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



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The JET Memorial Invitation Program was a life-changing, once-in-a-lifetime experience. Just as the U.S. is a melting pot of world cultures, Hawaii is a melting pot of Asian and Pacific people. I've grown up with Japanese culture around me since the day I was born, simply because it's embedded into the local culture of Hawaii. However, determining things of Japanese origin may be difficult, and is often blurred by how we determine things of Chinese or Korean origin. Visiting Japan, or as some people like to call it here in Hawaii, the "motherland," was an eye-opener. I was able to learn more about Japanese culture, and then compare real Japanese culture with Hawaii's altered version. It was sort of fun always thinking about how things were in Japan and then thinking about how it might be similar or very different to how things were back home. Some places, especially places within the Tohoku region, reminded me of Hawaii and

it made me feel at home. Although some days felt unbearably hot, I enjoyed all of the time I spent in Japan. I made so many new friends both within the program and with the many Japanese students we met throughout the trip.

The efforts that the Tohoku region has taken thus far to rebuild and recover from the 3.11 disaster are amazing. It was amazing to see everyone there was trying their best for the sake of their hometowns and with a smile on their faces on top of that. I was moved by every

anecdote I heard throughout the Tohoku tour about the disaster and the measures taken since that day to recover. Each person there had such hope for the future; it brought a smile to my face to see everyone working collectively towards a better future.

After coming home from the program, I felt that my Japanese had improved a lot. Even though there are many native Japanese speakers in Hawaii, I never really took the time to try and talk to them for the sole purpose of practicing Japanese; they always knew how to speak English and usually preferred just speaking in English. During this program, however, there were countless times where I had no choice but to speak in Japanese. I think practicing my Japanese and trying to keep a conversation with Japanese people was one of the most fun aspects about the trip. Getting first-hand speaking experience, I felt, helped my Japanese speaking skills to improve a lot, even if it was for just a short amount of time. It was fun, and even became something like that of a game at times when I totally couldn't say what I wanted to and had to resort to hand motions and what not.

In Hawaii, taking Japanese as a world language class is extremely common, and therefore everyone pretty much knows a little Japanese to some extent. Whether it's a greeting or just saying thank you, Japanese is not completely foreign to us. "Us" soon turned into "me" when I landed in LA and was all by myself with 31 other students from all over the nation. It was interesting, and very new, to be around people that didn't grow up surrounded by Japanese culture. What was normal to me may have been very abnormal for everyone else, and it was through that that I broadened my horizons and even learned about other states' cultures.

Before participating in this program, I had an idea of what I wanted to study in college. But now, after everything I've experienced, I know for sure that Japanese is something I want to continue studying in the future. While in Japan I noticed that if language barriers didn't exist between countries, then it would be very easy for everyone to get along. Even with cultural differences, I found that the Japanese people I met were very similar to anyone you would meet in America. If I can become better at writing and speaking Japanese, then making and maintaining relationships with Japanese people would be much easier. Even with the other participants, we all had very distinct differences from one another, but Japanese is something that we all had in common and it's part of what brought us together. Because of this program, I feel more compelled to practice Japanese because I've realized that I'm very privileged to be in this situation where, if I want, I can just go to school or the mall and have a conversation with a native Japanese person.

It was an amazing feeling to act as bridge between two countries. Not only was I able to learn about Japan, but I was able to teach Japanese people more about America. It was very fun to answer questions that Japanese people had about America. It was even more interesting to see some of their reactions to my answers; I'm glad that I was able to clear up some of the stereotypes that they had about the U.S. Just as I cleared up some stereotypes that Japanese people had about America, I resolved many stereotypes that the other program participants had about Hawaii. For example, there is very big difference between being from Hawaii & being Hawaiian. Meeting so many different types of people from so many different place

the most fun I've ever had; I was able to both learn and educate others about my own country. Making the collages before the program started and bringing them around with us was very convenient. It was fun showing other people the place I come from, and it was equally entertaining being shown the places that the other participants were from.

The time in which we did homestay was one of the highlights of the trip. Not only was I given a personal tour of some parts in Japan, I got to meet an amazing and extremely welcoming family. I'm thankful that they were so open to the idea of having me stay over at their house and spend two days with me doing whatever we wanted to do. I had a lot of fun with my host family, and they were very interested in American culture. Because of this, they wanted me to teach them a little bit of English, and for the rest of my time with them they would use the English words I taught them in the middle of their Japanese sentences.

Everything planned in the program had a purpose, whether it was learning more about Japanese culture or language, getting to know the other students in the program, or visiting and spending time with Japanese people to make new friendships. The memories I made during the JET Memorial Invitation Program are some of my best.

To Taylor Anderson and Montgomery Dickson, words cannot express how thankful I am for the efforts both of you put forth to bring together two countries. Throughout the program, it was clear that both of you made a lasting impression on the people of Japan. They truly appreciate everything that you had done for them, and everyone appreciates the amazing examples you have both made for the future generations to come. What you did in Japan transcended just teaching English to Japanese students. You both forged strong bonds between the U.S. and Japan, which is something I aspire to do in the future as well.

NIPPON THROUGH MY EYES PHOTO SUBMISSION



“We’re Always Here for You”

The amount of support that Japan has for each other seen on the blackboard was extremely moving, and is what I would like to see in the future for the relationship between the Japan and the U.S.

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JF National Survey

Japanese Language Education Update 25

2015 J-LEAP Report: Kasumi Tago

2015 J-LEAP Report: Tamaki Yoshitome

2015 JET-MIP Essay: Angela Li

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