

FEBRUARY, 2014: BREEZE ISSUE #76

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



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When I got accepted into the JET Memorial Invitation Program, at first, I was only thinking about the idea of being able to go to Japan. I was thinking that the best part of this program would be sightseeing and buying souvenirs, just as a tourist would think. But when I actually met up with the other JET-MIP participants around the country, my views began to change. At the institute, even

when my friends and I did not go sightseeing, we would hang out in the lobby and just talk, not wanting to be alone in our rooms. As the program progressed, we visited high schools and met with many other people with different backgrounds. Together I chatted and played games with the Japanese students, not realizing until the end that that moment with them was one of the best and unforgettable parts of my stay in Japan. When our time together was coming to an end, I did not even notice that I rushed to get the students' contact. Through our email and Facebook exchanges, I hope to stay in contact and stay friends for a long time. That was when I was able to grasp the main point of this program, building bridges between Japan and America through our friendship.

Not only did this program teach me what things are important to me and how powerful friendship can be, it also gave me a path to my future. At first I was not really sure about what I wanted to do the rest of my life, but after participating in this program I sort of have an idea. When my junior year in high school was coming to an end, my interest in international business grew, but I was still unsure if that was the right path for me. The time that I spent in Japan opened a new idea in my mind. I realized that I wanted to travel around the world and interact with other cultures, just as I had in Japan. This program has also set up a connection between me and Japan that deepened my love for Japan even more than before. In the future I have decided not only to continue my Japanese language studies, but will live in Japan. Japan has become the number one place I want to stay at.

After returning to America, I shared my experience with my family. My sister went to the Tohoku region last year and already explained much of the situation to my family, but even so, I had to tell them about all the things I saw, because I just could not stop talking about it. I told them about my home stays, the Tohoku disaster area, and all the other places I had stepped foot on. Their reactions were still made up of surprises and sadness. They did not know how much damage had been initially done until I informed

And the fact that after a year, many places still needed so much reconstruction. What interested them the most was the debates going on in Kesennuma, such as the large boat and the building of a wall. When they heard that these debates were going on, that's when they realized how significant everything meant to the people of Japan. They were also surprised at how strong they were. The fact that everyone was helping each other after the earthquake, and how they had never once given up hope while still holding on strong even now, gave my family a whole new perspective of Japan. My family hopes that if our town was ever hit with such a tragic disaster, that our town would help each other out just as the people of Kesennuma and other areas had. After telling them about my experience, they were able to compare the current situation of Tohoku region with last year's situation. Through this they were truly able to imagine just how much damage really was done.

This program was made possible because of Ms. Taylor Anderson and Mr. Monty Dickson. I was able to experience so much from this program and I just want to thank them. During my stay in Japan, I have learned so much about Ms. Anderson and Mr. Dickson, from their personalities to their lifestyle and much more. Every single person had only good things to say about them. Both of them had built bridges between America and Japan and influenced others to do so as well, just like the way all participants have met and became friends during JET-MIP. And from there, participants were able to expand their friendship to other Japanese students and people we have met along the way. Ms. Anderson and Mr. Dickson have encouraged every single one of the participants to do what we love without hesitation. I know that both of them had loved Japan until the very end and I want to love Japan just as they had loved it.

NIPPON THROUGH MY EYES PHOTO SUBMISSION



"A Better Home?"

I was able to tell how much the people of Japan love their homes. Not only did people start to build their homes on higher ground, but debates are going on about building a big wall that separates the ocean and Rikuzentakata. The arguments formed during the debates were concerning the safety of the people of Rikuzentakata or allowing people to enjoy Rikuzentakata's natural landscape.

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Annual Report

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