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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 Tiana Dunn and I recently graduated from the Japanese Immersion Program at A.J. Dimond High School located in Anchorage, Alaska. I was truly blessed to be chosen as one of thirty-two high school students to get the opportunity to visit Japan this July. The JET Memorial Invitation Program was better than any other program I had heard of before and had the absolute best purpose imaginable. When I first heard about this program, from my Japanese teacher, I figured that it was simply another exchange trip to Japan. A trip that would be exciting, semi educational and of course touristy. JET-MIP was not simply taking us to Japan. This program immersed us in Japan, gave us experiences that the average person would never get to have, and ended with us not merely seeing Japan but feeling Japan. This program alone has opened so many doors for me, and will not only have an impact on my Japanese learning but the rest of my life.

Every part of my trip to Japan has contributed to not only my future learning of the Japanese Language but other aspects of my life. The most obvious thing that I received from this program was my Japanese fluency and vocabulary. Everyone involved with JET-MIP didn't baby us, give us training wheels or hold our hand throughout the duration of our trip. They gave us the tools to survive in the country and set us free. (With a 9pm curfew of course). I had to finally apply all of the things I had learned in the classroom to my everyday life. I had to do things such as read road signs in Japanese, converse with employees at convenience stores, and of course karaoke in true Japanese fashion. Also thanks to this program, I became more confident in my Japanese ability, learned more aspects of Japanese youth and can finally understand the infamous Osaka dialect. I also made many friends while traveling in Japan. Through not only all of our school and other group visits, I even made some friends with random people I met while walking around. The people that made the best memories during my trip were my host family. They were not only some of the nicest people I ever met but gave me the best weekend of my entire life. Than this program I have made friends in both Japan and America and now have a second family. Anothe that the program has given me is a boost in my confidence. I used to be shy when meeting other pe

asking people for things and was utterly terrified of public speaking. After all of the various speeches I gave, interviews that I completed, and presentations I participated in, all my fears have been erased and my confidence sky rocketed. For this and many other life skills I truly thank this program. JET-MIP also gave me more motivation to not only fulfill my dream of becoming a Japanese teacher but to become a bridge between the two countries like Mr. Dickson and Ms. Anderson did before me.

Since returning home from Japan I have done various things in my pursuit of being a bridge between the two countries that I love. The Monday after I returned from my trip to Japan, I helped teach Japanese to elementary students for a week. On the last day of the camp I was asked to do a power point presentation for all of the parents there. In my PowerPoint I illustrated our trip to different parts of Japan with an emphasis on the disaster area, telling them about how not only the immersion program helped me be who I am today but the JET Memorial Invitation Program as well and lastly strongly encouraged them to motivate their children to be a bridge between the two countries. After that I was invited to the Japanese Consulate in Anchorage to talk about my trip and tell them my opinion on everything I experienced. I also was invited to speak in front of all of the language teachers in the Anchorage School District. I told these teachers about my recent trip to Japan and how my language study has helped me throughout my life time. Since I have graduated high school already I haven't had an opportunity to speak to anyone at Dimond High but I hope that I will have the opportunity to speak there and hopefully many other schools soon. I did however get a chance to briefly speak to my college Japanese class where I was pleasantly surprised to find out that my current teacher was supposed to attend our farewell party in Japan. My current Japanese teacher was the former teacher of Mr. Dickson, who had motivated him to excel in the language and the one who I had heard countless stories about during my trip. Because of this I am truly honored and excited that I have the opportunity to learn from the women who changed Mr. Dickson's life.

If I could say anything to Mr. Dickson and Ms. Anderson it would be thank you. Thank you for taking the time to learn this language, for impacting not only my life but the lives of every person that you came in contact with, and for being an inspiration to people all over the world. You both were truly amazing people and I wish I could've had the honor of getting to know you while you were still of this world. I hope however that you have seen how much you have impacted the world, and are proud of those who are working to keep your dreams alive. After meeting your families and friends, hearing stories about you, and meeting the people in Japan who knew you, I am truly a changed person. Thanks to you two I have become more motivated in everything I do, a more selfless person, and cherish life so much more. Thank you for everything you have done and everything I know will be in your honor. I plan to dedicate the rest of my life to being a bridge between the countries and I hope that one day I will make a difference like you two.

The JET Memorial Invitation Program gave me opportunities I never thought I would have, experiences that I'll always remember, and a love for a country that will never die. It gave me friends that I'll cherish forever, memories that I'll never forget, and a dream that I'll work towards for a lifetime. To everyone involved in this program, my fellow "meepers", the friends and families of Mr. Dickson and Ms. Anderson, and the hundreds of people I met during my trip, I thank you. I thank you for everything I learned from you, all of the memories we shared and I promise to be better. I promise you all that I will be a bridge between the two countries and one day I too will change the world.

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