

## OCTOBER, 2015: BREEZE ISSUE #96

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



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#### MY EXPERIENCE WITH JET-MIP

The experience I had in Japan while participating in the JET Memorial Invitation Program was undoubtedly the best of my life. Never before have I personally felt so utterly free and simultaneously completely connected with the people and world around me. I feel that my experience in Japan has not only changed my life, but also left an impact on the lives of those I met during my stay, whether they were American or Japanese. I was moved by the stories of Tayler Anderson and Monty Dickson as well as the stories I heard while in Japan of people who survived the tsunami to take every opportunity to live my life fully each day, and starting in Japan, I attempted to begin doing just that.

My personal experience in Japan was extremely positive; although I was thousands of miles from my house in Pennsylvania, I felt utterly at home. The Japanese people were very polite to me, and I was shocked at how easily I could connect to others and make friends using only Japanese. I truthfully had no large difficulties while in Japan, and I immediately felt that the country was very beautiful and its people very kindhearted. Throughout the duration of my stay in Japan, it was proven to me again and again that it is a country which shows great hospitality and a people who help one another in any way possible. I hope to come back to Japan in the near future, because I felt very comfortable and welcomed there. I would also like to return to the progress of the people recovering from the tsunami, because the perseverance in the face of adversity that I witnessed in Japan was nothing short of inspirational.

Although I have always been very passionate about my Japanese studies, my trip to Japan ignited a flame in my heart, kindling desire to learn and motivation to work such as I have never felt before. I have truly never been more inspired in my entire life than I was in Japan. Every conversation I had in Japanese both added to my confidence by proving to me what I was capable of and also encouraged me to keep learning by highlighting the areas in which my Japanese was still weak. I feel that I have learned a good deal about the simple concept of learning itself while on the JET Memorial Invitation Program, for I learned so much in Japan in ways that I would never have previously imagined. I now feel much more comfortable conversing in Japanese and possess greater direction in which to take my studies. Overall, I feel that my language studies are more focused than they were previously, and I also feel more certain about my future in Japanese, for this trip has solidified my intention to use the Japanese language in my future career. I truly love the language and culture of Japan, and I fully intend to continue my studies and hopefully use Japanese for the rest of my life.

The richest experiences of my time in Japan lay in the time I spent with other people and the relationships I made. Both with Japanese people and the other participants in the program, I shared many enjoyable and emotional moments which left me with unforgettable memories. At the High School Summit in Rikuzentakata, I met with Japanese students in the Tohoku region whose lives had been affected by the 3/11 earthquake and tsunami. Along with other Americans, we visited Rikuzentakata High School and discussed ways to improve the conditions in the town for people who had difficulties living there, such as those who were disabled or foreign to the country. I also had the lovely experience of meeting with two older women in the surrounding area and discussing the difficulties of their daily lives with them. At the High School Summit, we were able to discuss these difficulties and speak on behalf of those older women and many other elderly people like them with similar problems in the town. I hope that our presentation made a difference in their lives. It left a huge impact on me to speak with these people and others in the Tohoku region who had been affected by the disaster, and I hope that our visit left an impact on them as well by creating friendships across country borders and discussing improvement of the situation. I also made lasting relationships with my host family during my homestay. My host sisters and parents were extremely kind to me, and they patiently shared the typical Japanese lifestyle with me. I discussed with them what life was like for me in America, and we still keep in touch, sharing our everyday experiences in our separate countries via social media. Their hospitality opened up my world by allowing me to fully experience Japan and also blessed me with friends across the world whom I will keep in touch with for the rest of my life. I also made many friends within the program who live all across my own country. While experiencing Japan side-by-side, I found some of the greatest people I have ever known and some of the dearest people to me today. Now that I am back in my home country, I still keep in contact with them, and we are all working towards our eventual goals of returning to Japan and furthering our Japanese studies. I know I have made an impact on these people as they have made an impact on me. Both the people of Japan and my fellow participants have become important people in my life, and I now feel bonded to others across my own country and across the world. It seems to me that many of these people who I met feel this sense that they have bonded with me, and I hope this will help to bring Japan and America closer in comradery, making it possible for people in the future to do the same.

Before this program, I always desired to visit Japan due to my interest in the culture and language. However, my trip to Japan and the stories of Tayler Anderson and Monty Dickson have left me with far deeper impressions in regards to returning to Japan and continuing through the rest of my life as a person studying Japanese. If I could speak to Tayler and Monty, I would thank them, because their stories inspired me and my own experience in Japan illustrated to me their philosophies on life. In Japan, I stopped planning and overthinking and worrying; I just took every opportunity that came my way and truly lived. I have never lived so freely or fully in my life as I did in Japan, and I would like to tell Monty and Tayler that their free-spirited state of mind allowed me to think that such raw experience and carefree happiness was possible. Without this program and without knowing their stories, I would never have let go enough to learn that there was so much more to life than preparing and organizing, that just going out and doing something, ready or not, could be as fulfilling as I found it to be. I want to tell Tayler and Monty that they should be proud of how they followed their dreams, and I would like to thank them for helping me decide to follow mine. Overall, I would like to thank them for teaching me to really live. They will continue to live freely in my heart and the hearts of a great many people forever.

In Japan I learned a new way to live and made friendships that changed my perspective. My family tells me that I changed in Japan, and I believe that they are correct, because each day that I wake up, the world looks different to me now. I now hold the opinion that each day is given to us to be filled with people dear to us and experiences that enrich our lives. I now hold connections to a country on the other side of the world and wish to go back there, because nothing will ever be able to sever those bonds. I am now ready to go out and live the rest of my life, following my heart and my dreams, together with others dear to me, just as Tayler and Monty did before me.

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

“Kiyomizu-dera”

I chose it because it was taken at Kiyomizu-dera in Kyoto, which was one of the most awe-inspiring places I have ever visited, and the people in the photo were my friends who experienced it with me.



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