

## OCTOBER, 2013: BREEZE ISSUE #72

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



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The JET-MIP experience cannot be described in any other word than incredible. I had always dreamed of going to Japan. This program not only helped me achieve that dream, but it gave me the opportunity to experience so much more than I could have ever hoped to with any other program. Although this phrase is very over used, the JET-MIP program really was life changing for me, and I will forever treasure the bonds I made and the experiences I had.

When I first learned of the program, I immediately knew I wanted to participate in it. The first year we knew about it, which was when selections for the 2012 trip were taking place, my teacher nominated another student. Although I was disappointed, it only pushed me harder. When my teacher told me I had been selected as a participant for the 2013 program, I was beyond ecstatic. I even began to cry. I could not wait for this new “adventure” to begin.

My first realization of how impactful this program was, was when I was talking personally with Shelly, Monty Dickson’s older sister, and Andy, Taylor Anderson’s father. I had seen the videos about Taylor and Monty in my Japanese class many times, and seen interviews from them, but actually talking with them and hearing what this program meant to them, and more importantly how much it would have meant to Taylor and Monty made me begin to truly understand why I was given this amazing opportunity. After all of our orientation and ice breaking in Los Angeles, we set out for Japan. For many of us, myself included, this was our first trip to Japan, so needless to say we were all extremely excited. My first impression of Japan, besides how unbelievably humid it is, being from the high desert humidity is not something I’m used to, was how beautiful it is. Even in the airports, it is just amazing.

Throughout the whole trip, I felt as though everyone there was genuinely happy to have me there, and I really appreciated how much time and preparation was put in to our arrival and making sure we not only learned, but enjoyed ourselves; everything to the high school summit and the various school visits, to our two homestays, to our various “just for fun” activities.

I really felt like I was able to see and experience more than just one or two sides of Japan like in most programs. Between our time in Osaka, various towns in the Tohoku region, and our short excursion in Tokyo, I really felt like I was able to connect with more of Japan. The Tohoku region is where I felt I made the most connections to out of all of the places we went. Not just because of the disaster, but the culture there is so calm, and peaceful. It is so unlike anywhere I had ever been, and I love it. Also, the most impactful moment for me personally was after the high school summit in Rikuzentakata.

My high school designed and now sell bracelets to send to a sort of scholarship fund for children who are either orphans or their parents are disabled and cannot work called Ashinaga Kikin, which had a huge growth in children needing assistance after the disaster. After the summit, we had dinner at a little cafe called Clover. I was wearing the bracelet and toward the end of the night, a girl named Kana asked me what my bracelet was for. When I explained it to her, she told me that she receives assistance from Ashinaga and thanked me for helping them. The feeling I had after she told me that is unlike any I can ever describe, and I would never have been able to have that experience if not for this program.

This program is unlike any other in the sense that we are not just there as high school tourists, we are there with a purpose. That purpose being to make connections with Japan and its people on more than just a superficial level and really learn about the disaster area. I feel that having a purpose there made me appreciate my time there more than just being a tourist. Being part of this program also gave me more opportunities to connect than I would have with any other program.

This program has further enhanced my desire to continue studying Japanese and the Japanese culture, and eventually be able to make a career out of it. This program has significantly strengthened my passion for Japan, its culture and its people. I now also feel a connection to Japan I never had before, even though I have hosted students from Japan three times, that does not even compare to the connection I feel now, and I am so thankful for that.

School in Oregon does not start until September, and I have not had a chance to talk with my former Japanese teacher, but I fully intend to give my presentation to all of her Japanese classes at Summit this year if she allows me, not just my former classmates. If their reaction to everything I have to share will be even close to everyone else I have already told, I want to share my experience with as many students as I possibly can. As I said earlier, this program really was life changing for me, and something I will cherish forever.

To Ms. Taylor Anderson and Mr. Montgomery Dickson; although I never met either of you, I feel I was able to get to know the two of you through this trip and talking with your friends and family, both in Japan and the U.S.A. I can feel how much you love Japan and wanted to be that bridge between the two nations through all of the stories I was told about you. I think you would be very happy seeing all of the connections all of us made during this experience and that we are all working to keep your dreams alive. I want to say thank you for everything you did and stood for in your lives and let you know your dreams will never be forgotten.

Completing this program, I feel as though I really did change as a person and I am beyond grateful for everything. I made so many connections with my fellow "mippers" and the people of Japan that I know I will be able to hold on to for the rest of my life. The memories I made on this program are completely irreplaceable. These memories and experiences will forever help inspire me to become that bridge between the U.S.A and Japan.

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



## "SMALL PRAYERS"

We saw these at every memorial/tragedy zone in the Tohoku area. They are for prayer for those who lost their lives in that area.

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Breeze #73



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2013 Group Tour Report: Steven Johnson

2013 J-LEAP Report: Amiko Nishijima

2013 J-LEAP Report: Hiroko Maekawa

2013 JET-MIP Essay: Ariana Foster

2013 JET-MIP Essay: Lian Eytinge

2013 JET-MIP Essay: Rebecca Cook

2013 JET-MIP Essay: Shannon Foremaster

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Annual Report

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