

SEPTEMBER, 2013: BREEZE ISSUE #71

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



YU RI KIM

*Ed W. Clark High School
Las Vegas, NV*

My interest in the Japanese culture started in middle school. Ever since then, it has always been my dream to go to Japan. The JET Memorial Invitation Program gave me the opportunity to fulfill my longtime dream. Although this program was created due to the two American JET ALTs who lost their lives in the tragic disaster on March 11, 2011, this program will carry out their legacy to be forever remembered. One of the major themes that Taylor Anderson and Montgomery Dickson carried out was to create a bridge between the United States and Japan. This was an important theme in the program, for the members of the program to be the bridge between the United States and Japan and also strengthen that bridge. Throughout this trip there were times where we helped strengthen the bridge, from the high school summit in Rikuzentakata to the home stay in Osaka. Even when such events did not take place, there were also times where we were strengthening the bridge without knowing it.

I applied for this program wanting to become the bridge between the United States and Japan. Although it was not certain that I would be accepted into this program, it was still worth a shot. After the whole application process was done, I waited until the results came out. When the results finally came out, I was ecstatic when I heard the news from my Japanese teacher. I could not believe that I got accepted into the program and that I will have the chance to go to Japan! I was extremely happy to the point where I could not stop smiling for the rest of the day. Prior to the start of the program, a Facebook group was created in order to get to know the other 31 participants. Truthfully, I was quite nervous about meeting everyone, but when I found out that we all had common interests, I could not wait for the trip to start to meet everyone.

The trip began with the orientation in Los Angeles, California where I learned more about the purpose of this program, how awesome this program is and how awesome Japan is. On the day of our departure to Japan, we were all excited to finally go to Japan. Moreover, for many of us and I myself, this would be my very first trip to Japan! Our arrival in Japan ended after a 12-hour flight from San Francisco. I was tired a bit jet lagged, but nonetheless I was thrilled to be in Japan. My first impression of Japan was... Hu

Coming from Las Vegas where humidity does not exist, this sure was a definite change for me. By just observing what I see outside the window of the bus during our ride from the airport to the Japan Foundation in Kansai, everything was totally different than America.

After our short stay in Osaka, we left for the Tohoku region. Our first stop was at Rikuzentakata. I was shocked when I saw where the destruction had taken place. Even though the news in America has informed us about the disaster, after several months, there were much news about condition of the disaster stricken areas. Furthermore, I saw a news article about the places that were affected by the disaster being fixed after a year later. Seeing this article, I thought most of the affected areas would be fixed by now, but I was wrong. There was still debris left everywhere and many workers still laboring to clean up the areas. Moreover, there was a pine tree forest beach, but due to the tsunami; it is all gone except for one standing pine tree. This pine tree is named the Miracle Pine Tree because it is the only pine tree to stand after the tsunami. Although the Miracle Pine Tree has died, the people of Rikuzentakata are trying to find ways to preserve this tree since it serves as an important symbol to them.

There was a high school summit in Rikuzentakata that we took part in. We worked with the Japanese students to find ways on how we can work together for the future. We came up with many creative ideas, but one prominent point in everyone's idea was that we must communicate. In order to communicate, we either need to learn English (for the Japanese students) or to learn Japanese (for the American students). After the summit ended, we traded contact information with one another so that we can forever keep in contact. In addition, there it happened, just that little moment of trading contact information will help us create a stronger bond for the future.

We also visited Ishinomaki, which was another disaster affected area. There were still some visible debris left, but it seems that it was in a slightly better condition than Rikuzentakata. Moreover, we visited the Kiwi Club in Ishinomaki, where Taylor Anderson taught. Meeting people who knew Taylor Anderson and listening to their stories of her touched my heart. It almost felt like I knew who she was. The members of the Kiwi Club's ranged from high school students to maybe those over 50 years old. Seeing the members' enthusiasm on learning English was wonderful. Once again, when the meeting with them was over, we traded contact information so that we can keep in touch.

After a week in the Tohoku region, we went back to Osaka. At Osaka we went over to Semboku High School where we got to meet our host brother or sister. Since my host sister did not email me, I did not know what kind of person she was, but when I finally got the chance to talk to her, it was exciting. Meeting my host sister's family was also wonderful. They are a bunch of amazing and heartwarming people and I am glad to have met them. For the home stay trip, they took me to Kyoto to see many of the famous attractions there and we also attended a festival there. Since my host family's English wasn't that great, it became a great opportunity for me to speak and learn more Japanese. When I had to say goodbye to my host family at the farewell party, it was extremely sad, especially since my host sister started to cry. These were people that were once strangers to me and now they became my second family. This wasn't a goodbye though, it was more of a see you again. I hope that I will have another chance to go to Japan and see them again and I hope that they will have the opportunity to come to America and come visit me.

This program opened my eyes more than I ever thought it would have. This trip is truly one that I will never forget and keep close to my heart. Not only have I learned way more about Japan than I would have expected, I also created amazing lifelong friends from this trip. All in all, Japan is AWESOME!

NIPPON THROUGH MY EYES PHOTO SUBMISSION



"A NEW LIFE"

Life begins in the cars that were destroyed by the disaster.



"FOREVER SPARKLING, JET MIP 2012"

Playing with fireworks at the beach on our last days in Japan.

Breeze #74



Breeze #73



Breeze #72



Breeze #71



Breeze #70

Breeze #69



Breeze #68



Breeze #67



Breeze #66



2012 JET-MIP Essay: Suzanne Barrientos

2012 JET-MIP Essay: Susan Zhao

2012 JET-MIP Essay: Tiana Dunn

2012 JET-MIP Essay: Yu Ri Kim

Breeze #65



Breeze #64



Breeze #63



[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.](#)