

## NOVEMBER, 2013: BREEZE ISSUE #73

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



### TARIK HAYWARD

*Mountain View High School  
Bend, OR*

Three years ago I was presented with the incredible opportunity to go to Japan with my high school's band for a relatively low price. We were to be leaving in less than a week when the earthquake happened. Even though the place we would be going, Chiba, was not affected too badly, the trip was postponed by a year's time. Since that time, I have been involved in many fund raisers and have desired to visit the affected area because of the connections and relationships I had already made with Japan and its people.

And since my first visit to Japan, I had been looking for any and all chances to go back. When I heard about JET-MIP from my Japanese teacher, it was exactly what I had been looking for. Throughout the application process, I was confident in my "book knowledge" of Japanese, especially after taking the NJE, but I was unsure whether I would be selected because of my lack of speaking experience. When I received the acceptance email (in the middle of seventh period, Jazz 2) I literally screamed. I was going back.

Being the only participant who had been to Japan before, I knew a bit of what to expect upon arriving. I had been through the weather: hot and humid. I'd gone through the whole left side/right side traffic shock and seen how differently they drive. I knew the train system. I'd used the showers and baths and I knew the ins and outs of the fancy toilets. For that first couple of days it was like being back in a second home. I guess you could say that I was experienced. But nothing could have prepared me for the time we spent in the Tohoku region.

Seeing the effects of 3.11 first-hand, even two years after the event, was mind-blowing. After the event, of course footage was all over the news. Everyone saw the images of the tsunami coming in and literally sweeping entire houses away. And especially for a little while after, images of the damage were everywhere. You could certainly tell that this was huge. But it wasn't until I was there, standing where a house once stood — somebody's living room, somebody's kitchen, somebody's bedroom — on the only thing that remained, the concrete foundation, that I realized EVERYTHING was gone.

Before I had ever even heard of this program, I knew of the JET program. It's always been an interest of mine and a possible, even probable, path for me to follow. Not anymore. Now it is a certainty. On this program, from beginning to the end, we were able to meet with various JET participants, ALTs and CIRs alike. Hearing their stories and answers to our many questions has led me to the decision that I will do this program. And, as well, before this, I've expected that I would be an ALT, should I go into the program. But now, after speaking with people who have been through the experience of applying for and being both ALTs and CIRs, it would seem that I might be more suited for the CIR position.

This program has not only confirmed what I want to do, but how I need to do it. It has shown me how far I've come in my studies of the Japanese language and, more importantly, how far I have to go. One thing that has really stood out to me is something that the US consul general said regarding language study, that the only way to learn to speak is to... Speak. Specifically, one story that really hit home is when a Japanese student asked how good should her English be before studying abroad, and he simply replied, "Go now." I guess this has really shown me the direction I need to follow in order to improve my Japanese.

To Monty and Taylor,

This program was certainly one of joy and fun, and having adventures and making memories in Japan, but I don't want to lose sight of that M in JET MIP. You two lost your lives following your dreams and doing what you loved. Through this program, I feel like I have gotten to know you, personally. From all the friends and family we were able to meet, listen to, and speak with, I saw a glimpse into your lives and personalities. Your gifts to the people of Japan and desire to build and keep connections between Japan and the US, and all people, has inspired me to follow in your footsteps and continue in mine own efforts to connect these two great nations now, and onwards towards posterity. I like to think that we could have been friends had we known each other but, then again, like I said, because of this program, I think I do know you, and that is my definition of a memorial.

## NIPPON THROUGH MY EYES PHOTO SUBMISSION



“Sanctuary”

Hotel Bōyō was used as a shelter after the tsunami and was a large part of our time while we were in the tohoku region .

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5700 Wilshire Blvd, Suite 100  
Los Angeles, CA 90036

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