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

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Hello, everyone! My name is Sayuri Ogiuchi, and I work as a teaching assistant at Jefferson High School in Lafayette, Indiana. Let me introduce you to our cool city, our awesome high school, and above all, our fun Japanese classes.

Lafayette is a town with a population of about 67,000 people, with a historic downtown area and international companies like Subaru. You can find nice handmade crafts because many artists live here. West Lafayette is just over the Wabash River, where Purdue University is located. Lafayette and West Lafayette are called the “Twin Cities”

where you can enjoy both the history and beauty from the past as well as the youth and energy of the future.

Jefferson High School is near downtown Lafayette and has about 2000 students from grades 9 to 12. The best feature of the school is the availability of a great variety of elective subjects. You can study dance, music, drama, cooking, etc., professionally. It almost seems like a technical school despite being a public high school.

One of the elective subjects is foreign language and students have the following 6 choices: Spanish, French, German, Russian, Chinese and Japanese. Don't you think that is quite a lot?

Now I would like to introduce the Japanese classes at our school. The students here study Japanese with Karen Countryman sensei, an experienced American teacher with much knowledge about Japan, and the American education system. She also has a great sense of humor.

Currently, there are five senior students in 4th year Japanese. They are making skits using the new expressions for give and receive. One of their examples is “I gave a kotatsu (Japanese table with a source underneath) to him” ...!? Yes, they also know a lot about Japan in general.

Next there are seven students in 3rd year Japanese. They are studying about Hiroshima and World War 2 from the view of the Japanese side. That's certainly a serious topic to take up in a language class, but Countryman sensei thinks it's important to know both sides of situations, and understand how both sides maintain peace. All students participate during class and they discuss the topic very seriously.

Then there are 20 students in 2nd year class who are studying the expression "There is." They will never forget the expression, because Countryman sensei introduced it by standing on a desk, hiding under it and so on. That's unforgettable. Our Japanese class is full of actions and activities.

Finally, there are 30 1st year students who are separated into two classes. They are learning the expressions like and dislike. They will give a presentation about things they like in front of the class with pictures. They are still young and new to the language, and some of them are shy when speaking in Japanese, but every student is trying their best.

What do you think our Japanese classes? They seem fun, don't they? Yes, students can never get bored learning Japanese at our school, because as Countryman sensei puts it, "The fun never ends in Japanese."

My life here has been blessed and bright with everyone's support. I can't say enough, but Thank You, to everyone who has helped me along the way.

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