

## AUGUST, 2014: BREEZE ISSUE #82

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

### 2014 JET MEMORIAL INVITATION PROGRAM REPORT

July 6 - July 24, 2014



In July of 2014, 32 high school students from all over the country gathered in Los Angeles for an orientation to kick off the JET Memorial Invitation Program. This program was started immediately following the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami of 2011 to commemorate the work of two JET Assistant Language Teachers who sadly lost their lives during the disaster. All the participants arrived in Los Angeles without any major delays or issues and the program started without a hitch.

During the orientation, they learned about the purpose of the program, watched the film *Live Your Dream: The Taylor Anderson Story* and heard presentations by the family members of Taylor Anderson and Montgomery Dickson, as well as their friends. Masako Unoura, a survivor of the 2011 disaster also gave a presentation about her experiences and the lessons she learned through her ordeal. The two day event was capped off with a reception at the Official Residence of the Consul General of Japan where the participants were treated to dinner before flying to Japan.



The trip took a rocky turn as Super Typhoon Neoguri was expected to pass through the area right when we were scheduled to depart for the Tohoku region. Originally, the plan was to visit Rikuzentakata, followed by Sendai and wrapping up with a visit to Ishinomaki; however, due to the weather, the Tohoku tour was delayed for the safety of everyone involved. Everyone was very disappointed with the cancellation, but the participants had an extra day to prepare for the exchanges in Ishinomaki and also visit the ancient city of Nara.

On the day the typhoon was scheduled to pass by the Kansai area where we were staying, there were dark clouds in the sky, but nothing resembled a Super Typhoon. We took a trip to Nara to learn about the historical monuments of the ancient city and to see the deer there, which were once

considered divine and sacred.

We finally departed for the Tohoku region and arrived in Sendai for the Miyagi JET Art and Culture show. The group then headed for Ishinomaki where we visited the newly renovated Watanoha Elementary where the participants had their first exchange where they performed for each other and got to know each other through games. Next they visited Ishinomaki High School where they had lunch with the students and then departed for a tour of the city that was devastated by the disaster. They got to visit Rainbow Bridge which was recently built by <sup>MA</sup>

Ando whose kids were taught by Taylor Anderson. He built the monument for the children of the region so they could have a place to gather and play and also as a symbol for the future. Later that afternoon, the students gathered with members of the Kiwi Club for an exchange with locals interested in learning English.



Before returning to Kansai, participants paid a visit to East Sendai High School for a cultural exchange where they enjoyed a shamisen performance, learned the intricate footwork of kendo, and the intricacies of chado (Japanese tea ceremony). The exchanges were the heart of this program and after each event, nobody wanted it to end, but we had to catch our flight back to Kansai and that concluded this year's Tohoku tour.

The last few days of the program included visits to Senboku High School where participants met their host brother/sister for the weekend homestay as well as Kyoto to see the famous temples and shrines in that city. On the last day in Kansai, the participants presented about personal topics about the trip and participated in a completion ceremony attended by their host families. Upon returning to Los Angeles for the wrap-up meeting, the participants again presented about the trip, but this time in English. Everyone left the following morning to a flurry of tearful goodbyes.



Although the trip was short, the 32 participants developed deep friendships and bonds with each other, which will last a lifetime. Whenever they travel to another city there may be a friendly face there that they can always call on to reminisce about the unforgettable summer they spent in Japan. With this motivation, we hope that all mippers will continue studying Japanese to support Japanese language education in the U.S. and one day participate in programs like JET while following in the footsteps of Taylor and Monty in their goal of bridging the strong relations between Japan and the US. If you are a high school teacher and want to submit an application on behalf of your student for the 2015 JET-MIP, please check back in December for more information.

Breeze #86



Breeze #85



Breeze #84



Breeze #83



Breeze #82



Japanese Language Education Update 9

2014 JET-MIP Report

Breeze #81



Breeze #80



Breeze #79



Breeze #78



Breeze #77



Breeze #76



Breeze #75



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