

APRIL, 2015: BREEZE ISSUE #90

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



ANGELA ZHU

*Westview High School
Portland, OR*

I thought I hadn't gotten into the program. After failing the interview I was sure I didn't get in. For some reason I convinced myself that I was getting a phone call instead of an email notifying whether I got in or not. I remember my friend Jina, a past MIPper, telling me to calm down during Japanese class because I was freaking out so much. When I finally

checked my email I thought it was a rejection, but after reading it I was extremely ecstatic to be accepted into the JET Memorial Invitation Program.

The fact that I was actually going to Japan didn't really hit me until I met everyone in LA. I was extremely nervous and excited after making a few friends over an online chat session we had, but all those nerves went away after becoming friends with everyone.

I could barely sleep on the flight to Japan, but I was wide awake when we arrived in Kansai. I didn't experience any jet lag and with our schedule, rest wasn't an option anyway. I remember being awestruck while staring outside our bus window on the ride to the institute. We all pointed out how cars drove on the left side of the street and how the outlet mall had familiar brands. When we arrived at the Kansai Institute I was amazed at how welcoming and hospitable everyone we met was. I quickly adjusted to our new base and explored with my new friends in our free time. The days flew by and a typhoon did as well. Unfortunately we never got to go to Rikuzentakata because of the typhoon, but the time was well spent.

The trip to the Tohoku region, although a little off schedule, wasn't what I expected it to be like. The people we met were extremely kind and friendly and showered us with warm welcomes as we visited schools and met Taylor's friends. The Watanoha Elementary students, although shy, quickly warmed up to us as we played "Split Splat" with them. We had a great lunch and dinner with the Koubunkan High School students as well. Even though the people we met were happy and cheerful, there were a few things that felt a little off about the surroundings. There was a general emptiness around the coast. Houses that were swept away still haven't been rebuilt. It really signaled how much reconstruction still needs to be done for the people who still don't have homes. I forgot that everyone we met had to experience the horrible earthquake and tsunami because they were all so happy and cheerful around us. This just shows how strong they all are. Japan and its people are strong and their will to rebuild and move forward is even stronger.

I'm extremely grateful and glad that my first visit to Japan was through the JET Memorial Invitation Program. We got to experience Japanese culture and language first hand while meeting incredible people and seeing amazing sights along the way. Getting to see people's daily lives and living alongside them was the most important part of the trip to me. Connecting with people, sharing their stories, and understanding their experiences made the trip worthwhile. It's something you have to go to Japan to experience. I have also made 31 incredible friends I would have never expected to bond with so quickly, a second family in Osaka, and countless other friends I can always contact over Facebook and LINE.

On the car ride home from the Portland International Airport I realized why I felt so comfortable in Japan. Being home felt so out of place, yet I adjusted to the Kansai institute and my homestay without any trouble at all. The people, the surroundings, the food, and all my friends made Japan feel more comfortable than my actual home in the states. With this in mind I am more determined to continue my studies in Japanese in order to go back some day. After learning more about the JET program I will definitely apply once I graduate from college. Before then I'll be taking any other opportunity I have to go back to Japan, my second home.

To Ms. Taylor Anderson, thank you for sharing your dream with us. Your teaching affected so many great people we had the honor to meet and become friends with. The stories from your friends in the JET program, Mr. Endo, your students, and the Kiwi Club touched us all. I hope to one day be a quarter of the person you were.

To Mr. Montgomery Dickson, I'm sorry we never got to visit Rikuzentakata, but it was a great honor to learn about you and your dream through your beloved family. We loved your educational video and we all tried to pose like you while taking pictures. I hope to master Japanese and become a JET like you in the future.

And lastly many thanks to the Japan Foundation for making Taylor, Monty and all 32 of our dreams possible.

NIPPON THROUGH MY EYES PHOTO SUBMISSION



“Two Nations Together”

This pole was in a park on top of Mt. Hiyori in Ishinomaki. I chose this picture because the saying on the pole "May Peace Prevail on Earth", with Japanese and English, really represented the friendship between the two nations and our purpose during our trip.

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Japanese Language Education Update 17

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2014 JET-MIP Report: Jayson Wood

2014 JET-MIP Report: Joshua Warnick

2014 JET-MIP Report: Konou Xiong

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

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