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



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MY EXPERIENCE WITH JET-MIP 2015

I have barely been more than a few hours away from my hometown in Kentucky, so when I discovered that I had been accepted to go thousands of miles away to Japan, I was ecstatic, to put it simply. I spend weeks getting everything ready: applying for and receiving

my passport, buying all my supplies, and picking out the perfect omiyage for my host family. The plane ride over to L.A went smoothly, with a single stop in Dallas, and I luckily made most of my friends the very first night! We spent the first night in the freezing cold pool telling secrets. After orientation, we headed out for Japan! The trip to Japan went well, despite the turbulence and my row-mate and future friend having a seizure. Once we landed in Japan, things began to take off very quickly. The first few days, I was very homesick and nervous, because most of what we were doing involved sitting in a room with a man speaking very fast Japanese. As a second year, I struggle with comprehension. However, once we actual started going places, meeting people, doing things, and sightseeing, I finally felt like I was in a new home! We were able to experience many of the cultural aspects, like tea ceremonies, kendo, wearing a yukata, and visiting temples in Kyoto. Visiting Kyoto was so wonderful, especially since we visited on a holiday! We were able to see people dressed up in yukatas and enjoying themselves on their holiday. The cultural side was incredible on its own, but we were also able to do things like normal members of society, like going shopping, eating delicious and memorable food, and visiting an onsen! Meeting and spending time with my host family was an incredible experience, and I hope to keep in touch for many years to come. Coming back America was heartbreaking and I was initially pretty depressed to be here, but now I am motivated to do everything in my power to go back as soon as possible.

Some of the events weren't so fun, and were more of an experience of learning and listening. An example of this was seeing the disaster area in Tohoku. Our group visited several sites across Tohoku. Some of the sites were still in ruins, while others were slowly but surely recovering. We saw sites dedicated to those who passed during the earthquake and tsunami, including Taylor's Bunko and the Rainbow Bridge, both built by Endo-san. Hearing all about Endo-san's experience of the tsunami, and how he lost all of his family, made it so that I couldn't help but sympathize with his pain, although I'm sure I'll never experience anything like it. There was also the Ippon Matsu, the last standing tree out of a forest of 70,000, stretching over two miles. It was almost a spiritually moving experience to see that beacon of hope and to realize what it meant for people. Learning about Taylor Anderson and Montgomery Dixon was extremely difficult, because you could hear the pain behind the relatives voices. At so many of the gatherings of people talking about their experience with the earthquake and tsunami, there was a lot of pain, and it seemed very sensitive and delicate. I tend to be a very sympathetic person so I also felt very touched emotionally. Everyone was so thankful for us to be in Japan learning about what we could, as well as interacting with Japanese students.

Spending those few days in Japan has helped me set in stone what I want to do with my life. I want to major in Japanese in college, possibly spending part of my college years as a transfer student in Japan, and afterwards, join the JET program to teach English in Japan. After the JET program, I want to continue either working in Japan or at least in the field of Japanese. I hope I'll be able to carry on the legacy that both Taylor and Montgomery were a part of, and I hope I'll be able to be a part of the bridge between Japan and America, and to build more and more friendships each time I visit. I will honestly do my best to fulfill that task.

I've had an interest in Japan since I was very young, but getting to see it in person and experiencing the culture was truly life changing, and I'm so thankful for being able to participate. It has helped me set my future in stone and give myself a better sense of purpose, and I have to give all of my thanks to both Montgomery Dixon and Taylor Anderson for that. I also have to give thanks to the Japan Foundation, as I would never have been able to get to Japan, let alone experience all of the wonderful things that happened, without their help. Thank you so much.

NIPPON THROUGH MY EYES PHOTO SUBMISSION

“Rinku at Night”

I chose this photo because I spent a large amount of my free time by this beach, and I believe this photo truly captures how it feels to be here at night. It's so peaceful, but you can still see the glow of the city.



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Breeze #97



Breeze #96



Breeze #95



Y5 J-LEAP

2015 JET-MIP Essay: Madison Ball

2015 JET-MIP Essay: Raphael Barnes

2015 JET-MIP Essay: Mary Burke

2015 JET-MIP Essay: Megan Chandler

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