everybody came from different parts of the country I learned a lot and was able to share a lot about where I come from. Seeing so many other points of views about the disaster made the trip a lot more memorable and meaningful. I will always treasure the friends I have made on this trip.

While doing the homestay portion of the trip, I realized that I did not know as much Japanese as I would want to know. I want to be able to better understand people and be able to say more in Japanese, so I do plan to continue studying it in the future. Before this program, learning Japanese was less of an interest to me, but now I would really like to study more in order to be able to have better communication skills with people in Japan. I also hope to have a job in the future where I have a chance to use my Japanese knowledge in conjunction with my engineering major.

To Tayler Anderson and Montgomery Dickson, even though you came to Japan as English teachers, you did a lot more. Both of you went far above expectations and were able to make a difference in the towns you were assigned to. Even though you are gone now, your memory and teachings will last forever in the towns where you taught.

NIPPON THROUGH MY EYES PHOTO SUBMISSION

“Building Up”



Rikuzentakata's brilliant idea of raising the town is visible all day long there. Dirt is constantly falling, and watching it do so bring peace of mind for the future.

Breeze #110



Breeze #109



Breeze #108



Breeze #107



Breeze #106



Breeze #105



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