

## OCTOBER, 2012: BREEZE ISSUE #60

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



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#### MY JAPAN EXPERIENCE

The JET Memorial Invitation Program (JET-MIP) offers an incredible experience for anyone who has an interest in learning Japanese; not only for advancing language skills, but for advancing understanding of culture and current issues as well. For me, being able to go to the impacted areas in Tōhoku was the most eye opening experience of the trip. It struck me that not very many of the participants, and certainly not myself, were aware of the extent of the damage remaining from the tsunami. Going to Rikuzentakata, Kesen-numa, and Ishinomaki, and seeing the current state of the towns compared to how the reconstruction effort had been portrayed by American news. What surprised me the most however, was how friendly the locals were, how much they tried to make us feel welcomed in their town, and how genuinely happy and sociable the people were just one year after experiencing such a disaster. The

Tōhoku people have touched my heart and increased my desire to become a bridge between Japan and America.

The program was very well organized; although we had a lot of things to do we still managed to fit everything in with enough free time for us to still explore the local areas on our own. After having such a fast paced schedule it was nice to relax with shopping in Rinku, and karaoke at the institute's karaoke room. Despite the fast pace, at no point did I feel like we were under-prepared for events. We were always briefed on what we would be doing, there was very good preparation by staff, and the program's class on Osakan made it so I never had trouble with local dialects which made the home stay a great experience. The homestay, although short, was by far the funnest experience of the trip. If I had to change anything about the program, it would be to extend the duration of the home stay to at least two nights if not more. Staying with my host family was the most helpful in regards to practicing Japanese, and learning about culture because they would always explain things I didn't understand and teach me new worc Even if it was only for a day, my host family made me feel welcomed and like family, and I know that return to Japan that I have a second home waiting for me.

This trip to Japan has been an amazing opportunity for me. Before I got accepted into this program I had no expectation to be able to go to Japan within at least the next 10 years if not longer. But being able to go, as a high schooler no less, has changed my perspectives and possibly even my personality. I am normally someone who has a very mild-mannered disposition, very seldom taking initiatives. After going through this program, I feel like I now have more confidence and am now planning on studying abroad for at least a year via exchange programs offered by my college, something that I would never have considered before. I think this program has given me an edge going into college. Before even setting foot in a college Japanese class I have a well-rounded grasp of the current issues facing Japan and many Japanese friends who I can practice conversation with over social media.

I am sure that Monty Dickson and Taylor Anderson would be proud to see this program today, and to know that they are still helping to build relations with the country that they loved. If I could send them a letter today I would like to tell them how much they accomplished. I will always remember the poem that Monty Dickson translated, "There is nothing as beautiful as dedicating oneself to a cause." How such a small act as translating a poem can have such a large effect, with his translation being later read by Secretary of State Hilary Clinton at the U.S.-Japan Council annual conference. It showed to me how even small actions can have great implications and that even the small steps I take towards building the bridge between our two countries can make a difference.

## NIPPON THROUGH MY EYES PHOTO SUBMISSION



### "OSAKA CASTLE"

A blending of old and new with the outer walls and moat of Osaka castle and a skyscraper visible in the distance.

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2012 JET-MIP Report Part 3

2012 JET-MIP Essay: Benjamin Johnson

2012 JET-MIP Essay: Carolyn Jeon

2012 JET-MIP Essay: Connor Veale

2012 JET-MIP Essay: Corrine Quirk

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