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



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My phone alarm rings at 7:30am. Groggily, I get up and open the window curtains, revealing the sun rise just behind the ferris wheel in Rinku-town. The Marble Beach glitters, and I watch the small people go for their morning walk on the bumpy shoreline. As I opened my window, a waft of fresh sea air fills the room.

Quickly, I get dressed and grab my card from the secret card slip next to the door. I take the elevator down 10 flights, greeting fellow mippers on the way. I pick out my breakfast and rush to the large table of mippers. Where will we go today? What adventures will we have? What we were about to experience for the rest of the day was always beautifully unpredictable. What kind of pain we were about to endure 19 days later would be beyond anything we would ever be able to imagine.

If someone were to ask me what time of my life I would relive over and over again, there would be no doubt that I would say my time in Japan through the JET Memorial Invitation Program. In a mere 19 days, I have never made so many strong bonds and friendships with fellow youth; nor have I learned so much about the human condition. Despite the language barriers, I was still able to break into laughter with other Japanese students, and have a wonderful time. JET-MIP's goal to build stronger bonds between America and Japan have been more than fulfilled. The program has made my pull towards Japan stronger than ever before. It is a powerful bond that I know will carry through for the rest of my life.

Coming into this program, I was very sure I wanted to become a neurological researcher in the future. Now, I question the path I had previously chosen to follow. I gained a newfound love for language and interacting with people. My experience from JET-MIP has made me look at people in a whole new light. In the past, I was under the impression that people from different societies and cultures were significantly different within themselves. I was slightly apprehensive to approach the Japanese students, fearing that we would have nothing in common, and nothing to talk about. But I was quickly proven wrong. Despite the language barrier, the American students and the Japanese students laughed together, with all differences dissipated. For the first time I felt truly connected with Japan, and a seed of hope for a united world was planted in my heart. People are more similar than we are led to believe. I am not sure what kind of future I will have or what career path I will follow, but I am positive that the things I have learned through JET-MIP are things I will integrate in every one of my actions.

I had the privilege of speaking as a representative of the JET-MIP participants in the farewell party on our last day in Kansai. After my speech was over, one of the host mothers came up to me and thanked me for speaking to her and her family. She told me that I had a poetic voice and my words were very beautiful, and encouraged me to continue studying Japanese. With encouragement such as this, and my longing to connect with this beautiful country even more, I intend to continue studying Japanese. In my opinion, language is a tool of communication that ties one to a country stronger than anything else. Even with my amateur Japanese, I was able to reach out to hearts I never knew I could touch. In college, I plan to continue my studies in Japanese and also familiarize myself with other languages.

Japan has become my second home; it was no wonder that I was not the only one who had an extremely severe case of homesickness when returning to New York. After a couple days of moping around my house in denial, I was able to meet my friends and share my stories of Japan. I expressed how valuable and life-changing my time was there in the best words I could've conjured at the time. My friends were very impressed and wanted to hear more and more stories about Japan. But there are some things that cannot be explained with words and have to be understood by first hand experience. My stories motivated my friends to one day visit Japan, perhaps even with me.

Although I did not personally know Taylor Anderson or Monty Dickson, I had learned through their loved ones what beautiful people they were, and I am thankful to be fulfilling their legacy of strengthening the bridge between Japan and the United States. It was a tragic loss, yet even from the unfortunate turn of events, they have both planted the seeds of passion in the many hearts of both Japanese and American people. Not only did I have a life-changing experience, but I learned to core value of life, as well as seizing the opportunity to follow the things I love most. The experiences I have been through and the memories I have made from the JET Memorial Invitation Program are invaluable, and I will treasure these moments for the rest of my life. Taylor and Monty, you have made such an inspiring impact in your lifetimes, and I could not begin to imagine what kind of heart it took to touch the lives of so many people the way you two did. Thank you for further deepening the 2014 JET-MIP members' love for Japan, and creating a legacy that many people will forever hold dear to our hearts.

NIPPON THROUGH MY EYES PHOTO SUBMISSION



“Curious Soccer Players”

All 32 of the JET-MIPPERS are sitting on the steps of semboku high school for a group photo. As they are trying to keep their composure, the high school soccer team comes up behind the photographers and makes the students all laugh.

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Breeze #97



Breeze #96



Breeze #95



Breeze #94



Breeze #93



Breeze #92



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Japanese Language Education Update 16

2014 JET-MIP Report: Valerie Santos

2014 JET-MIP Report: Kyle Smith

2014 JET-MIP Report: Jacqueline Tran

2014 JET-MIP Report: Britta Smith

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