

APRIL, 2014: BREEZE ISSUE #78

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A Free E-Newsletter for Friends of Japan & Teachers of Japanese

GREETING FROM THE DIRECTOR



HAJIMEMASHITE (NICE TO MEET YOU) AND THANK YOU FOR VISITING OUR WEBSITE!

I arrive here in Los Angeles during an exciting period for Japanese culture with Mount Fuji recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage site and Japanese Food designated as an intangible cultural heritage. Furthermore, Tokyo was selected as the host city for the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic games. With this momentum, we hope to further develop programs to enhance the recognition of Japanese culture in a deeper, wider, and sustainable manner while creating opportunities for mutual understanding and trust.

Based on the 2012 Survey on Japanese-Language Education Abroad, the number of individuals studying the language worldwide increased to 3.98 million and in the United States, the number increased as well to over 150,000 learners. Applicants for the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT) has also been steadily increasing since we started offering the test in 1993. Our support for Japanese language learners and teachers has never been stronger with the implementation of our grant programs, the Japanese Language Education Assistant Program (J-LEAP), as well as the massive youth exchange programs like the *Kizuna* and *Kakehashi* projects. We believe this will open new opportunities for fresh encounters, interactions and exchanges that were unimaginable in the past. The youth from both our countries have the flexibility, intellectual curiosity and potential to act as *Kakehashi*, (bridges) between Japan and the United States for both the new and old generations.

Three years have passed since the Great East Japan Earthquake and I want to take this opportunity to express my gratitude for all our friends across the United States who provided their encouragement support. We will continue to organize events that bring to light the current status of the Tohoku area and its cultural strengths. This includes the JET Memorial Invitation Program (JET-MIP), which commemorates

two American teachers who lost their lives during the disaster. This year, we will again invite 32 U.S. high school students to Japan with a focus on the Tohoku region. The experiences during the past three years of this program brought home to me the significance of direct ties between people, the power and potential of culture, and the preciousness of long-term friendship.

Along with our continued efforts to connect with our local community, our goal is to enhance not only the friendship shared by our two great nations, but also to promote mutual understanding worldwide by working together to achieve a common global agenda. We have been engaged in this path of cooperation for many decades now and hope to continue our activities during my time here and for many decades to come.

Naomi Takasu, Director



JF NIHONGO TEA TIME: LET'S CHAT IN JAPANESE
SATURDAY, APRIL 12 AT 1PM
VENUE: JFLA AUDITORIUM

Come join our casual and informative conversation café that starts off the new term of our language courses. You'll have a chat with native Japanese speakers while enjoying Japanese tea & snacks, Japanese language experience is not necessary, but participants should be 18 and up. All levels are welcome! If you are interested in our JF Nihongo language courses and register at this even, you can receive a 10% discount off tuition.



JAPANESE LANGUAGE COURSES
SPRING TERM: APRIL 19 - JUNE 12

Spring term will be starting soon so register now to learn Japanese with us! JF Nihongo (Japanese) features fun and unique language courses for both new Japanese-language learners as well as those who are interested in improving their existing language skills. Get 10% off with the early bird discount when you register by April 5. Courses are for adults (18 and up). Learn Japanese with us this spring!

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KOKESHI: THE TOHOKU ARTISAN SPIRIT
THURSDAY, APRIL 17 AT 7PM (JFLA AUDITORIUM)

Kokeshi are traditional Japanese dolls that are made of wood with originating from the Tohoku region. Manami Okazaki, a journalist and author who recently published "*Kokeshi, from Tohoku with love*" will talk about kokeshi and the Tohoku artisan spirit.

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JAPANEMA: FREE JAPANESE CINEMA SCREENING
THE HIDDEN FORTRESS (139MIN., 1958) DIRECTED BY AKIRA KUROSAWA
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 9 AT 7PM
VENUE: JFLA AUDITORIUM

A grand-scale adventure as only Akira Kurosawa could make one, *The Hidden Fortress* stars the inimitable Toshiro Mifune as a general charged with guarding his defeated clan's princess (a fierce Misa Uehara) as the two smuggle royal treasure across hostile territory. Accompanying them are a pair of bumbling, conniving peasants who may or may not be their friends. This rip-roaring ride is among the director's most beloved films and was a primary influence on George Lucas, the creator of *Star Wars*. *The Hidden Fortress* delivers Kurosawa's trademark deft blend of wry humor, breathtaking action, and compassionate humanity.



JAPANEMA: FREE JAPANESE CINEMA SCREENING
MITSUKO DELIVERS (109MIN., 2011) DIRECTED BY YUYA ISHII
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 23 AT 7PM
VENUE: JFLA AUDITORIUM

Mitsuko (Riisa Naka) is a young woman who believes everything will be okay and always tries to help those around her. One day, she met an American man and wanted to help him. They became involved in a relationship and she moved with him to California. A little later, her boyfriend left her and she returned to Japan alone. Now, *Mitsuko* is nine-months pregnant, unmarried and almost broke. She has to move out of her apartment but she doesn't know where she will go. She'll visit an elderly woman who was her parents' landlord many years ago and will also see again the boy (Aoi Nakamura) that held a life-long crush on her.



REMINDER: 2014 JET-MIP

APPLICATION DEADLINE: WEDNESDAY, APRIL 16, 2014

SEND A HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT TO JAPAN FOR TWO WEEKS NEXT SUMMER

If you are a Japanese teacher and plan to submit an application for the 2014 JET Memorial Invitation Program, please note that applications must arrive at our office on Wednesday, April 16. This year, we are accepting applications by email, fax, or regular mail. The last day to administer the National Japanese Exam (NJE), a requirement to apply for this program, is on Friday, April 11, so please make sure your candidate takes the test by then. If you have any questions or issues, please let us know in advance.



FISCAL YEAR 2014-2015 JAPANESE LANGUAGE GRANTS

We are pleased to announce the start of our Fiscal Year 2014-2015 grant programs that we organize annually in support of Japanese-Language Education in the United States. These include the following:

1. Japanese Language Learners Event Grant previously known as "Speech Contest Grant" (Deadline: 9/1/2014)
2. Japanese Teaching Material Purchase Grant (Deadline: 9/15/2014)
3. Salary Assistance Grant for Japanese Language Courses (Deadline: 4/10/2014)
4. Japanese-Language Education Project Grant (Deadline: 2 months prior to project start date).

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EVENT REPORT: RAKUGO IN ENGLISH WITH DIANE KICHIJITSU

On Saturday, March 24, Diane Kichijitsu performed English Rakugo at JFLA to a packed crowd that was standing room only. This was the first time we organized a Rakugo performance here and many Angelenos came out on a Saturday afternoon to support Diane and enjoy her performance as she mesmerized the crowd with her knowledge of Japanese sit-down comedy. She performs world-wide so if you are interested in seeing her, check out her website below to see when she will be coming to perform in your town.

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JAPANESE LANGUAGE EDUCATION UPDATE #5: TWO CONFERENCES (CLTA AND AATJ/AAS)

March was busy!! JFLA went to two big conferences to support teachers and Japanese language education! First, we headed down to San Diego for the California Language Teachers Association (CLTA) Annual Conference, where we set up a Japan Foundation booth and handed out plenty of Nihongo goods and information. At a Saturday morning information session, Program Coordinator Amanda took her first step onto the Japanese language education stage with her presentation on the 2012 Survey results with a special focus on California. Did you know that California has 24% of all learners of the Japanese language in America? And 27% of the teachers.

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THE JAPAN FOUNDATION'S TRAINING PROGRAM FOR OVERSEAS TEACHERS OF JAPANESE REPORT BY NORIKO NAGATA

Every year, several Japanese language teachers world-wide are accepted to our advanced teacher training program at the Japan Foundation Japanese Language Institute Urawa. This program is different from the short term and long term training programs because it allowed more experienced individuals to work on special projects to address specific challenges they face in their field. Prof. Noriko Nagata from the University of San Francisco participated in this program during fall of 2013 and wrote about her experiences in a report that is linked below for your reading pleasure.

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2013 JET MEMORIAL INVITATION PROGRAM: PARTICIPANT ESSAYS PART 8/8 FINAL

In July of 2013, 32 US high school students participated in the JET Memorial Invitational Program (JET-MIP). They travelled to Japan for a two week study tour of the Tohoku region, focusing on the cities of Rikuzentakata and Ishinomaki. These were the cities that Montgomery Dickson and Taylor Anderson were assigned during their tenure as JET Assistant Language Teachers. Sadly, they lost their lives during the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami in March, 2011 and JET-MIP was created to commemorate their work. Participants took part in exchanges with local elementary, middle and high school students as well as local community groups with the purpose of fostering friendship and goodwill between both countries. Each month, we will feature four essays written by the participants describing their experiences in Japan. Click below to read about their unforgettable journey.

[Na Xiong](#)
[Jina Yee](#)
[Yunsu Yu](#)
[Tiffany Yuen](#)



STAFF UPDATE: SAYONARA MISAKO

Misako Ito, our Director for the past three years, returned to Japan at the end of March. She was instrumental in the move of our office to the Miracle Mile and the organization of the many community events that are held at our office each month. A reception was held to thank her for her hard work and to welcome our new director, Naomi Takasu. We appreciate all who came to say their good byes and also to say their hellos. We hope Misako will be able to enjoy the cherry blossom season in Japan with her family after being away for so long.

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Annual Report

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