

FEBRUARY, 2014: BREEZE ISSUE #76

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



ANDREW RYFA

*Highland High School
Highland, IN*

Before traveling to Japan, I believed in a false sense of what the country was truly like. Granted, I did not expect absurdities such as every town sporting skyscrapers with robots roaming the streets, but I did believe that the amount of rural villages were much lower than in reality, and I did expect that the Japanese people I would meet would be almost fluent in English. Furthermore, I believed

much of the Tohoku region to have been rebuilt, give or take a few exceptions such as what used to be larger scale buildings. However, after traveling to Japan and the Tohoku region, I broke free from my former shell of ignorance and learned how the country of Japan, the nation's people, and the region of Tohoku truly is. Through this program, I developed a better sense of the language and its culture, further found myself, realized what I truly want out of life, and learned what a strong impact an individual can have on a community of people.

Firstly, I believe that for me, along with the other members of the program, the JET-MIP ultimately proved to be one of the most influential, memorable, and life changing experiences we will have ever lived. This journey to another nation, and into the lives of a different culture, is something I will forever hold dear to me. At some point between the countless school visits, tours of the region of Tohoku, and roaming around the institute, I began to feel a feeling of infiniteness. Never in my life would I have imagined that connecting with another from a foreign country I love would have impacted me as it did. Talking to all of the high school students, along with my host families, gave me a sense of fulfillment and happiness, which caused me to become overcome with emotion.

As we continued to visit schools and speak with the students, I began to realize more and more how genuinely happy and ecstatic they were just to have us in their company. With each song they sung, each game we taught them, and each meal and conversation we shared, I began to develop a close emotional tie to the people I met, and I would tell myself that I would remain in contact with as many of them as I could. Regrettably, there were many young individuals I met that I am not able to contact, as I was not able to give or receive a means by which I could communicate with them back in America. However, I can continue to communicate with the select individuals that I was able to find a way to talk to via techn and I plan to continue this communication much into the future, or as long as they wish to converse

me.

Secondly, this program fundamentally contributed to my desire to further study Japanese in college and caused me to awaken out of the dream I had brainwashed myself into thinking I desired. Prior to traveling to Japan, I had planned on becoming a pharmacist due to the high salary and high job demand. However, despite my plan, I have always been passionate about being an English teacher, as the English language and literature are two things I love and enjoy the most. Between all of the school visits and long, tiresome days, I realized that I honestly do not want to study what I had stubbornly planned to up to this trip and that English teaching - in America and in Japan - is what my heart truly desires for my future. Therefore, this program led me to follow my true passions and my true dreams, and motivated me to continue to study Japanese throughout college, and one day teach overseas. Through this, I hope to profoundly impact students in Japan, and later in America, just as many ALT's, including my own Japanese teacher, have done already.

Thirdly, after returning to America, I excitedly shared my experiences with my family and friends. Although there were the few people that half-heartedly listened, which I knew they would before telling them, the majority of the people I told my experiences to were surprised, ecstatic, and even a bit crestfallen. After telling of the innovative everyday objects and machines, such as dry ice dispensers in grocery stores and conveyor belt sushi restaurants, my family and friends were amazed that such things exist, and even more amazed that we have yet to have such things here in America. Furthermore, after telling of the Japanese people's outstanding moral conscious and benevolent values, the people I told were surprised that a nation, although not entirely perfect, could be so safe and all around good. Lastly, after telling of Tohoku region's coast's current state, majority of the people I told became much more empathetic, having not realized how devastated much of the area still is.

Finally, I will write a message to the two individuals that inspired this program, and impacted the lives of others in a way that I long to impact as well. Firstly, to Taylor Anderson: the bravery you demonstrated when helping your students to safety is something I pray I will one day possess. I hold you in the highest of amount of respect, and I relate to your love of the Japanese language and culture. I admire you for what others described your personality to be, and I believe that you've left behind a legacy that will never be forgotten. Secondly, to Monty Dickson: I am amazed by how fluent and flawless your Japanese truly was. In all honesty, I am a bit envious of that skill you possessed, and I hope to one day be half as talented as you with the language. Furthermore, I respect you greatly for the dramatic and beneficial change you caused in the community of Rikuzentakata, and I fully believe that if I were to have ever met you in person, I would have admired your character and personality almost instantaneously.

All in all, the 2013 JET-MIP ultimately proved to be the most eye opening, educational, endearing, and significant experiences I have ever had the pleasure of living throughout my life. As I age and continue on my path of life, I will never forget what I found and what I learned while I was on this trip, nor will I ever forget the profound, lasting relationships I made with the people I met, Japanese and American. At the end of the day, I thank the Japan Foundation for granting me this life changing experience, and for gifting me with the motivation I needed to pursue my dream and float on into the future, no matter what it may hold.

NIPPON THROUGH MY EYES PHOTO SUBMISSION

“Dilapidated Ruins of a Shopping Mall”



I chose this photo because it clearly demonstrates the amount of rebuilding work that still has yet to be done in many of the disaster regions. The destroyed shopping mall signifies that the village still has to finish just cleaning up the rest of the destruction, which many people in America do not realize.

Breeze #86



Breeze #85



Breeze #84



Breeze #83



Breeze #82



Breeze #81



Breeze #80



Breeze #79



Breeze #78



Breeze #77



Breeze #76



2014 Kakehashi Report

Japanese Language Education Update 3

2013 J-LEAP Report: Moe Takahashi

2013 J-LEAP Report: Haruka Nitani

2013 JET-MIP Essay: Lisa Trieu

2013 JET-MIP Essay: James Tran

2013 JET-MIP Essay: Anna Schneider

2013 JET-MIP Essay: Andrew Ryfa

Breeze #75



[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.