

## DECEMBER, 2012: BREEZE ISSUE #62

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



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Japan ... a majestic, mysterious, magnificent land that I never truly knew about. Even after three years of learning the language - and the culture, and the traditions, and even the superstitions - my expectations of Japan were naive and uncertain; my imaginations were blurry. So when I learned that I was going to the land of the rising sun with 31 other people that I had never met before in my life I was a bit intimidated. I was leaving the country - which I hadn't done in almost a decade - with strangers. Not only had I no idea what to expect from the program at all. On paper, everything that was listed on our itinerary was vague, making it difficult to comprehend what I was truly going to experience in the next two weeks.

Experiencing Japan through the JET Memorial Invitation Program was a gratifying adventure for me. It required hard work, tough decisions, and even stepping outside of my comfort zone to be successful. Through the program I was able to meet many people who are kind, compassionate, strong, and who are now my friends. Even though we are thousands of miles apart we hold onto a bond that most people don't get to experience. The classes that prepared us for the many trips we took were enlightening and amusing. I never had a class that was spoken in only Japanese so for the first couple of times it was a culture shock. But what shocked me even more was how much Japanese was used during the trip. Whether it was at the local Family Mart or in attempts to find the conveyor-belt sushi restaurant, I used - and learned - more Japanese than I could have imagined. I know that if I were to go to Japan as a tourist rather than through this program, I would not have gotten the chance to visit the beauty of the Tohoku region, or learn the eccentric Kansai dialect, or make some of my closest friends.

Through the many moments I experienced in Japan, I gained a newfound love for the language and the culture. The beauty that surrounded me for two weeks was unforgettable. Even in the most devastated places there was an aura of beauty and mystery that cannot be found anywhere else but Japan. With renewed interest, I have been more motivated than ever to continue learning the Japanese language

want to become proficient in the language that has captivated me since I was young. I want to be immersed in the culture that I've spent years learning. I want to interact with the people who showed insurmountable kindness even when it was the first meeting. This program has solidified my desire to not only study abroad but also work in Japan.

I plan to give presentations to the Japanese classes at my High School to give them a sense of how Japan truly is. I know every student that decided to take Japanese has some sort of interest in the culture in order for them to take such a rigorous class so I hope that through the presentation, they will also find inspiration to not only aid in the relief effort in Japan but to also help build the bridge between Japan and the United States. So far I've told close friends and families about the impact of this program and the condition of Japan. All of them were shocked by my experiences in Japan. From the beauty of the landscapes and the people to the destruction and reconstruction after the disaster of last year, all of it fascinated my friends and families. They gained a new interest in a culture that is hard to be exposed to here in the suburbs of Chicago. For a lot of my friends who are involved in volunteer services, they found a new project to support. They expressed a lot of interest in helping with the relief effort for the Tohoku region even though we are thousands of miles away. It was encouraging to see that people close to me gain such a positive perspective towards Japan and all that it has gone through.

For me, Ms. Anderson and Mr. Dickson will be always be two people who inspired a meaningful love for a culture and a language that people may not understand or take the time to learn. They are true role models to look up to find that perseverance, hard work, and dedication can lead to success in ways that are immeasurable. I want to say that their work and message will not go in vain - for there are future generations of people that share their love for Japan and hope to connect America to Japan in every way possible. They have inspired me to be one.

The Jet Memorial Invitation Program was created to commemorate the dreams and aspirations of two amazing people. Through this program, it has help mold 32 other people to continue their progress towards a united community. Although this program will only continue for a few more years, I believe that the JET Memorial Invitation Program will have the same effect on the future participant as it did for the 2012 JET-MIPPERS.

## **NIPPON THROUGH MY EYES PHOTO SUBMISSION**

### **"A TEMPLE IN THE LIMELIGHT"**

A temple that is illuminated by a light from nowhere (it was a cloudy/rainy day) brings back the temple and its sightseers back to ancient times.



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2012 J-LEAP Report: Chigusa Izumi

2012 J-LEAP Report: Katsura Shimano

2012 JET-MIP Essay: Hillary Nguyen

2012 JET-MIP Essay: Indica Sur

2012 JET-MIP Essay: Jennie Ju

2012 JET-MIP Essay: Jenny Trieu

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