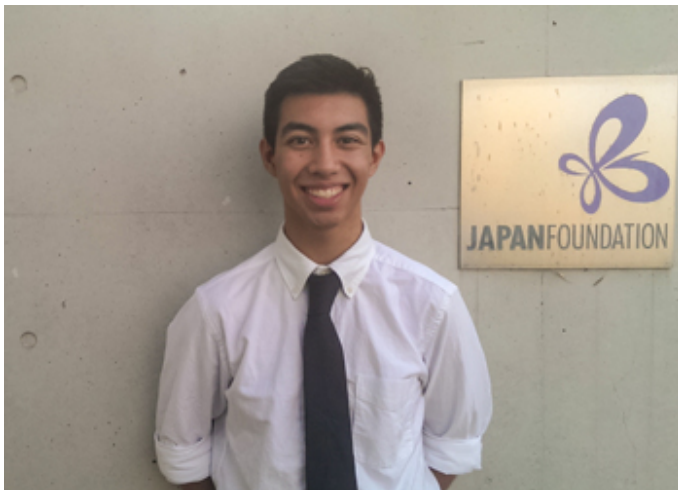


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A FREE MONTHLY E-NEWSLETTER FOR FRIENDS OF JAPAN & TEACHERS OF JAPANESE



THOMAS O'DONNELL

Cranford High School

Cranford, NJ

There are still days that I wake up expecting to be in Room 505 of the Kansai Institute. Sobered by reality, I look around and realize that I'm back in boring old New Jersey, unfortunately all too familiar with my surroundings. When I'm thirsty, I instinctively look around for a vending machine. After drinking a water bottle, I carry it around with

me for a while out of habit, surprised to see how many garbage cans there are on every street corner (also a bit bothered because the garbage isn't separated). Although our stay in Japan was relatively short-- only nineteen days-- it was long enough to make a lasting impact on me and the way I perceive Japan. The experiences I had and the relationships I formed on the trip are still going strong even to this day, and I know I will hold them close to my heart for the rest of my life.

The program in Japan was nothing short of spectacular. Every minute of every activity we did was either educational, fun, or both. There were no wasted moments. I feel like there was the perfect balance of leisure time and educational time (including the tours we spent learning about 3.11 and the JET's). The many visits we made to shrines, temples, and historic cities and towns really enriched my understanding of Japanese history and culture, especially on the connection and difference between Shintoism and Zen Buddhism. Also, the home stay and generally my interactions with all the Japanese people I talked to really made a real impression on me. I realized that despite the different cultures we live in, Japanese people and American people have many of the same likes, dislikes, personalities, hobbies, and so on. Many of social gaps can be closed simply through the learning of each others' languages, which

2014 JET Memorial Invitation Program has attempted to and successfully fostered. The meticulous planning and scheduling that must have gone into making such a wonderful program for us was undoubtedly very successful and fruitful.

This trip to Japan has only made me one hundred percent confident and sure of myself that I will continue my Japanese studies into college and hopefully graduate school. I will be applying to the JET program and hopefully I get in. To be given the opportunity to partake in such a program would be another once in a lifetime endeavor. The conversational skills I picked up in Japan have really enhanced my understanding of the language; so many things just "click" inside my brain now. Before going to Japan, I remembered things in somewhat of a formulaic manner, objectively studying phrases and words. However, now I understand much of the grammatical significance and actual connotations and denotations they hold simply by hearing them all the time. Surely it will benefit me this coming school year, as I will be taking my school's AP Japanese Language class and taking the AP Japanese Language test. A huge part of the test is comprehension and listening skill competency, which I got so much practice doing while in Japan. Hopefully it is enough to get me a 4 or a 5 on the exam, which is widely regarded as one of the hardest, if not the hardest, AP foreign language exams offered by the College Board.

I am truly grateful for the thirty one lifetime friends I met upon the trip. Although we were only together for nineteen days, I feel as if I have known them for a lifetime. We grew so close simply because we spent every waking (and sleeping) moment together and were able to share our life experiences with each other. Another connection between us all was our love of the Japanese language and the culture associated with it. Although I personally did not watch much anime, read much manga, or listen to much J-pop as everyone else before this trip, they have definitely rubbed off on me a bit and I have gotten into it. I am at the stage right before it can be labelled an obsession. I am so close with some of them that even after returning to America, we decided to meet up and spend time together because we cannot bear not all being together anymore. It is very bittersweet, but the wonderful thing about technology is that it allows us to stay connected with each other despite there being massive terrestrial distances between us, which I am extremely thankful for. However, I feel like I speak for everyone on the trip when I say that talking to the Japanese students at the various Elementary and High schools, as well as our respective host families, when I say we all learned the true meaning of the Japanese phrase "Ichi go ichi e", which roughly translates to something meaning "One meeting at one point in time". This saying, in essence, stresses the fact that we should treasure the once in a lifetime experiences we get and to value them for what they are. Do not be sad once they are over because the memories will always be there. If the experiences had lasted forever, they would lose their value and not be as special as they are due to their ephemeral nature. Although I am definitely sad that I am not in Japan anymore and that I cannot see my new friends on a daily basis, I am thankful for the short time we got to spend together. Knowing we only had short of three weeks together really caused me to make the most of every little precious moment, and to never waste any time worrying or focusing on negative emotions.

could put aside all my troubles and worries in America and leave them at home. And for that I am eternally indebted to the Japan Foundation. Thank you so much for experience of a lifetime. I will never forget it.

If I could, I would have so much to say to Taylor Anderson and Montgomery Dickinson. I would tell them that although they are no longer with us, their influence still resonates with us all even to this day. Their legacy is greater than they could have ever imagined. It was such a tragic loss to lose two such great people so early on in their lives, but through this tragedy so many beautiful relationships and experiences and foundations have been formed. We have all learned to treasure life and to enjoy every moment thanks to them, and I wish they were here in person to see the change they had on the world that they left too early.

NIPPON THROUGH MY EYES PHOTO SUBMISSION



“HUNTY TACHI - Me and some of my close friends on the beach, which was coincidentally the free day we got because of the typhoon.”

I chose this picture mainly because of the sentimental value it holds for me. This was one of the most fun during leisure time I had on the trip and it was the day me and many of the other participants really started to grow close. I remember everything about this beach

adventure so vividly and I will never forget the friends I made. I am still in contact with them today.

Breeze #98



Breeze #97



Breeze #96

Breeze #95

Breeze #94



Breeze #93



Breeze #92



Breeze #91



Breeze #90



Breeze #89



Breeze #88



Breeze #87



2015 Kakehashi Project

Japanese Language Education Update 14

2014 J-LEAP Report: Hiromi Nagai

2014 J-LEAP Report: Shunji Iwasaki

2014 JET-MIP Report: Thomas O'Donnell

2014 JET-MIP Report: Michelle Peterson

2014 JET-MIP Report: Gwentyth Nicoloro

2014 JET-MIP Report: Claire Nord

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5700 Wilshire blvd, Suite 100
Los Angeles, CA 90036
P. 323.761.7510

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