



## OCTOBER, 2012: BREEZE ISSUE #60

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



### CAROLYN JEON

*Northside College Preparatory High School  
Chicago, IL*

The moment I found out that I was accepted into this program felt very unreal. It has always been my dream to go to Japan one day, but I always thought this would happen after my college years; never would I have thought that such an opportunity would come this soon. This would be my first time traveling anywhere outside of the United States, so I was very excited for the experiences to come in the summer time.

When everyone in the program arrived in Los Angeles, we visited the Japan Foundation and the official residence of the Consul General of Japan in Los Angeles. There, we met the siblings and parents of Ms. Taylor Anderson and Mr. Montgomery Dickson, two JET ALT members who lost their lives in the Great East Japan Earthquake of March 2011. The parents shared about the passion that Mr. Montgomery Dickson and Ms. Taylor Anderson had for the country of Japan, the culture, and the people. Ms. Shelley Fredrickson, Montgomery Dickson's sister, shared that

Montgomery translated a poem for a friend the day of the tsunami. The translation read, "There is nothing more beautiful as dedicating one's life to a cause." The legacy that both Ms. Anderson and Mr. Dickson left would become more real and recognizable as the JET-MIP participants traveled to the Tohoku region in Japan.

During our stay in Tohoku, we went to the regions of Rikuzentakata, Kesenuma, Sendai, and Ishinomaki. Two of the cities we went to was where Ms. Anderson and Mr. Dickson worked as JET ALTs. I think that the day of the Rikuzentakata city tour had the most impact on me during the Tohoku trip. There was much media coverage of the earthquake and tsunami around the time that it occurred over one year ago, but the attention in America eventually died down after a while. Many of us did not realize the extent of the damage that took place and still remains; seeing the damage on the television at home and seeing it with your own eyes were completely different experiences. Our guide, Mr. Konno, showed us pictures of the city looked like before the disaster as we walked through the area. Mr. Konno also told us his story how he survived and what he saw on that day. It was shocking to see the difference between the

photographs and what we saw in front of us. We visited the site close to where Mr. Dickson was found after the disaster. One of our chaperones suggested that we pray for Mr. Dickson as well as all the victims whose lives were lost in March of 2011. This moment hit many of us and deeply saddened us. However, Mr. Konno told us something that I still remember now: "Do not worry, because then I will worry, too." He also said that even though there has been damage not only to the city but also to the people, the people are looking forward and hopeful for their future. His positive outlook on the future lifted our spirits, and also made us hopeful for Japan's future.

Mr. Konno was not the only person that had a positive attitude. We were greeted with friendly smiles from people of all ages everywhere we went, including the people who shared stories about their experiences of last year's disaster. For example, the owner of the hotel we stayed at for several nights in Kesenuma said, "I believe God is healing Japan right now." One of my group's tour guides in Sendai talked about how she lost her home because of the tsunami, but also shared about how she looked forward to her career as a teacher. A high school student in Rikuzentakata I talked to mentioned with excitement about her dream to become a fashion designer. Even the posters that we saw everywhere we went that said, "*Ganbatte*," or "work hard!" in English gave the JET-MIP participants an insight into the character of the Japanese people. Their strong spirit is something that I came to admire during our time in the Tohoku region.

One of the main themes that came up in conversation with others during this trip was the idea of "*kakehashi*," or a bridge building. "What can we do to serve as a bridge between the United States and Japan?" At first, this idea seemed very hard to grasp; I had only just graduated out of high school. What could I do? However, the conversations I had with the Japanese people helped me answer this question. The high school summit in Rikuzentakata between the JET-MIP participants and the Japanese high school students was the first opportunity we were able to talk to people our age and discuss our opinions of what we can do together to make the idea of *kakehashi* into a reality. The members of the Kiwi Club, a place where Japanese people can go to have conversations with others in English and learn more about English, told us about Ms. Taylor Anderson and how her smiles and her time there will never be forgotten. During these times, when I told people of the reason behind why the JET-MIP participants were in Japan, I would always receive sincere words of thanks for being there. I realized that even though I cannot do much now, I can start by going back home and telling others of what I saw, heard, and experienced there as well as continue the friendships I have made in Japan through means of communication such as email and Facebook.

When we returned to Osaka, the group had the chance to participate in home stays with Semboku High School students. My home stay experience was only for two days, but it was enough time for me to see the kindness and the fun side of my family. Their laughter and love for jokes made me think of my own family. My host family's home almost felt like a second home because of everyone's bright character. The JET-MIP group also had the chance to gain more cultural experience through a wadaiko class and wearing yukatas. I participated in the wadaiko class, and the fun time during that session made me want to learn more about taiko back here in America!

The official closing ceremony for this trip arrived faster than all of us expected. Some of the Semboku High School students also came, and as we sang and danced after the ceremony, I felt happy that we could spend our last day in Japan with them. The bonds I made with the people in Japan is something I will remember forever, and the fun times that the JET-MIP participants have experienced together in the span of two and a half weeks has created lasting friendships.

This trip was not only humbling to me, but it was also a life-changing experience. I did not believe I was a year's JET-MIP participant when he told us in Los Angeles that he does not stop thinking about his

awesome time in Japan, but I have also realized that the memories I made during this trip is something I think about every day. I am so thankful that I was given such a wonderful opportunity. To Mr. Montgomery Dickson and Ms. Taylor Anderson, I am also thankful, because I was able to learn of how they pursued their passion wholeheartedly and see the impact that they left in where they were in Japan. This Japan trip has made me even more excited about my future, because I intend to continue studying Japanese throughout college. Although I am a person who tends to have many worries over things, this experience has helped me gain more confidence in not only my Japanese studies, but in other aspects of my life. So, with all sincerity, thank you! Arigatou gozaimashita!

## NIPPON THROUGH MY EYES PHOTO SUBMISSION



### "GANBAPPE!"

Just one of the many signs that I saw that had the words "Ganbatte!" or as some say in the Tohoku region, "Ganbappe!" which means "You can do it!" in English. These words testified to the strong spirit of the Japanese people, something all the JET-MIP participants came to admire throughout the trip.

Breeze #62



Breeze #61



Breeze #60



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

Breeze #59



Breeze #58



Breeze #57

Breeze #56



Breeze #55



Breeze #54



Breeze #53



Breeze #52



Breeze #51



[Headquarters](#)

[New York Office](#)

[Center for Global Partnership](#)

[Volunteer](#)

[ボランティア募集](#)

[Japan Related Links](#)

[Job Openings \(Updated\)](#)

5700 Wilshire blvd, Suite 100

Los Angeles, CA 90036

P. 323.761.7510

---

Annual Report

© 2019 The Japan Foundation, Los Angeles

Web Design.