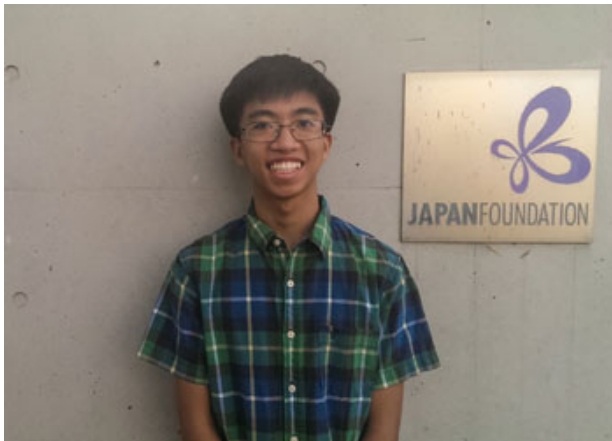


DECEMBER, 2014: BREEZE ISSUE #86

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



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I have to say that the trip that I took with the JET Memorial Invitation Program was the best two and a half weeks of my life. ほうんとうに ありがとうございます。

While on this trip, I was able to fully experience Japan in all of its glory. I went to many places and made many memories. In Nara, I was able to see the Giant Statue of Buddha and also see deer for the first time. I will never

forget the face that my friend Rachel Hirsch made when a deer tried to bite through her plastic bag of souvenirs. In the Tohoku region, I was able to meet with many Japanese high schoolers and converse with people who were involved in the March 11 earthquake. While listening to their stories and getting to know them, I gained a greater understanding of the hardships that they have been through and how strong they must be to keep on going. In both Sendai and Ishinomaki, we saw first hand the destruction that devastated the Japanese landscape and we were all just amazed at how the Japanese rebuilt and kept going. That kind of perseverance is something that I will forever try to imitate for the sake of the Japanese. Another thing that really got to me was how happy the Japanese people were when we visited them. Everyone was so happy that they weren't forgotten after four years. For some reason this just gets to me because I would never want to be forgotten as long as I'm alive. It is because of this that I will never forget about them or Japan and what they have been through.

The thing that I took away the most from this trip was making thirty one lifelong friends. When I first met the other participants in Los Angeles, I was very nervous to say the least. However, that quickly gave way to friendships that I will forever cherish, no matter how old I become. In Japan, we went to many different places, experienced Japanese culture, met and conversed with native Japanese people and had the time of my life. I remember the first time we arrived at the Institute and we were all trying to get used to the feel of a Japanese room. I went over to my neighbor's room, Ryan McCormick, and asked if he knew how to use the air conditioner. It took us a while to figure it out but when we did we were so happy. Looking back on it, I can't believe that was more than a month ago. It feels like I've been separated from everyone for more than that. In the days following that very first day in Japan, I became closer to everyone else. It wasn't until the third day in Japan, I think, that I was invited to go into the karaoke room by Alaska's Sierra Dunn. At first I was very hesitant to go since I couldn't sing, but I convinced myself by saying

was a once in a lifetime thing and I might as well enjoy myself. I think that was one of my best decisions on the trip. While in the karaoke room, I met people that would become some of my closest friends on the trip. It was so much fun going in there and singing with everyone and just dancing along to all the songs. Over the course of the next few weeks, we went to all of those places together, making memories, it was just nothing like I have ever experienced before. It was so amazing to have been in Japan with other people who have the same interest in Japan as me. It was because I was so comfortable around these people, so close with them, having formed a bond through our adventures in Japan, that I was so devastated when the end of the trip came. It was hard for me to grasp that it would be my last night with these amazing people and I think that is why I cried so hard. I was truly grateful for the time that we had in Japan and all the memories that we made together. I hope that we all will be able to see each other again when we apply for the JET program and become JETs in Japan.

My time in Japan has showed me that I truly and deeply love Japan and the Japanese language from the bottom of my heart. Before the trip, Japanese was merely just one of my favorite subjects in school, and now after the trip, I realize how much I love it. I love it so much that I actually thought about getting a minor in Japanese language while studying for my degree in pharmacy. I have also decided to take Japanese 4 as an elective in my senior year. I want to challenge myself to become as fluent in Japanese as I possibly can before I return to Japan with everyone else.

Since I have returned from Japan, I have started going to school again as a senior. In my Japanese class, my sensei gave me some time to explain about my trip to Japan. When I shared my experiences, I have to say that I was unable to truly express how amazing it was in the time I was given. I did, however, try my best. As I was explaining my trip to my fellow Japanese classmates, I saw that I was able to inspire them to try and join the JET Memorial Invitation Program since next year will be the final year. I truly hope that one of my underclassmen does get a chance to participate on this program so that they may experience the best summer of their life in Japan.

I truly cannot express how saddening it is however that for this trip have happened, Japan had to go through the March 11 earthquake and that two JET's, Taylor Anderson and Montgomery Dickson, had to lose their lives. I am truly thankful to them and their families, however, for supporting them and their dream to help those in Japan. It is truly an honor and very humbling to have been a part of the legacy that they have left behind. They have inspired me to become a JET myself to teach kids English and to truly be a part of the Japanese culture. It is because of them that I have realized that I love Japan and the Japanese language. Because of that, I am forever thankful to them. I hope that I can live up to the legacy that they have left behind and I aspire to be bridge that will connect Japan and America in the years to come.

NIPPON THROUGH MY EYES PHOTO SUBMISSION

“Look Up”

Three arrow pointing up at the Rainbow Bridge that Endo-san built represents the three children that Endo-san lost in the disaster and it tells us that we must always look up and persevere.



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