

## JANUARY, 2016: BREEZE ISSUE #99

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



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The program surpassed my expectations. The people, the schedule, the lessons, the study, everything was more than I had bargained for. The people, just thinking about them brings a smile on my face. The supervisors, the teachers, our coordinator Thomas, everyone made you feel welcomed. For instance, I was one of the last participants to arrive in Los Angeles, but when I got there the other participants - around 12 individuals- were all huddled up in a circle, sharing games and experiences as well as their own basic information. Every time someone new came in we would all introduce ourselves just as they did with me. The atmosphere we all created seemed as if we were already friends.

Another aspect of the program that struck me was how liberal it was. Of course, it had its rules and regulations, but everyone- most of the time (I came late)- followed them. It amazed me how much trust our coordinators and supervisors gave us. I didn't expect to be able to go on bike in an unknown city, in a completely different country, right after classes, with only a few friends. Everything was well organized and the results: fruitful. We developed our songs, our groups and leaders, we knew the rules, and abided to them. Our orientations, games, and free time allowed everyone to get to know one another.

The event that left its deepest mark on me was the friendships I had made. Everyone we encountered, in every school, in every city, every time expressed their joy to have us with them, to share each other's time and experiences as well as knowledge. When the time l

come to separate our arms that were held around each other, we could not bear to let go, but we did and without regret, because we knew that we would not forget each other, and would meet again in the future. Reminiscing the memories, it amazes me how quickly we all form friendships. Mine, did not even require a full day, with only a few hours, even minutes, I knew, this is the person who will become important to me. They are the ones who make me feel like I need to return and when I do, be better than whom I was before.

This program made me realize how much time I have wasted, dragging time as I walk around in an endless circles. When I came back to the states I decided I would change. I decided I would do more. I decided to be open, and take all opportunities in life to grow. This trip was my dream, now, I have a greater one.

In Japan, I became sensitive to the Japanese language. I consider myself a beginner so I try to capture everything I hear in order to be able to apply it to what I can say later on. There were times where the American high schoolers and I were left to speak to the Japanese children with our own intellect and understanding of the language, I remember, during the High School Summit they had shown us all a slide, directed to the American students, to not allow ourselves to hold back our skill in speaking Japanese because of fear of embarrassment, being mistaken, or thinking that one could not do it. I had all those to think of when I spoke Japanese. I knew in order to become better I needed to throw all of those thoughts away, so I did. It worked. I remember the frustration I felt when I couldn't understand my host family at times; when I had to ask for a help, use a dictionary, or use contextual clues to understand what they were saying. I do not want to feel that again. When it was time to say goodbye my host mother and sister, through their tears they suggested to me "when you come back make sure to visit us." I vouched I would return and I will. When I return I want to be able to show them how much I have grown and to be able to speak to them and to any native Japanese with no boundaries. This trip has made me realize that I need to learn more, I am determined to do my best.

When I came back home, I had brought pictures and omiyage, souvenirs, from every place I had gone to. With these I demonstrated my experience to my family members. I told them everything I learned. When I was finished my mother had smiled to me and told me she was proud of me and said she was glad I made the trip, that hopefully I would continue to go on more. I believe I made my mother think the same thing I had been telling her since I came to high school, Japan is awesome. To my brothers, they had asked my most if I understood what everyone had said in Japanese. I told them I managed to understand. My brother, Ken, has been studying French for nearly five years, he told me he could not wait for his time to travel to France. My father, well, he was mostly happy to see me and the pictures I had taken, he remarked Japan looks like a beautiful place.

Later on I had met up with friends. I told them my story. Two of them are already interested in the language it seems I have inspired them. I added to their interest and had given them some level of desire to go to Japan. As I told them of the different foods and convenience store foods I tried, along with an illustrative image, their eyes were wide open and their mouth nearly watering, they love food. I even offered to take them to the places I had gone to,

seemed to like the idea. I also told them of the JET program. They were amazed at how great it sounds. In the end they told me they were happy for me, for being able to accomplish my dream at my age, they told me they wouldn't lose to me, another said she should also get started on her dream. I believe that my story mostly inspired them to make theirs, and follow their dreams, I was happy and they wanted to be too.

To Tayler Anderson and Montgomery Dickson,

I understand why you love Japan. Now that I have gone and experienced it in the flesh, my mind has opened, and what was once a dream is now an inspiration, a fire that grows within me to go back. You shared to others of the Japanese culture and given to the Japanese people our own, you expressed your love and that love has connected our countries. I hope to be able to create a bridge like you have by strengthening the bonds with the friends I made in Japan. I am determined to go back and reunite with them in the future. Near the end of our trip they had told us that the way we can help Japan is not only sending help or volunteering, but to live our dreams like you two have. I have made promises I intend to keep and fulfill them, they are what make up my dream. It is because of you two that many others like me, with the hope to one day be able to make a difference like you have and to pursue our dreams, have been able to do so. Though you are not physically here with us you continue to inspire and teach others.

Thank you.

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



“A Meaningful Idea”

This picture was for the High School Summit project. My team's location was this hospital. I choose this picture because I believed here, our ideas made a difference, and we did it together: the Japanese students- who became our friends- and American students, along with our supervisors of course!

Breeze #110



Breeze #109



Breeze #108



Breeze #107



Breeze #106



Breeze #105



Breeze #104



Breeze #103



Breeze #102



Breeze #101



Breeze #100



Breeze #99



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2015 JET-MIP Essay: Michelle Lin

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**Annual Report**

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