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



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JET-MIP was a once in a lifetime and life changing experience. I was very blessed to have been accepted to the program and the experience will always hold a special place in my heart.

The program rigorously tested the limits of my Japanese knowledge. We did several projects and presentations, such as our classroom-based lessons. These tested my “text-book” knowledge of Japanese, and were very instructive. The most engaging, fun, and challenging times, however, were when we interacted with the Japanese people and students in person. That was when I felt the most connected to Japan and Japanese language and culture. Those were the times that made me realize that I want to do something with Japanese when I’m older.

Visiting the historic and culturally rich parts of Japan, such as the Todai-ji in Nara and Kinkaku-ji in Kyoto, were eye-opening experiences, particularly because of the straightforward familiarity of my life in America, with America’s young traditions and my culturally starved upbringing. My favorite experiences, though, were the ones I had in Ishinomaki. We met many Japanese students, both in elementary and high school. We talked to adult members of the community and learned a lot about the events of 3.11 and the destruction it caused, but more importantly, we learned about the downright awe-inspiring strength of the Japanese people after the earthquake and tsunami had hit. Standing on the mountain and looking down on Ishinomaki and comparing what was before my eyes to the pictures of what had once been tugged on my heartstrings. Mr. Endo’s heartbreaking story and the strength of his heart to continue on in life and provide the community with his beautiful woodwork was a wonderful small-scale version of what Japan did after 3.11.

That was the day that changed the path that I had thought my life was going on. Before the trip, I had had a plan-- graduate high school, go to college, master in neuroscience and minor in chemistry. The Japanese language was a favorite hobby and class of mine and the culture was a distant, intangible wonder that seemed nice, but unreal. I never thought my Japanese experience would go past the classroom. When my Sensei told me about this program, however, I realized how desperately I want to deepen my “relationship”, so to speak, with Japan and Japanese. The experience did more than jus

it made me realize that I want to do something with Japanese in the future. First, I wish to complete this year of high school and my AP Japanese course with a better knowledge of Japanese. I now wish to double minor in college, and have a Japanese minor as well. I'm praying that somewhere in the field of neuroscience I can find or build a bridge between my career and Japan.

This program has also heavily aided in my decision to return to Japan one day. At first, I was unsure of the JET Program, or any teaching abroad program, because I was unsure if I would make an adequate teacher. After listening to and talking to the current and past JET participants, however, I have overcome that fear and wish to apply to JET and participate in it for one or two years.

Before I applied for JET-MIP, my family and friends did not share the same enthusiasm and love for Japan as I do; however, when I returned from my trip they listened to my stories and recounts with eager ears. My sister, Tricia, was already somewhat interested in Japanese culture, as well as her best friend, Jeremy, and her best friend's younger brother, Cody. Cody is planning to study abroad in Japan in 2015. Tricia, ironically, took the four of us to a hibachi grill to discuss my Japanese experience through JET-MIP. They asked me numerous questions about the people, the language, the food, and the spirit of Japan. I told them about how kind the people are and how considerate they are of each other and of us. I told them about an experience I had the day we visited Namba. We were stopped by two little girls who interviewed us, asking if we liked Namba and why. We then asked them where we could get delicious taiyaki. After asking their parents for permission, they wined us through the mall to one of the most delicious meals I've ever had. They were very sweet to us and spoke clearly so we could easily understand them. I also recounted the many kind and fun things I did with my host family, and told them about how hospitality is a very important virtue to most Japanese people.

My sister told me that I had inspired her to look further into Japanese culture. I had given Cody renewed excitement for going to Japan. My parents told me that they were proud of me and happy that I had the chance to experience such wonderful things. In Boonsboro, Maryland, the majority of the small population have lived in the town or in the area their entire lives, and rarely (if at all) travel. They are mostly farmers or local business owners who have known each other and very little diversity for as long as they can remember. The fact that I could go to an entirely different country made my town and my family proud.

When I talked about Taylor Anderson and Montgomery Dickson, the mood became somber, but my friends, my family, and myself also commented on the fact that we were happy that for at least a little while they were able to live their dreams and were grateful that the JET Memorial Invitation Program had been started to help keep their memories and dreams alive. This is my personal message to them:

Dear Taylor Anderson and Montgomery Dickson,

You both have inspired me so much. By applying for the JET Program, you overcame the fears of homesickness, embarrassment, culture shock, and failure, all of which I feel would take me quite a bit of encouragement to overcome. By actually participating in the JET Program, and excelling in it, you proved to me that nothing is an impossible feat-- even moving to a different country without knowing anyone, getting a teaching job, and teaching children a very difficult language. Your actions on the day of 3.11 changed and saved the lives of so many people. I want to be as courageous, helpful, and selfless as you both were. Your impact still today in the JET, JET-MIP, and Japanese communities is astounding. Not many people are able to live on and continue to make such large and positive impacts as you two do. My aspiration is to have even part of the impact on peoples' lives that you two have. Thank you for the amazing opportunity to meet so many friends in Japan, for helping me learn about Japanese culture

language and the events on and after 3.11. Thank you both for being with me as I mourned for you in our orientations, for comforting me and for saying to me, "Don't be sad-- use this opportunity to live your dream." I am forever indebted to you both.

NIPPON THROUGH MY EYES PHOTO SUBMISSION



"Love"

My host family and I did hanabi the one night that I got to stay with them. Love has no boundaries, even across race, language, country, religion...It makes me happy! It was amazing how quickly we grew together as a family.

Breeze #86



Breeze #85



Breeze #84



Breeze #83



2014 J-LEAP Orientation

2014 JET-MIP Report: Darrian Boyd

2014 JET-MIP Report: Sierra Dunn

2014 JET-MIP Report: Jay Gillis

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