



## MARCH, 2015: BREEZE ISSUE #89

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



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The 2014 JET Memorial Invitational Program was an unforgettable, once in a lifetime experience for me and my fellow participants. It was riddled with memorable moments and impressive individuals which left lasting impacts on me. The experience of visiting a new country that I had been studying for the past three years, and have been culturally exposed to for about 11 years is something indescribable. The trip showed me the truth about Japan and it's people, and reinforced my love for their culture and my passion for their language.

The accommodations provided by the Japan Foundation were astounding, but the Japan people interested in us who were willing to help us and talk to us were the most memorable to me. The area around the Institute is riddled with good memories of both my newfound friends and Japanese people. Even the seemingly insignificant situations, ordering food, buying things, asking for directions, were met with amazing kindness. It was refreshing and surprising to see the amount of people interested in our program and studies in Japanese. I remember buying a random CD from a record store, and was surprised to have fallen into a conversation with the woman at the register. She asked if we were students, how long we were staying, and if we liked Japan so far. "How do you like Japan" proved to be a commonly asked question for the rest of the trip. Even the most distant of strangers were looking out for some foreigners like us. They saw us putting the effort in to learn the language and customs, and they helped fac our growth. The Japanese people proved to be even kinder than I expected them to be.

This experience has helped shape my knowledge of what I intend to do in my future. I still have no clue what I want to do as far as a career goes, but this trip gave me a point to aim for. Between the information given to us regarding it and my amazing experience in Japan, I'm dead set on participating in the JET program after college. I'm very grateful to have learned about the opportunity to go and either translate or teach in Japan for a number of years, as I was beginning to wonder how, even though I love Japanese, I would find a use for it in life. Even if I can't find a practical use for my years studying Japanese after JET, it will have been worth it to have gained the wonderful experiences in Japan I have had, and intend to create in the future.

Upon my return, I was, and still am, itching to share my experiences in Japan. There are the trivial things that are commonly known, which I don't even bother to tell people, then there are more entertaining and meaningful facts and experiences I have shared. People laugh when I tell them about the places like Akihabara and Nihon Bashi, which are saturated with what America is the norm in Japan like maid cafes and billboards full of cartoon women. People are amazed by my descriptions of the narrow roads and the skill by which people drive them, but there are some experiences that can't be described. When I speak of the connections I made with people or the silent interactions between me and every random person in Japan, it starts to go over their heads. This is the reason I believe Japanese needs to have a larger foothold in America. More schools need to teach it and more programs like JET Memorial Invitation Program should help students to realize their existing dreams or find new passions.

To Taylor Anderson and Montgomery Dickson, I have so much to thank you for. You died doing what you loved, following your dream, and I believe that is nothing to be sad about, and is a way to go that everyone dreams of. Your deaths gave me and many others, with similar dreams to you, the opportunity to embark on an unforgettable journey and create new friends and passions. I hold enormous amounts of respect and admiration for you two, and I want to thank you the world over for doing what you did and I bet if we ever met each other we would be friends. Thank you.

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

"Mon Man"

A strange wordless interaction I had with this man, hard to explain without being there, but it's something about mutual interest in the well being of America and Japan.



Breeze #98



Breeze #97



Breeze #96



Breeze #95



Breeze #94



Breeze #93



Breeze #92



Breeze #91



Breeze #90



Breeze #89



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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