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



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The JET Memorial Invitation Program considerably opened my horizons. In the weeks before I left, I was nervous about how the program would be run; I was not sure how to handle being a “student ambassador” in my native country, speaking my native language, let alone in a foreign country with an entirely new set of customs and traditions. However, I was pleasantly surprised by the

smooth integration JET-MIP offered. The Institute greatly enhanced the transition; I noted that in the beginning it felt very Japanese, but by the end of the program it seemed American. By using the Institute as a midway point between the cultures, I felt that this program was able to handle what would have been extreme culture shock. As far as the activities and places visited within the program itself, I thoroughly enjoyed them. Meeting the Japanese students, something I had been apprehensive about, turned out to be one of the most enjoyable parts of the trip, and by the end of it I felt that Japan seemed like more of a home than the United States. All of the food and the accommodations were simply amazing, and I loved the more traditional experience we had in Hotel Boyo. The disaster areas were shocking, and both resulted in awe for the power of nature. More importantly, though, the program resulted in awe for the people of Japan, and their tenacity. All of the people I met were positive and ready to rebuild. They refused to give in to the incredible amounts of stress and hardship that was placed upon them, and that perhaps taught me more than anything. I savored and loved every second we had in Japan, and I never wanted those two weeks to end.

Before I embarked on JET-MIP, I was not planning on studying Japanese past college. Although I was always interested in Japanese culture, as a resident of South Carolina it felt like more of a distant dream, a hobby at most. I was planning on going abroad for my post-graduate studies, but I was thinking more about going to England or Australia. After experiencing Japan and its culture, my priorities changed drastically. To put it simply, the trip made Japan feel more ‘real’ to me, and like a future place to live. Because of JET-MIP, I will be both taking more Japanese classes at my university and becoming a more active part of the Japanese community here in my state, as well as working towards study abroad opportunities in Japan. In addition, I want to work in or alongside Japanese companies, and hope to further my Japanese education to the point where I can go to a graduate school in Japan.

Although I did not have a chance to speak to my classmates, I have told all of my friends and family about Japan. My friends especially were enthused, as many of them are into Japanese pop culture already and wish to one day visit Japan. Like me, they saw Japan as more of a dream than a reality, but the experiences I shared helped them to both understand more about the situation in Japan after the earthquake currently, and think deeper about Japan as not just a dream, but also a possibility. Some of them are planning to study Japanese, and after telling them about the JET program, are now looking into it. I was surprised by how many people do not know anything about such opportunities in Japan, and how few people study Japanese outside of Japan. They were encouraged to know that it is possible to live and study in Japan, as well as experience its amazing culture.

Dear Taylor and Monty,

Thank you both so much, for your time and dedication to making a difference. Both of you worked incredibly hard not just to teach English, but to bring joy to many children's lives. You were well loved and you truly changed many lives, not just in Japan. You changed my life. Even though you both may never know, you created a new life for me, in a sense. I did not know what I was meant to do until I visited Japan, and you both made that possible through your vibrant spirits and the ones that loved you wishing to remember you and create your place in history. Just as you two acted as bridges between two countries, the United States and Japan, I will strive to do so in the future. I hope that one day I can live up to your memory.

Even though I never knew you personally, I will never, ever forget either of you and the impact you had on my life and my future.

Once again, I thank you from the bottom of my heart, and I hope that you both rest in peace, wherever you are.

Best regards,

Alix Tuel – JET Memorial Invitation Program Participant 2013

NIPPON THROUGH MY EYES PHOTO SUBMISSION

“The Grounded Ship of Rikuzentakata”

This photo depicts the giant ship that grounded itself in the middle of Rikuzentakata during the 2011 Tsunami. To me, this boat is a symbol of the remaining effects from the tsunami, but is also a demonstration of how little the current situation has changed.



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2013 JET-MIP Essay: Jacob Wolter

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2013 JET-MIP Essay: Sean Truong

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