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



YUNSU YU

*Glenbrook South High School
Glenview, IL*

FANTASY BECOMES REALITY

My interest for Japan has been present ever since my childhood years. I grew up watching Pokémon and Sailor Moon, hoping to become a Pokémon Master and Sailor Scout. Quickly as I started elementary school, I realized that it could only be a fantasy; however, I have never let

go of my inner child. By holding on to my fantasies and interests in Pokémon and Sailor Moon, I found myself branching out and finding new interests in Japanese culture and language; which later led me to study the Japanese language. Although I am not able to physically become a Pokémon Master or Sailor Scout, I was able to use a fantasy from the past and make it into a passion. I am so glad that a small fantasy has led me to take Japanese because I not only met great people but also found many new opportunities. An interest from my childhood has brought me as far as learning the language and then to applying to a program like JET-MIP 2013. I applied to this program understanding the slim chances I had, and when I learned that I had been accepted, my fantasy became a reality.

This whole program was so much more than I ever expected it to be. When we first heard the trip outline and summary in Los Angeles, it sounded packed and I was a little intimidated by it. I do not think I processed the program well enough to fully understand what we would be doing in Japan; I was caught up in a lot of different emotions. I was still anxious about actually going to Japan and still felt awkward around the new faces. It was not until after our first school visit that I understood the purpose. Yes, we were told what we were going to do, and the Japan Foundation prepared us very well; however, when doing these exchanges and meetings, no amount of preparation was able to fully depict what we were doing with the Japanese students or how I felt. No amount of words is able to justify the kind of satisfaction and happiness I felt after exchanging with the students. These exchanges brought us closer to the Japanese students as well as the American students. After being with each other for a couple hours, we felt comfortable with one another and created new bonds. My favorite part of this whole trip was being with the Japanese students and getting to know them and having fun with them. It was not until I actually met with the students that I understood that we were building bridges between our two different worlds. Although we grew up in different places and with different cultures, we were able to connect and understand each other. One thing that I was very worried about for this whole program was the fact my Japanese was not developed enough. When I met other Mippers, I felt that they were much better

I was and I was almost embarrassed to use my Japanese. However, one thing that helped me overcome this worry was how the Japanese students would speak in English while the American students spoke in Japanese. This made it less awkward for all of us and it helped us to feel comfortable speaking despite our mistakes or lack of skill. Through this, it was amazing to see myself speak in Japanese and for the Japanese students to understand what I was saying; I was able to see the fruits of my education and effort in learning Japanese pay off. I also felt that the classes we took at the Kansai Institute helped as well. The preparation for homestays and the exposure to the Japanese was helpful. The whole staff at the Institute was so encouraging and positive as well; they really helped me feel comfortable speaking in Japanese.

Overall, this program was one of the best experiences I have had in my life. This program taught me that if you are willing to participate, then you can really make an impact with your actions. Even if we were not able to make enormous changes physically in Japan as JET-Mippers, talking to the people and making relationships was precious to me and I know the other Mippers feel the same way as I do. One thing that left an impression on me was how open minded and friendly the people of Tohoku were. I was surprised to see how they would just talk to us and how quick they were to want to make a relationship with people they did not know. The hearts of the Tohoku people were almost childlike. They did not over analyze or question the situation; they just acted out of pure intentions. They did not hold on to the past, but they were optimistic of the future and very proactive to making their towns better places to live. This really stuck with me and has taught me to more like the people of Tohoku, to overflow with kindness and to just take action without hesitation. I am the type of person to take a lot of caution before acting and end up hesitating; my hesitation leads to a lot regret. At first, I was like this on the trip; I was kind of quiet and reserved. However, as I interacted with the other Mippers, I slowly opened up. It was not until I first met the people of Tohoku that I finally let go of everything holding me back. I asked myself why I was acting so reserved and cautious and found no reason to. I found that the spirit of the Tohoku people really influenced me to be freely who I am without holding anything back. Through the spirit of the Tohoku people, I learned more about myself and the capability we all hold of making an impact on others.

This experience in Japan has ignited a desire in me to step out of the United States and understand that there are so many opportunities all over the world. I have heard about the JET program, but through JET-MIP I have seen how rewarding it is. Rewarding as in, it is rich in lasting relationships with fellow JETs and with those you interact with daily. Hearing the stories from prior and present JETs helped me see that they are making an impact on the lives of young Japanese students daily. I am definitely interested in applying to this program in the future, and I am also interested in studying abroad. I would love to study in Japan for a semester or summer and actually get a taste of living in Japan on my own. I am taking Japanese next year for my senior year of high school and am interested in continuing my studies into college. Before, I was always interested in the medical field and maybe becoming a doctor someday. However, lately I have been reconsidering my options. After visiting Japan, I have been interested in International Relations and have been thinking about a future in this field. Who knows, maybe I can become a doctor that travels to different countries and have the best of both worlds. I am currently unsure of what to do with my life, but by taking Japanese many new doors have been opening for me. After this experience in Japan, I definitely want to return to Japan one way or another, and hopefully when I return, I will be on my way towards my dream.

I have shared my stories and experiences with my friends and family. Overall, everyone was shocked by how much we accomplished on the trip. Not everyone knew what the purpose of the trip was, and when I told them about it they were very interested. They found it very inspiring that we were creating a bridge between America and Japan. Many people were shocked because the normal girl they knew, Yunsu ... in Japan doing many things they never expected. Trust me, I was shocked too. I later met up with some of my friends from Japanese class, and they all want to apply for next year's program. Because I was tl

student to participate from my high school, we did not have a good idea of what it consisted of or how to apply. But now that I have participated and told them about the program they are all really interested. I am excited to share with my class the many inspiring stories and personal accounts I heard from 3.11.11. I have yet to tell other people at my high school, but if I give my presentation I am sure more people will be interested in exploring Japanese. I think that the stories and experiences I share will also inspire people to look into the JET program even if they are not studying Japanese now.

Finally, to Ms. Taylor Anderson and Mr. Montgomery Dickson, all I can say is thank you. Thank you for being our inspiration to not just live limited lives. I admire how you guys chased your dreams no matter what obstacles you faced. Hearing about your journeys has really inspired me to do something great with my life. Although I have never had the chance to meet you guys in person, I feel as if I have. The love you guys poured out in Japan is so apparent and visible; the legacy you guys have left is so powerful. It was not like you guys were doing what you did to leave a legacy, but out of the pure desire out of your hearts, you wanted to be in Japan touching the hearts of others. You guys lived each day to bring a smile to someone and please know that you have forever impacted 32 more lives through this year's JET Memorial Invitation Program. I am blessed to have had this life changing experience and I will never forget it. As I mentioned before, I tend to hesitate a lot and worry about the future tremendously, but after this trip I have gained more confidence in myself and I am excited to start my senior year of high school. I feel like I have something no one can ever take away from me and I will forever cherish this experience. Thank you again for being the bridge between Japan and America and for inspiring the next generation to pursue big dreams and live for what we love. Thank you for helping this dreamer realize that fantasies can become a reality.

NIPPON THROUGH MY EYES PHOTO SUBMISSION



"Reborn like a Phoenix"

This photo was taken at Watanoha Elementary School in Ishinomaki, Miyagi Prefecture. This was the elementary school where Taylor Anderson taught English to her students. As you can see, there is a crane on the left side of the photo showing the reconstruction. Right now, the students have been relocated to a temporary school while the original building is being rebuilt. We were told that sometime next year the school will be in use again. I chose the title "Reborn like a Phoenix" because like a phoenix, the school is being reborn. It may have gone

through the fire and left with ashes, but the school is rising out of the ashes and being reborn. The school and its students are starting with a fresh slate. On the walls of the school, there are pictures drawn by students with encouraging words and beautiful pictures. Their messages and pictures bring encouragement and hope to many.

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2013 JET-MIP Essay: Na Xiong

2013 JET-MIP Essay: Tiffany Yuen

2013 JET-MIP Essay: Yunsu Yu

2013 Advanced Teacher Training Program

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5700 Wilshire blvd, Suite 100

Los Angeles, CA 90036

P. 323.761.7510

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