

NOVEMBER, 2014: BREEZE ISSUE #85

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



LOVELY MATIAS

*Long Beach Polytechnic HS
Long Beach, CA*

March 2011, two JET members lost their lives in the tsunami. Taylor Anderson and Monty Dickson were two lovable English teachers. While being on this program, I heard many stories from co-workers, friends, and students. They seem to be very outgoing and funny. It's hard to believe that these two JET members, who were adored by everyone, are gone. Their passion for Japanese language and culture inspire many people. They

inspire me. I want to thank them for giving me this opportunity to travel to Japan with JET-MIP. Now, I understand why they love Japan so much.

When I first arrived in Japan, it felt like I was still in America. I don't think it really hit me that I was in Japan. It first hit me when we had the Nara tour. Unfortunately, we weren't able to go to Rikuzentakata for the high school summit. It was also the place where Monty Dickson taught. I was really looking forward to go there. Due to the typhoon, they wanted to keep us safe. But thankfully the typhoon didn't hit us at all. The day of the typhoon, it was very sunny. Nara wasn't a bad replacement for Rikuzentakata. It hit me here because I got to see the traditional culture of Japan. There were also temples and shrines at Kyoto and Asakusa. I learned more about the history and culture. It made Japan even more interesting to me.

The trip to Tohoku was very emotional for me. Knowing about how badly the earthquake and tsunami destroyed their cities, I wondered how they're coping with it. We visited Watanoha Elementary School. The school building recently finished its remodeling. All the children were really happy to see us. Since it was around the time for the Tanabata festival, they made a tree where we can hang our wishes. There was a little girl who had a wish that said, "I want there to be no more earthquakes and tsunamis." Another had a wish that said, "I hope we can have a good relationship between America and Japan." These 8 year old elementary school kids had amazing wishes. It was touching to hear all of them. Then they sang the Rainbow Song and I just wanted to cry right there. I held it in. But once we were leaving the school, I started crying. Although I've only been with them for about an hour, I felt very close to them. They are very strong kids who probably lost a lot during the disaster. It makes me so happy to see them doing okay.

After Watanoha, we visited Sendai Higashi High School. My escort, Arisa, took me around her school. I've always wanted to visit a Japanese high school and see everyone in their uniforms. I did Sado and Kendo for the first time there. Sado is a tea ceremony. It was held in the school's washitsu (Japanese style room). Everything was very formal and traditional. Kendo was my favorite. It was a little embarrassing for me to yell "ya" and "to." Kendou takes a lot of work to master it. There are specific things you have to do. For example, there's certain steps you have to take, how to hold the katana, how to sit down, ect. Everything was very new to me. I've gotten a taste of traditional Japanese culture.

My days spent in Tohoku really surprised me. Everyone was very positive after the disaster, especially Mr. Endo, who lost three kids during the disaster. He was also someone who inspired me. He built a bookshelf dedicated to Taylor Anderson. Recently, he built a playground called "Rainbow Bridge." It's where his house used to be. The playground had three arrows pointed up to remind everyone to always look up. He wants everyone to be positive and to look up into the sky where love ones will always watch them. He is probably the strongest person I've met during this trip. While talking to us about his story, he didn't shed one tear. He was very open about what happened during the disaster. It's amazing how much he's doing for his community. He gave us a fan with the words "United Together." These were two simple, but strong, words. He gave everyone strength. He united everyone together.

We went back to Osaka and visited Kobukan High School to meet our host family. My host sister was Kae. I spent my weekend with Kae, her mom, and her little sister. They tried their best to do everything that I've always wanted to do in Japan. The first night, they took me to their local matsuri. My host mom dressed me up in a yukata and did my hair. I got the opportunity to experience a summer matsuri. My host family and I visited a shrine. They taught me how to wash my hands and how to pray. I also helped the family with preparing the food. I've always wanted to use aisatsu like "itadakimasu" and "ittekimasu." I also wanted to try to sleep in a futon, go to the mall, ride the train, eat sushi, and more. They managed to do everything. I love them for that. They know me so well that they took me to a cat-themed udon restaurant. I was *mecha* excited to see everything with a cat on it. I've gotten so close to them. It felt like I was a part of their family. I learned so many things. I wanted to spend more time with them. But I'm looking forward to meeting them in the future.

The part I absolutely hated the most about this trip is that I get to meet 31 wonderful people and probably never going to see them for a very long time. The two weeks I've spent with them felt like I've lived in Japan with them my whole life. We were a crazy bunch. I've done everything with them. We sang karaoke, played late night games, went to the mall, and even the onsen. We shared many smiles, laughs, and tears. I am so blessed to meet them. The last day at the institute, we did hanabi at the nearby beach. It was the last fun thing we can do together in Osaka. It was hard to believe that we were leaving the next day. A few days after I came back to America, I met with my high school Japanese teacher, Watson sensei. I told her about my whole trip. She was very happy for me that I got the chance to travel to Japan. She wasn't surprised about everything I was surprised about Japan. We both shared the same passion for Japanese like Taylor Anderson and Monty Dickson.

Everyday I wonder when I'll be back in Japan. When will hang out with everyone again? When will I meet my host family again? When? I would like to become a JET after college, like Taylor and Monty. I want to become an English teacher who everyone looks up to. I really want to make a difference in Japan and on people's lives. I want to build a bigger bridge between America and Japan. Like what Endo have said "United Together." That bridge can help unite us together.

NIPPON THROUGH MY EYES PHOTO SUBMISSION



“Homestay”

These are my host sisters, Kae and Yuki. They took me to a matsuri and we wore yukatas.

My host family did everything I've always wanted to do in Japan: go to a matsuri, wear yukatas, sleep in a futon, eat udon, eat at a conveyor belt sushi restaurant, ect. I've gotten so close to them that it felt like I was a part of their

family.

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.