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2018 J-LEAP REPORT BY SHINO UEO

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Ona/Huntington, WV

Konnichiwa!

My name is Shino Ueo. I have been working at Cabell Midland High School and Huntington High School in West Virginia with Meagan Joseph sensei since August 2018.

Today I would like to introduce my work and life in America.

State of “Country Road”

What do you imagine when you hear “West Virginia”? I guess a lot of you imagine the song “Country Road”. This song is known by many Japanese people as a song from “Whisper of the heart (耳をすませば),” which is my favorite movie. West Virginia is a beautiful place surrounded by rich, wonderful nature. I would like you to enjoy various activities here, too!

About 90% of the population is Caucasian and there are about 580 Japanese people, living in West Virginia (0.03% of the population). This is one of the states, which has the smallest population of Japanese people.

Huntington, where I live, is the second-largest city in West Virginia. It is in the southwestern corner of the state that borders Ohio and Kentucky. It is called University Town, because it has Marshall University, where there are lots of students living. Marshall University has a Japanese language program, and we often work together to expand Japanese education in West Virginia.

What a jovial teacher she is!

This was my first impression when I saw Joseph sensei teaching. She is my Lead Teacher (LT), and we have been team-teaching. She is 2 years younger than me, and she has worked as a Japanese teacher since 2014. She is really fun, kind and UNIQUE! The students love her, with some of them calling her “Okaasan (Mom),” because she always takes care of them. Some of the good things about team-teaching is that we can help each other and learn a lot of things, such as language, culture and strategies for teaching, etc. I am happy to have her as my LT!

Schools and Students

We work for two schools, Cabell Midland High School and Huntington High School. They are the only two schools, which have a Japanese program in West Virginia. There are about 3600 students total in the two schools and 80 of them study Japanese. We teach in classes with four different levels for grades 9-12. In the morning, we teach at Cabell Midland High School, and in the afternoon, we teach at Huntington High School.



Our students are so nice and unique! I learn a lot from them every day. I sometimes need to be strict, but it is because I love them and wish for their happiness and success in the future.

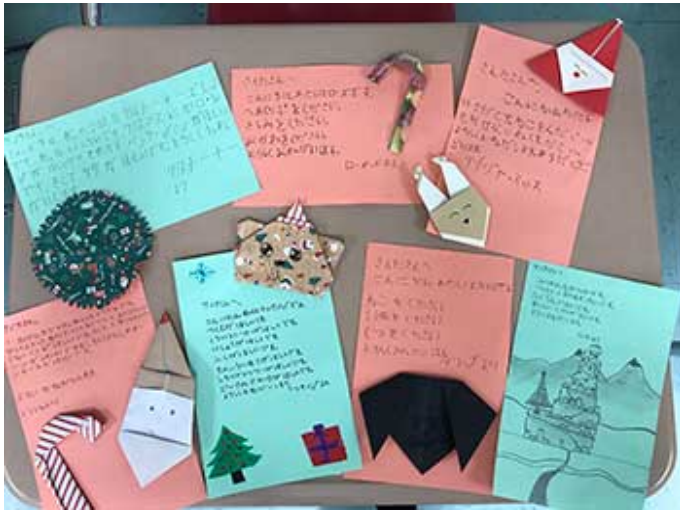
We have 4 language programs: Spanish, French, Latin and Japanese. Japanese is the smallest program right now. I was interested why students chose Japanese, not other more popular languages, so I took a survey: 85% were interested in the culture and customs, 55% were interested in the history, and 50% were interested Anime & Manga.

When I first started working here, it was hard for me to manage the class, because it was really different from the schools I studied at in Japan. However, thanks to Joseph sensei's support, I gradually have found what I can do for her, our students, and our entire Japanese program during this two-year experience.

My Goal

“To expand the Japanese program” “To increase student's interest and motivation”. These are some of my goals as a J-LEAP participant. Now I would like to share what I am working to accomplish.

First, I made a lot of opportunities for students to communicate with Japanese people. In addition to the sister school in Aichi, I built new relationships with a middle school in Shioya which is my hometown, and a community of pre-school and elementary school students in Gunma. We created a music video for a Japanese song and shared it with them. A



exchanged letters, Nengajyou (New year's card), video messages, etc. Because there are not many Japanese people in West Virginia, it is a great experience for students to communicate with Japanese people and to learn new things. I am going to continue to deepen these relationships.

Secondly, I always try to keep students engaged through a variety of practical activities. I try to use various materials and various types of activities, so that they are not

boring. I believe it also helps them to improve their speaking and communication skills.

Finally, I do a lot of activities in the school and the community. The students and I performed Soran Bushi at the International Festival at Marshall University, and more than 200 people watched it. In fact, it was one of the best memories in my life!

I also visited a nursing home for elderly people with my students, and we gave letters and Origami to 80 people. Also in the art class of high school, I held a tea lesson and 70 students participated.

Luckily, we have a JOI coordinator in the same city, and we often work together. For example, we have done workshops, such as calligraphy, cooking sushi and gyoza, etc.

My Family in America

I lived with my host family for 4 months. There are three family members: the father, the mother and their young daughter, who is 4 years old. It was a great time staying with them. In fact, my host mother is Japanese. She is like my elder sister, because she is just 6 years older than me. She also used to teach Japanese at a university, so I often can receive good advice from her. It is reassuring having them, because they support me a lot. I feel like they are my American family.

Thanks to all the people

In the end, I really appreciate that I have been given this opportunity to teach Japanese in America. It would not be such a great experience without the support of The Japan Foundation, The Laurasian Institution, Joseph sensei, my host family and friends.

The objective would be to make the Japanese class the biggest in the language program. What is the best way? I haven't got the answer yet, but I will do my best to answer this question and to achieve my goals!

Your Japan #7 - November

Your Japan #6 - October

Your Japan #5 - September

Your Japan #4 - August

Your Japan #3 - July



Your Japan #2 - June



Your Japan #1 - May

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