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



JESSICA LEE

*Garfield High School
Seattle, WA*

The JET Memorial Invitation Program has been one of the most culturally-enriching experiences of my life. I have never thought a foreign country could be so exhilarating and full of thrill. I initially thought that the program would be filled with lots of touring and sight-seeing. However, the program was almost the opposite; it was filled with lessons on Japanese language and culture, a tour of the Tohoku region, and a homestay. At first, I thought the lessons on the language and culture would be on topics I already covered in class, but they were actually fun and enlightening, as I learned about different dialects of Japanese language, among other topics. The tour of the Tohoku region was one of the best parts of JET-MIP; it was sad yet heart-warming to see the results of the tsunami and earthquake. Piles of debris were left everywhere but the citizens of the region were the kindest people I have ever met. Moreover, I was really nervous about the homestay at first, but it was a great way to

wrap up my stay in Japan. Speaking to my host family in only Japanese was difficult and at times frustrating, but I would not change a single thing about my stay with them. Overall, my stay in Japan was a once in a lifetime experience, especially with the 31 other participants.

My experience in Japan has definitely inspired me to continue studying Japanese in college and possibly beyond college. I took AP Japanese at my school this year and I thought that I wouldn't study Japanese during my senior year of high school, but now, I feel extremely motivated to self-study Japanese so that I can take higher level Japanese classes in college. Experiencing Japan's culture has made me more interested in it and I really want to return to Japan in the future through the JET program. Although the path to becoming a JET is rigorous and difficult, I believe my trip to Japan will help me become a JET because I will have already had experience with communicating with people who speak Japanese as a first language. In the future, if I keep studying Japanese in and out of college, I would like to teach my children how to speak Japanese at a young age so that they can have an experience similar to mine.

My experience with JET-MIP began with the orientation in Los Angeles. It was a little nerve-racking to be surrounded by over thirty other strangers, but it was fun getting to know everyone. During the second day in LA, we got to visit the official residence of the Consul General of Japan in Los Angeles and have dinner with him. The next day, we departed for Japan and after a long flight, we arrived in Osaka. We left for the Tohoku region the next day and that was one of the best parts of the trip. It was saddening to see the effects of the tsunami and earthquake, but one of our tour guides told us, "Please don't worry about us. We are fine. If you worry about us, that will make us worry even more." The people of the Tohoku region were the nicest people I have ever met, despite the fact that they nearly lost everything to the tsunami. Another favorite part of the trip was meeting with other high school students and listening to their personal experiences with the tsunami. Some of the students lost their parents and other relatives and I really admire them for being able to keep their head up high and living through each day.

Though I have never met Taylor Anderson and Monty Dickson, I can still say that these two people have inspired me to continue to study Japanese. These two people dedicated their lives to helping the people in Japan, whether it was by teaching them English, sacrificing their time to better their lives, or by dedicating their own lives to save their students. Right before the tsunami, Ms. Anderson made sure that all of her students were safe from the disaster before she fled for safety. This signifies her commitment to safeguarding the lives of her students. Mr. Dickson, likewise, was also committed to the wellbeing of his students. Although both teachers lost their lives to the tragedy that occurred over a year ago, they continue to serve as inspirations to people all over the world because of their effort to bridge Japanese and American relations.

NIPPON THROUGH MY EYES PHOTO SUBMISSION



"JAPANESE RAINBOW"

Cranes in Ishinomaki.

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5700 Wilshire Blvd, Suite 100

Los Angeles, CA 90036

P. 323.761.7510

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