

Ways To Get Involved in Your JET Community



Everest of Apples
Children Education Equality

Everest of Apples is a charity run by Aomori JETS to support the Prajwal school in Nepal, which offers educational opportunities to girls, Dalits (Untouchable caste), and other disadvantaged children. Since 2002, Everest of Apples has raised enough money to buy land, build a three-storey school, and offer scholarships to over 50 students. In 2008, our focus switches to improved teacher-training, supplying educational infrastructure and assisting the school to achieve financial self-sufficiency in its day-to-day operational costs. Everest of Apples relies heavily on the ongoing passion and involvement of the Aomori JET community. Please come along to our information session in the new JET year to find out how you can support this effort or check us out at: www.everestofapples.jetsetjapan.com.



Outdoor Special Interest Group

Outdoor Special Interest Group is a JET-based national recreation group that organises and attends outdoor events around the country. Formed in 1997 OSIG is entirely volunteer-run, and traditionally holds its biggest annual event in Hokkaido and Aomori every February (the Powdertopia snow trip to Niseko and Hakoda-san).

OSIG has a very strong base in Aomori with its President (myself), Treasurer (Toby Walrod), and General Secretary (Nobuko Kimura) based here. So expect to see events around the ken most months of the year. However we are re-expanding our membership across Japan and are looking to establish an OSIG Prefectural Director in each ken who will organise events over the year that we can advertise to the entire OSIG/JET community.

OSIG membership costs a mere 800 yen for the year (good until August 2009) - which goes entirely to subsidizing OSIG events and providing food and drink.

Climb, swim, ski and jump aboard OSIG and do it outdoors!

Check us out on Facebook!- JET OSIG (Outdoor Special Interest Group)

<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=36852902208>

Alex Barker OSIG 2008/2009

Community

This group is a part of AJET and its primary focus is helping the new JETs when they arrive to Japan, as they get settled

Coordinators and acclimated. However, aside from that, they will be co-ordinating several regional events throughout the year. These events will be organized with the idea of bringing the JET community, and Japanese community together. These events will be publicized so if you are interested in participating in any of them please feel free. The more participation we have, the stronger our community will continue to grow.

Good Morning Aomori!

This quarterly newsletter is made for and by JETs in Aomori. If you have anything you would like to contribute, be it an article, a poem, a drawing, a picture etc., please send them our way. We will be more than happy to share your talents with the rest of the ken! Also, if you have any ideas or requests for information that we could add, please let us know as well and we will do our best to address it quickly! Send all submissions to good-morning.aomori@gmail.com

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Aomori JET and Community

Good Morning, Aomori!

JET PROGRAMME, AOMORI
EDITION 5

Welcome Edition
August - September 2008



Photo by Helen Masters

CONTENTS

Special Feature.....	2
Activities & Events... 3	
Japan Spotlight.....4	
ALT Talk School Life..... 5	
Featured JETS.....6,7	
JET LIFE..... 7	
Welcome Messages.....8	
CIR/ Teacher Talk....9	
Club Corner: E of A10	
Festivals/ Birthdays.....11	
Getting Involved.....12	

Welcome everyone to our home in the Blue Forest a.k.a. Aomori. As many of you have been anxiously waiting, 37 new JETs have made their way to our beautiful prefecture. I would like to be one of the first to say 'Welcome to Aomori!' Whether you have just arrived, or been here for years, I believe this will be another year of new experiences, lasting friendships, interesting stories, awe-inspiring festivals, and self-discoveries, but these are only a few of the things we have to look forward to in this coming year 2008 – 2009. As I frequently like to say, 'May the best of your past, be the worst of your future'. May this be your best year yet. I am thrilled to be able to share this amazing experience with you! Here is looking forward to Aomori JET Programme, 2008 – 2009!

*Editor's notes: I hope to maintain the same high standards this year as those in the past. I look forward to having an outstanding year with you!
Marti Deyo, Prefectural Advisor

Last Year at a Glance**Wyomia Mouwers, Hirosaki ALT**

Certainly I'm not the only one who becomes instantaneously genkified when reminiscing about the past JET year. The genki-factor, of course being, the extreme bliss of having experienced a bounty of GOOD TIMES, in the company of an awesomely fierce bunch of people in a breathtakingly beautiful prefecture.

The 2007/2008 JET year was set off with a jump start for some of us at the Nebuta Matsuri in Aomori city, and it did not lose momentum after its puissant start. The bumper packed month of August with all its newness and adjustments also included Aomori Orientation and JETs enjoying summer festivals in various towns around the prefecture. The Scavenger Hunt around Aomori ken and the welcome party at the Shichinohe cabins ensured some neighborly bonding where new JETs became well acquainted with their Aomori gaijin family.



Whether your October adventures includes a tale about a flat tire in the middle of nowhere on the way to the soccer tournament or your taste bud's reaction to sampling garlic ice-cream or garlic wine, there's no doubt it was memorable.

At the start of auburn autumn we were culturally enriched at the Japanese Culture Day, as we enjoyed painting wooden horses, ikebana, kendo, tea ceremony and other Japanese traditions under the guidance of Japanese volunteers. As the leaves started changing color and Aomori turned into a tapestry of autumn hues, many of us found ourselves taking scenic drives, absorbing the picturesque views. This spectacle of beauty brought along the first signs of winter chills, but it did not ward off the witches, monsters, and array of characters who came out to play at the E of A Halloween party in Hachinohe.



As winter set in and snowboard enthusiasts overflowed with excitement at the first signs of powder, we congregated in Hachinohe for mid-year seminar and the EofA Talent Show and Services Auction, followed by hearty warm Thanksgiving dinner parties with traditional home cooked meals across the prefecture. The holiday season saw many packing their bags for vacations in the sun or off to spend time with family, while others remained to experience Christmas cheer with local friends. For those who were brave enough to come out of hibernation and the comforts of their toasty homes during January and February, there were rewards of fun in the snow whether it was skiing, snowboarding at AJET ski-weekend or the snow festivals in Sapporo and Hirosaki.

As the snow started melting, JETS from across the prefecture showed off their crafty footwork at the E of A Futsal tournament. St Paddy's was celebrated in Misawa, by some green clad JETS, while the last standing Irishman in Aomori celebrated at the neighborhood Izakaya, with a home cooked stew. Spring and the dreamy marshmallow Cherry Blossoms inspired much intoxication and frolicking in Hirosaki Park, and overflowed into exciting Golden Week adventures for many. Amidst preparations for the leavers and the arrival of the incoming Aomori Jets, the Tsugaruben proficient amongst us, showed off their skill at the Tsugaruben Taikai in Tsuruta.



Hats off to the organizers of Trivia Weekend for adding the cherry on top to an awesome year, with a memorable event at the perfectly located Oirase Keiryu Hotel. As we bid farewell to the legends with whom we've shared the Blue Forest, we prepare for Nebuta Matsuri and the summer festivals, which provide taiko drum rolls for the dawn of another extraordinary JET year in Aomori ken.

A Summer of Festivals

Photo by Becky Koob



Hachinohe	Hachinohe Sansha Taisai Festival	End of July - Beg of August	3-4 days
Shariki	Shariki Swim Competition	First weekend in August	1 day
Aomori	Aomori Nebuta Matsuri	First week in August	6-7 days
Hirosaki	Hirosaki Neputa Matsuri	First week in August	6-7 days
Goshogawara	Goshogawara Tachi-Neputa Matsuri	First week in August	5-7 days
Kuroishi	Kuroishi Yosare Matsuri	Third weekend in August	2-3 days
Ohma	Ohma Blue Marine Festival	Third weekend in August	1 day
Higashi Dori	Higashi Dori Mura Festival	Third weekend in August	1 day
Fujisaki	Fujisaki Fireworks Festival	Third weekend in August	1 day
Onoe	Onoe Festival	Late August	1 day
Kizukuri	Kizukuri Umaichi Matsuri	Late August	1 day
Rokunohe	Rokunohe Festival	Early September	1 day
Shichinohe	Shichinohe Matsuri	First weekend in Sept.	1 day
Misawa	Misawa Air Show	First Sunday in Sept.	1 day
Towada	Towada Aki Matsuri	Second weekend in Sept.	1 day
Shimoda	Shimoda Town Festival	Last weekend in Sept.	2-3 days
Inakadate	Tanbo Rice Harvest	Last Sunday in Sept.	1 day
Nagano	Soccer Tournament	End of Sept./ Early Oct.	2 days

Happy Birthday to the Following JETS**August**

- 4 Kevin Tang
- 11 Christine Cruell
- 13 Wade Binneboese
- 30 Shane Menza
- 30 Stephen Pendleberry

**September**

- 1 Martha Gast
- 3 Rachel Johnson
- 5 Weldon Green
- 7 Karen Retter
- 9 Nancy Velasquez
- 12 Will Koch
- 22 Mike Cayas
- 24 Adam Mott
- 26 Jabari Smith
- 27 Allison Reed



Featured Club: Everest of Apples



Everest of Apples (known throughout the Aomori JET community as EoA) is a charity run by Aomori JETs focused on providing educational opportunity to disadvantaged children. Since our founding in 2002 by former Aomori ALTs Richard Paterson and Cameron Wrigley, EoA has raised over US\$45,000, which we have used to build and support the **Prajwal Shiksha Sadan School**, a private non-profit primary and middle school located in a small village near **Hetauda, Nepal**. The Prajwal School strives to offer equal education opportunities to all children, regardless of their race, caste, or socio-economic status.

In 2004, the Prajwal School purchased a plot of land with funds donated by EoA, on which a new two-storey school building was built. A third storey was added a couple years later, along with much-needed toilet facilities for students and faculty. These projects were all funded primarily by EoA. In addition to the funding of construction and operating costs at the Prajwal School, funding from Everest of Apples also helps to provide scholarships to the most disadvantaged children, helping the Prajwal School in its goal to provide equal education opportunity for all children.

While EoA's financial contributions to the Prajwal School have been vital to the school's continued ability to serve its community, there are also several non-financial ways for EoA supporters to contribute to that success. EoA has several fundraising events throughout the year. It takes tremendous time and effort to organize these events, and the more people we have helping us, the better. Also, several EoA members have traveled to Nepal in recent years to visit the school, bringing donated supplies, helping to evaluate the school's needs, being mobbed by adorable (and tireless) schoolchildren, and even teaching lessons. There are many ways for you to get involved – come along to one of our organizing committee meetings to find out how!

In fact, if you're signing up for a Go Lloyds money transfer account, there's one immediate way in which you can help (and it costs you nothing!). Go Lloyds has a "member-get-member" program, so if you nominate Karen Retter (our EoA treasurer) as the member who introduced you to Go Lloyds, she will be credited with a free transfer once you use your account. We use Go Lloyds to transfer money to Nepal and saving even a few yen means more money allocated where it's really needed – in improving educational resources for children.

www.everestofapples.jetsetjapan.com

This Year at a Glance A summary of what's to come

August – New JETs arrive, JET Nebuta, Aomori Orientation, Welcome Parties, Scavenger Hunt

September – ALTs start teaching, JLPT applications close

October – Culture Day, Koyo (autumn foliage), EoA/ AJET Halloween Party

November – ALT Mid-Year Seminar, CIR Mid-Year Seminar, Talent Show, Booking vacation for Winter!



December – JLPT in Sendai or Sapporo, Winter vacation

February – Re-contracting Decision, Returners' Conference, ALT/CIR Opinion Exchange, AJET Ski Weekend

March – Graduation Ceremonies, Drivers License tests, Farewell Parties

April – New School/ Financial Year, JET city tax obligations, JET car tax obligations, Chinese/ Korean JET arrivals, Futsal Tournament

May – Leavers start preparing, New AJET meets with IAD, Beach Volleyball

July – JET Leavers Party, Group A JETs arrive

JET Programme Summary:

The JET Programme was started in 1987 with the purpose of increasing mutual understanding between the people of Japan and the people of other nations. By teaching foreign languages at schools nationwide and assisting with international exchange activities organized by local authorities, participants engage in international exchange on a variety of levels with local residents. In this way, the Programme is expected to increase cross-cultural understanding as well as contribute to internation-



August and September Work Event Schedule

Group A JETs arrived in Japan on July 27th

They will take part in Tokyo Orientation until they arrive in Aomori on July 30th.

August 4th JET Nebuta.

Group B JETs arrive in Tokyo on August 3rd. They will arrive in Aomori on the 6th.

All new JETs will participate in the Aomori Orientation.

Starting on the 18th and ending on the 20th.

Business attire is required. Please bring your passport, hanko, foreigner's card, insurance packet and CLAIR Language Course papers.

The evenings of the 17th and 18th will include AJET Welcome Dinner Parties.

September 6th will be the AJET Welcome Party and activities!

Sign up with friends, bring along your little brother and sister, and come have a good time! For further information, please watch the listserve or contact the AJET President, Sam Arnett at AomoriAJET@gmail.com.

*September 15th – Respect for the Aged Day (Holiday)

*September 23rd – Autumnal Equinox Day (Holiday)



Helpful Tidbits

The JLPT Japanese Language Proficiency Test

Every year the Japan Foundation and the Association for International Education in Japan runs a Japanese proficiency test for foreigners. It is held in December (this year December 7th), with the closest test spots in Sapporo and Sendai. There are four levels, from basic level 4 to fluency- level 1. There are three tests, vocabulary (including kanji), listening, and reading/ grammar. All answers are multiple choice. This test is widely recognized by Japanese employers and can help you measure your own progress. This can also give you incentive to study. Generally groups from Aomori make the trek together, so if you are interested in car-pooling all you have to do is post a message on the list serve and away you go.

The application period is between August 1st – September 12th. The applications are not available online. The only local place to get them is from Kinokuniya bookstore in Hirosaki, so please call them or ask your Hirosaki friends to pick up an application for you. The application itself costs 500 yen, and the test is 5,500 yen. For more details, see

http://www.jees.or.jp/jlpt/en/jlpt_guide.html

Useful websites for studying:

www.kanjicafe.com/icemocha.htm

http://momo.jpf.go.jp/jlpt/e/test_info_e.html

(for information on the test from last year, how to apply, and practice tests)

Ganbarimasho!



Spotlight: Aomori City

Steven MacWhinnie, Namioka ALT

A Quick Guide to: Some Good Places for a



Decent Cup of Coffee in Aomori City.

Most people have probably visited Aomori city, but few have had the opportunity to walk the streets and find the plethora of remarkable coffee spots that are available in this city. Aomori city was nearly leveled by the American bombs during the war, but as a direct result the streets are easy to walk and the city keeps to a grid pattern. So here is a quick run down of where to go for a cup of joe, or perhaps something a little stronger.

If you start from the station you are already at a place where you can grab a cup of coffee. The **Lovina** shopping complex, attached to the station, offers not only a little coffee shop with good pastries and passable coffee, called **La Vie da France**, but also a good international food store, **Jupiter**, where you can buy, among other things, coffee imported from around the world. As you walk from the station downtown along **Shinmachi** street, you pass by **Auga**, another shopping complex that is frequented by high school students, yet still has some interesting shops worth checking out. There are a variety of stores on the third floor that are full of interesting gifts, including pot air fresheners, snacks, drangonball costumes, and yes, some sort of strange drink that seems like it might be coffee. The ground floor of Auga also has a cafe of sorts where you can get a sandwich or coffee.

As you walk down **Shinmachi** you will come to **Passage**, a small area where you can sit outside and have a drink from the coffee shop **excelsior**, or if it's the evening, stop by the only gaijin run bar in the city and see Rob for a drink. There are also a couple of decent places to grab a cheap bite to eat in the area.

If you want a bit more culture with your coffee continue down the street and drop by **Chandola** for an overly elegant light meal or drink. For a slightly cheaper coffee shop with some foreign charm try **Cleopatra**, also on **Shinmachi**. Cleopatra's furniture was imported into Japan by the owner's mother when she traveled through Europe. The coffee is passable, but the cakes and tea are really quite good and the history of the shop makes it well worth checking out. If you leave **Shinmachi** and head into **Furukawa**, the area to the right of the station, you can find **Quadrille**, a cool little shop with a restaurant out back. This place serves truly wonderful sandwiches and good drinks as well. These are the places that, in my mind, are the best. So next time you are in the city take a moment and try at least one of these places.



CIR Talk

Alessandro Caruso, Aomori City, CIR

My job at the Aomori Kencho



Even if it is probably one of the things that JETs say often, I can't help but start this brief explanation by pointing out again that time here flies. I came to Aomori almost one year ago, but it would seem like 2 weeks ago, if it wasn't for all the pictures of the snow I took last winter (check them out on facebook!). So, there are generally two reasons why time seems to pass by quickly: because you are having fun, or because you are always busy... Right? Well, I will let you guys imagine which of the two better fits my case!



But let's come to the present and what I actually do everyday in my office for about seven hours a day.

My most important duty is my being in charge of the relations with "Regione Liguria", Aomori-ken's Italian sister city. This technically means that I have to write e-mails, make phone calls, or translate from Japanese into Italian or the contrary, depending on what is needed for the various exchange programs.

Last year I was pretty lucky, because it was the fifth anniversary of the Liguria-Aomori friendship pact, I got the chance to go to Italy as the official translator for the Aomori delegation. Before the trip I helped organize all the exchange activities, calling theatres, some Judo and Aikido clubs, and the Institute of Oriental Studies of Genoa, in order to arrange two concerts of Tsugaru-shamisen, some martial arts demonstrations and a conference about Zen meditation. Moreover, I also had to call the official authorities of Regione Liguria and translate the official greetings from the Governor of Aomori.

The second big activity that keeps me busy is the legendary "Gakko Homon" (school visits), that bring me to many countryside elementary schools of the ken to introduce my country to little Japanese kids and almost every time play a fun Italian game afterwards.

The third thing that I do is taking part in local international friendship fairs or potluck parties, trying to keep in high regard the name of Italian cuisine with my culinary art. To close, I should mention that the peak of my year as a JET was my participation in the G8 energy ministerial summit in June.

Teacher Talk

Welcome to Aomori Task Nakamura, Aomori BOE

She telephoned a big appliance shop one day. She asked the shop owner whether a light of a desk were sold at that shop. The light of her daughter's desk was out. Her daughter has used that desk for about nine years.

You know there are various kinds of lights at a shop. They are different in length or thickness. The shop owner needed to know about this in order to answer her question and asked, "How long?" She answered, "Since my daughter was seven years old." She is my wife. She never lets me bore. I have two daughters and only one wife. Now I live in Goshogawara city, but my hometown is Hirosaki. Since April, I started work at the Prefectural Board of Education in Aomori.

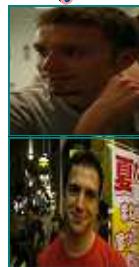
My first name, Task, seems strange in its sound to Japanese. It means to help other people, but I have never helped others. I have been helped by many people. Now I work closely with Ms. Marti Deyo so I hope she will help me. I trust her very much.

I hope all the JETs live happily in Aomori. I believe all the students study eagerly thanks to you.

*Task started work at the Prefectural BOE in April, let's give him a big welcome!



A WARM WELCOME TO AOMORI'S NEW JETS



Samuel sits comfortably in a large, leather, wingback chair. He reaches for his snifter of brandy and revels in the delectable aroma. He notices you standing at the door::: **Oh, hello. I didn't see you there. Please come in.**

Thank you so much for visiting with me this evening. Now I daresay you might have heard some of the more extravagant rumors about what my plans are, so I just thought you'd like to hear it from me. This is the face -- it's no great mystery.

I like to think of myself as an **AJET** man, and as an AJET man I hope that you'll forgive just good old-fashioned plain speaking. Now this work that we do is very much a social enterprise. I work side by side with my partner **Joe Collstro**: I think one or two of you might have met him already. Of course, this work includes several others as well, these being the **Community Coordinators**, which shall be the eyes and ears of our little enterprise where my personal faculties cannot reach.

As for the particulars, we, as a group mind you, shall be orchestrating several events in a timely manner. The first of which shall be our participation in the local festivities of the so-called **Nebuta**. Secondly, we shall divert our attentions to the **Party of Welcoming**, and the **Day of Culturation** shall be the next order of business. While these are the primary avenues of sociability, we will of course extend ourselves in whatever ways as is necessary and beneficial for all the parties involved. This could include **local gatherings, outdoor expeditions, or dramatic excursions in the nearby town of Misawa**.

These are just a few of the things we can offer you, and I assure you, that if we do find sociability here, and I think there's a very good chance that we will, this community of yours will not only survive, it will flourish.

I'd be happy to answer any questions that you might have: AomoriAJET@gmail.com.

Samuel Arnett, AJET President

Welcome and Advice from a Few Community Coordinators

"I'd like to extend a sincerely warm **WELCOME** to all of the new **ALTs & CIRs** entering the **Aomori JET Family**! I guarantee that this will be the experience of a lifetime, one that will certainly provide you with an immense amount of personal growth and unforgettable life experiences. Without a doubt, it will be a challenging ride but trust and believe that it will all be worthwhile as the **IMPACT** you have the potential to make is one that won't go unnoticed!"



If I had to offer a bit of advice on how to have a truly rewarding experience in Japan, I'd say TRAVEL, TRAVEL, TRAVEL...Japan and its neighboring countries have so much culture to offer and enjoy so don't feel as if you have to limit yourself to Aomori; also, keep in close contact with Family & Friends from Home as they will keep you grounded, focused on accomplishing your personal goals, and provide support that you will definitely need living & teaching in Japan!"

Jabari Smith, Fujisaki ALT, Tsugaru C.C.

Hey newbies! Welcome to Aomori. I'm sure a lot of you are feeling pretty overwhelmed and lost right now, but that's why us veterans are here to help you through. You may not see much of me because I don't get out of Shimokita much except for soccer tournaments, but if you're ever up here, my place is centrally located and always open for JETs & friends to crash (at least 20 JETs and 40 Japanese friends have crashed at my place in the past two years!). Think of JET as an extension of college. You work hard, but you have plenty of free time to play around (and this time around you actually have money to spend too!). Best of luck!

-Amy Miller Mutsu City CIR and Shimokita C.C.

Welcome to Aomori. Or welcome back. I hope you have a great year. See you at a nomihodai sometime soon!

**Karen
Aomori
City ALT
and C.C.**



School Advice

Michelle Nguyen, Hirosaki ALT



You might have heard the horror stories by now: the frigid winters, living in inaka-ville, studying Japanese for years only to encounter Tsugaru-ben. I'm here to tell you it's okay! Coming in with a negative impression won't get you far. Like many others in Aomori, I have grown to love it here and it now has a special place in my heart. So, take a deep breath and relax. Now, let me tell you a story...

I walked into my first day of work like a deer in headlights, albeit a very sweaty deer. Not used to the humid summers, I underestimated my sweat while walking to school. By the time

I reached the front entrance, I was completely drenched. My backpack clung to me like a baby koala and there were sweat lines over my shoulders. I was wearing a white button up, so my bra and tattoo were visible through all the sweat. It had taken me only 25 minutes to walk to school, but I had to fan myself off furiously for another 20 before I could walk into the teacher's office. In the dressing room, I crouched over in awkward positions to fan my own back. Plus, the act of fanning myself was making me sweat. Wiping and fanning, wiping and fanning....

To make matters worse, I had to meet Kyoto-sensei for the first time that day. I had just gotten to my seat when he came up to me and started asking me questions in Japanese. I was still damp, embarrassed, and self-conscious. I kept fanning myself off, which I didn't realize was rude behavior in front of a superior. Kyoto-sensei stared me down, almost dogging me. I was highly intimidated, and I knew then that I had not made a good first impression.

Maybe it's not my most embarrassing moment at work, but it was my first so I was horrified at the time. I kept thinking, "Do they wish another ALT had come instead of me?" "Are they disappointed?" "Do they think I'm a rude, stupid American?" It took me some time to figure out that, no, they didn't think any of those things. Most likely, your coworkers will be understanding, too. Most Japanese teachers have worked with ALTs before, so they should know about cultural differences, the fact that you just came here, and that this is a new environment for you.



By now, you probably have had tons of advice thrown at you from your hometown, Tokyo orientation, your big brother/big sister, and Aomori orientation. It's overwhelming (it was for me, at least). That said, here is another word of advice, a kind of non-advice. Just relax and have fun! Of course, we should all try our best to follow etiquette, but most people are considerate and will let things pass. Don't be so self-conscious that you don't reach out to your staff and students. You were specially chosen as a JET for one main reason: your personality. So let it shine through! Have fun, interact with people (at work, JETs, and non-JETs) and really make the most out of this experience as it only happens once.

Last but not least, don't sweat (no pun intended) the details. If you have a million questions running through your head, (Where's the closest supermarket? How do I use my washing machine? Why is everyone staring at me at work?) you're an adult—you'll figure it out eventually. If not, there are plenty of JETs willing to help. I hope you have an amazing year here! **Yokoso!**



Featuring our Fifth Year JETS!!!



Name: Marti Deyo

Job Description: Aomori Board of Education ALT PA

Hobbies: Traveling! Volunteering, camping, swimming, meeting new people, being outdoors, and soaking in as much culture as possible.

Favorites in/ thoughts of Aomori: The seasons in Aomori are absolutely astounding! I came from a small mountain town in Idaho where we had one month of green in May, then hot dry summers before a couple days of snowfall.

Idaho is also beautiful, but I do love the powder in winter in Aomori, the cherry blossoms in Spring, the Taiko drums, the festival food and beach camping in summer, as well as the hills that blaze with color in the fall. I would have not picked anywhere else to stay the last five years. It has been amazing!

Goals for the new JET year: My goal is to make the most out of all my experiences, do the best possible job I can at work and as a PA (if you have any suggestions to improve the JET community, I would love to hear them!), and enjoy my final year in Aomori. I guess I should also start planning for my next step— maybe Peace Boat for 3 months, www.peaceboat.org, Peace Corp in South America, or Graduate school in Europe? Life is so full of choices and adventures!

Words of Wisdom: Try not to turn down an offer or an opportunity, it could turn out to be a great experience!

"Never underestimate what a simple gesture can do. It is the little things that you do that make a big difference in other people's lives." Catherine Pulsifer "We can't help everyone, but everyone can help someone."



Name: Luke Trepal Elliot

Job Description: ALT for Kazamaura Village in Shimokita. I cover one junior high school and three elementary schools. In the summer I am drafted into active service in the board of education's war on monkeys. We use air guns to drive the monkeys out of gardens and residential neighborhoods. It is much more interesting than teaching classes.

Hobbies: Reading, tree climbing, Old Testament studies, and shooting monkeys

Favorites in/ thoughts of Aomori: I don't know, I grew up here. I like it. I hope to move back here after graduate school. I have to say, though, that I've gained a new appreciation for the warm climate on the Tsugaru side. It was a mistake for humans to inhabit the north side of Shimokita. It is June, and we still have to wear jackets outside when the fog rolls in. We should give the whole area back to the monkeys instead of shooting them with air gun replicas of M16s.

Goals for the New JET Year: My goal for the New JET Year is to shoot lots of monkeys and to successfully prepare for my family's big move to Toronto next summer.

Words of Wisdom: If one of your "Other duties accepted as necessary by the Supervisor or the school principal" (see Section II, Article 3, #7 of your JET contract) happens to be shooting monkeys, don't tell everyone about it. It seems to offend some people. On the other hand, if you are given a direct order to shoot a monkey, don't refuse. You are bound by your contract to carry out such an order (provided your Supervisor or the school principal accepts the order as necessary). Incidentally, is "Supervisor" capitalized in your contract form, too?



Name: Toby Walrod

Job description:

ALT, Speech Contest Coach, Local Foreign Icon
Hobbies: Sports. Movies. Prochibitz.

Favorites in/ thoughts of Aomori: Aomori (or at least Kawauchi-machi) is hell in winter, paradise in summer.

Goals for the New JET Year: Figure out what's next.

Words of Wisdom:

The advice I gave in my 4th-year intro is still sound: When you go to any kind of big nomikai (e.g., 50+ people), as soon as they give the green light to eat, head straight for the sushi platter, and jostle your way to the front of the crowd if you have to, because all the salmon will be gone in about 8 seconds, and only the crappy squid will be left.

Other Fifth Year Jet:s Ivan Sanchez (Kodomari) , Kevin Tang (Tsuruta)

Traveling In, Around and Outside of Japan

Useful Travel Tips:

Book tickets in advance (this will save you money and help you get the trip that you really want). August and December are the peak travel seasons, which mean tickets skyrocket. Try to vacation outside of these times and/or book early.

Hotel and Air packages offered from travel agencies can often be great bargains.

Check out the month's special deals or ask your local travel office for packages specials. A shinkansen ticket from Hachinohe to Tokyo can cost 15,150 yen one way, however there are often packages with roundtrip shinkansen tickets and a one night hotel stay for roughly 27,000 yen.

Use your Paid Leave (nenkyu) to your advantage: Ask if you can use nenkyu around public holidays. For example, taking only 7 or 8 days of nenkyu during New Years holiday will give you about 21 days of travel time!

Don't forget to get re-entry permits! You can buy multiple re-entry permits from the Aomori Immigration Office for 6000 yen. This permit will allow you to leave/ re-enter Japan as many times as you like until your Visa expires.

Check visa requirements and country specific information when traveling. One good website is http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1765.html

Good Deals:

Seishun Juhachi Train Tickets – discount JR train tickets that can be used March 1 – April 10, July 20 – Sept. 10, and Dec. 10 – Jan 20. The cost is 11,500 yen and allows 5 days of free unlimited travel to anywhere in Japan on JR lines. Ask JR offices for more information.

Frequent flier points/ miles – make sure you acquire frequent flier miles on any flight that you travel. A free trip is sooner than you think!

For visiting friends and family (you must have the temporary visitor stamp in your passport to use this), the Japan Rail Pass may be the cheapest way to go. 28,300 yen will give you 7 days of unlimited travel on all JR trains including the shinkansen. http://www.japanrail.com/JR_Japanrailpass.html

Useful websites:

No. 1 Travel: www.no1-travel.com

JTB: <http://www.jtbgmt.com/index.html/>

Japan Railways: www.japanrail.com

Train Time tables: www.hyperdia.com

