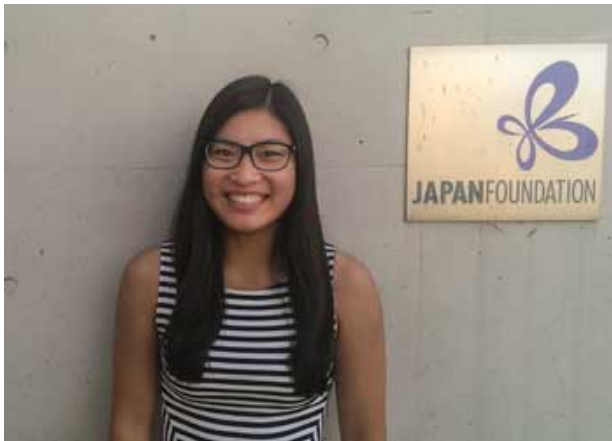


## NOVEMBER, 2014: BREEZE ISSUE #85

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



### JENNA LOUIE

*Lindbergh High School  
 Renton, WA*

The JET Memorial Invitation Program was truly the opportunity of a lifetime. It was a unique experience in the way that we were able to incorporate many aspects of Japan into our short amount of time there. We were given the chance to fully immerse ourselves in Japanese culture with activities like the home stay and school visits, and at the same time we got to experience the tourist side of Japan at places like Nara and Kyoto. This program gave

me the chance to acquire more knowledge not only about Japan and its culture and people, but also about the other participants and myself.

From the moment I read the email that said I was accepted into the program, to July 6th when I was on the plane to Los Angeles, the reality had not yet set in that I was going to Japan for two weeks with thirty-one students I had never met before. It felt as if I was in a dream, and I would wake up any second to an ordinary summer day. With a range of feelings from excited to worried, I boarded the plane headed to Los Angeles—then it finally hit me that I was embarking on this incredible experience. In a couple of days, I would be in Japan, somewhere I had always dreamt of going.

During the pre-departure orientation, I began to fully understand why I was given this opportunity along with thirty-one other students. As representatives of the US, Taylor Anderson and Monty Dickson created positive images of Americans in the communities they served. We were to act as bridges connecting the United States and Japan, and continue the legacy that Taylor Anderson and Monty Dickson have left. At that time before the trip, I was unsure how I would be able to do that.

The people in Japan seemed genuinely happy to have us there. The multitude of smiling faces that I encountered during each school visit made me feel very welcome. We did most of our school visits in the Tohoku region, where the students have endured a great deal of hardships since the 2011 disaster. They had most likely lost family members, friends, their homes, and anything else that the earthquake or tsunami affected. But, they continued to smile, and by looking at them, no one would have guessed what

they went through. They played games with us and talked to us like any other students would have. In a matter of a few hours, we all met new and unexpected friends. When it was time for us to leave, saying goodbye to our new friends was always difficult and saddening.

Even though we come from the other side of the globe and don't speak the same native language, we all had at least one thing in common—the willingness to try to form bonds with each other. When I looked back at all the new friends I had made in Japan, I realized that I was unconsciously building bridges between the US and Japan. Although I was unaware of it at the time, every connection I made with someone was another step in creating positive relations between the two countries.

After such a positive experience in Japan, there is no doubt that I will be returning in the future. Traveling to Japan for the first time with this program has reinforced and augmented my motivation to continue with Japanese studies. I plan to major in civil engineering and further advance my Japanese education with a minor in Japanese. Whether it be for a JET ALT position after college, or as a civil engineer to create infrastructure able to withstand the detrimental effects of future disasters, I intend to use the knowledge I obtain of the Japanese language and culture upon my return to Japan.

Since I have returned home, I have been sharing my experiences with all the friends and family I've encountered. All of their reactions could be described with the same phrase—in awe. People are amazed by everything the program had to offer us, from being able to see the current status of the reconstruction efforts in Tohoku firsthand, to how well all of the participants were taken care of during our whole visit. Most people were shocked when I informed them of the disaster's aftermath that still remains in the Tohoku region. A lot of people don't realize that the region continues to battle the egregious effects of 3.11 because not only is reconstruction a slow process, but also the economy was hurt and people are moving out of the area. I hope that sharing about my experiences in Japan will create a better understanding for the people who are poorly informed about the Tohoku region.

I will be eternally grateful for the chance to participate in such a remarkable program. All of the memories I made throughout the journey will be cherished. The friendships I have created, with both the Japanese and American people I met through this program, will never be lost or forgotten.

Lastly, to Ms. Taylor Anderson and Mr. Monty Dickson:

I learned so much about the two of you through this program. You formed a bridge between the US and Japan, and it has inspired many to follow in your footsteps. We all made numerous friendships and connections during the program, working to keep your legacy alive. Your aspirations will never be forgotten, and now they have been instilled in us. I would like to express my deep gratitude for everything you did. Thank you so much for allowing us to continue your dreams.

## **NIPPON THROUGH MY EYES PHOTO SUBMISSION**

### **“Current Status of Reconstruction”**

The view I saw from the top of Hiyori Mountain was significantly different from the pictures of the landscape prior to the disaster. I was surprised by the number of buildings still missing from the pictures after three years. The area may never look the way it used to before 3.11 since reconstruction has been a slow and difficult process.



Breeze #86



Breeze #85



ACTFL 2014

Japanese Language Education Update 12

2014 J-LEAP Report: Yoko Nishikawa

2014 J-LEAP Report: Kiyomi Tadokoro

2014 JET-MIP Report: Victoria Lockhart

2014 JET-MIP Report: Jenna Louie

2014 JET-MIP Report: Tristan Lundy

2014 JET-MIP Report: Lovely Matias

Breeze #84



Breeze #83



Breeze #82



Breeze #81



Breeze #80



Breeze #79



Breeze #78

Breeze #77



Breeze #76



Breeze #75



[Headquarters](#)

[New York Office](#)

[Center for Global Partnership](#)

[Volunteer](#)

[ボランティア募集](#)

[Japan Related Links](#)

[Job Openings \(Updated\)](#)

5700 Wilshire blvd, Suite 100

Los Angeles, CA 90036

P. 323.761.7510

---

Annual Report

© 2019 The Japan Foundation, Los Angeles

Web Design.