

Rocky Mountain JETAA Newsletter

A Quarterly Publication of the Rocky Mountain JET Alumni Association

Winter Edition

December 2005

It's That Time of Year Again... The JET Application Process Has Begun!

Matthew Johnson
JET Coordinator



December can bring mixed emotions to many. While it is a time of holiday joy and celebrating accomplishments during the year, the pressure of fitting everything into your schedule with cards, parties, left-over work, and so much more can also bring a lot of stress. December was also a busy month, and a very stressful time, in pre-modern Japan. All debts had to be cleared by the end of the year. Lucky people were running around trying to collect from others, while those with debts scrambled to obtain the cash necessary to cover their obligations, or were planning a quick route out of town to avoid them.

There is a group, though, that I am sure is breathing a collective sigh of relief at this time. That would be those who applied for the 2006 JET Program. Applications had been due November 29, and I am sure those who have gone through the application process in the past remember the relief of finally getting everything off.

This year's process was a little different since, for the first time, applications were filled out on-line. That is not to say that everything has finally advanced into the internet age; even though prospective participants filled out the form

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Winter Enkai in New Mexico

Kristina Schauer
Kyoto-fu, 2000-2001

The New Mexico Chapter of RMJETAA had our second annual winter enkai on December 9th, 2005. We met at the new sushi restaurant in Nob Hill, Crazy Fish, and had a fantastic time reminiscing about all things Japanese. We are excited to add two new members to our small alumni group: Zazza Green, a fresh-off-the-boat returnee from Toyama-shi (2003-2005); and Mitzi Uehara Carter, who spent two years on Sado Island (1997-1999). Also in attendance were Eric Treat and Kristina Schauer (Kyoto-fu, 2000-2001), and Patrick Martin (Oita-ken, 1997-1999). The winter enkai has been a wonderful way to reconnect with Japan and the JET Program, we sincerely appreciate the support of RMJETAA for hosting us! ■



The New Mexican JET Alumni enjoy their annual reunion and some sushi at Crazy Fish.

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The RMJETAA sponsored JET Alum, friends and family in Denver at Mori's Sushi Restaurant for dinner and karaoke!

UP COMING EVENTS

RMJETAA PLANNING MEETING

COFFEE ON THE LOWELL
4995 LOWELL BLVD. / DENVER, CO
JANUARY 8, 2006
2:00



Don't be shy, get involved! Please join us for free coffee and good company while ensuring the ongoing success of the RMJETAA!

RMJETAA ANNUAL SHINNENKAI

INTERNATIONAL HOUSE @ DU
2200 S. JOSEPHINE ST. / DENVER, CO 80208
SUNDAY JANUARY 29, 2006
5 - 8 PM



Celebrate the New Year, Japanese style and join us for an evening full of friends, family and fun. Sushi, Drinks, Taiko, Ikebana, Go and a Raffle giveaway are some of the details planned for the evening. All JETAA members, family and friends are welcome to attend the annual New Year's party for free.

RMJETAA PLANNING MEETING AND SUSHI

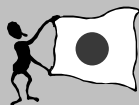
SUSHI TORA
2014 10TH ST / BOULDER, CO 80302
SATURDAY FEBRUARY 11, 2006
1:00



Please join us for our planning meeting as well as a sushi lunch in Boulder. Come and chat with other JET Alumni about your experiences in Japan and how you would like those experiences to contribute to your life in the US. Please RSVP to rmjetaa@hotmail.com by February 8th. All JET Alumni, friends and family are welcome. The RMJETAA will buy lunch for all JET Alumni.

JET PROGRAM INTERVIEWS

SALT LAKE CITY, UT
DENVER, CO
END OF FEBRUARY, 2006



We wish all of the JET applicants the best of luck!

JAPAN BOWL

STURM ON UNIVERSITY OF DENVER CAMPUS
DENVER, CO
FEBRUARY 26, 2006



Preparation for JASC's premier educational event is gearing up and volunteers are needed! Please contact the JASC office at (303) 592-5768 or jascolorado@att.net if you are able and willing to help up in the days leading up the event and/or on event day!

Insider: RMJETAA Monthly Meetings

Desiree Thorp

President



Returning to the US from Japan, I had a lot on my mind; I needed to find a job, see friends and family again, consider going back to school, and think about what I should do in order to accomplish these things. It took awhile to find an RMJETAA event, and it took several more months before I finally attended a monthly planning meeting. The thought of going to a planning meeting, where there would be a bunch of strangers and where I had no idea of what would happen, was rather intimidating; but I went realizing that getting involved in a volunteer, community organization would be beneficial to me in the future. The meeting wasn't bad at all. It is a small group of JET alumni committed to the RMJETAA and greater Denver community.

I am writing this article to encourage any skeptics that it is worthwhile to become involved in RMJETAA. First, it looks very good on a resume; participation in a volunteer organization. Second, you can gain event planning skills. Third, you can get together and reminisce about Japan with like-minded individuals. Lastly, the more people that get involved, the more networking of jobs, friends and events that can be done.

A typical meeting: We meet at Coffee on the Lowell at 2pm-ish. We all have some kind of a drink, courtesy of CLAIR. We catch up, and once basically everyone is there, usually 4-5 people, we discuss our agenda. The agenda usually consists of planning and allocating duties for the next event, discussing upcoming or potential events as well, daydreaming about all of the possibilities that could take place with JETAA, discussing our budget and relations with other similar community organizations.

All JET alumni are welcome to come and see what goes on at the heart of RMJETAA! I hope to see a few new faces at our next monthly meeting. If you have any questions just contact me, the president, at rmjetaa@hotmail.com. ■



RMJETAA Members, Cathy and Shinya Ishida, Kim and Matt Lemme (with daughter) at Jillian's Bowling Alley for the monthly meeting and bowling event.

UP COMING EVENTS CONT...

RMJETAA PLANNING MEETING

COFFEE ON THE LOWELL
4995 LOWELL BLVD. / DENVER, CO
MARCH 12, 2006
2:00



It's not too late to get involved! Come and find out what happens behind the scenes and join us for free coffee. By attending a meeting you will be ensuring the ongoing success of the RMJETAA!

RMJETAA AND CU JAPANESE STUDENT ASSOCIATION SUSHI NIGHT

MARCH, 2006
DETAILS TO FOLLOW

ARTICLE DEADLINE FOR THE WINTER EDITION NEWSLETTER

GCAROSA@HOTMAIL.COM
MARCH 3, 2006 BY MIDNIGHT



Our next newsletter, the spring edition will be published in March, 2006 and we are looking for submissions! Submit articles and have your name entered into a drawing for a \$25 gift certificate to a Japanese restaurant of your choice. Article ideas – Japanese news, announcement/ reviews of local events, Japanese recipes, Japanese restaurant reviews, Japanese cultural information, JET stories or recollections of your stay in Japan, poems, photos or anything else you would like to submit that your fellow RMJETAA members would enjoy. ■

Happy New Year!

Gina Carosa
Vice President/ Editor

I hope that this new year of the dog brings joy and happiness to all!

For this upcoming year the RMJETAA board members have been planning some great events so keep an eye out for our Yahoo Group emails with event announcements. Also we will be improving our website and implementing a more up-to-date events page, so I encourage you to keep checking back to our website while we continue to make many upgrades and changes.

Coming up in the spring we will be having elections, and even though it's still a few months away, it's not too early to start thinking about getting involved in the RMJETAA. We will be making an announcement when the date gets closer as to what traditional positions will be open. However, we are going to add some new positions such as; events planner, historian, a fundraising position, restaurant reviewer/coordinator and any other positions that interest you which would benefit the RMJETAA.

For my last announcement, I'd like to thank everyone who submitted articles and photos for this newsletter. **Katie Bilodeau** won the \$25 gift certificate to The Sushi Den in the drawing for the fall newsletter. As always I'm still looking for newsletter articles. The next newsletter will print in March, so please submit your newsletter articles to gcarosa@hotmail.com by midnight March 3rd. Thank you again for everyone's help and participation and Happy New Year! ■

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on-line, it then had to be printed, signed, and sent in along with the accompanying material to the embassy in Washington, D.C. by the deadline. The people in the JET office at the embassy were very positive about the results of this new system, and perhaps within a few years, we'll be able to do everything on-line.

While numbers are still preliminary, it looks as though there were somewhat fewer applications as a whole this year, perhaps due to the improving economy and job scene domestically. Even so, the number of applications for Denver and Salt Lake City increased slightly, showing that there is still strong interest in the area for the JET Program.

After the applications are screened at the embassy, we will hold interviews in Salt Lake City and Denver in February. As usual, I will be looking for volunteers from among alumni to help out at the reception desk during the interviews. If you will have the time, please contact me at cgid-pr@qwest.net.

I would like to thank everyone for their support of the alumni association, and especially to the board members for their hard work over the past year. I hope that 2006 will bring even greater success and growth to the Rocky Mountain JET Alumni Association, and it is my pleasure to work with all of you. Happy Holidays. ■



Matt Lemme and Desiree Thorp participate in two of the many events sponsored by the RMJETAA



November RMJETAA Dinner and Karaoke at Mori's

Michelle Carriger

RMJETAA Member

I never knew the epic joys of singing hits of the '70's among a roomful of beer-swilling colleagues until moving to Japan, where my first experience featured the mayor of my village singing "Michelle" to me among the rest of the village VIPs (like the school board and the two village bus drivers). My second experience found me in front of the teachers from my school and every single parent of my junior high students after Sports Day, singing "Dancing Queen" as the vice-principal whipped off his T-shirt and forced every person in the room to get up and dance with me.

Needless to say, I'm a convert. So I was thrilled to join JETAA at Mori's in downtown Denver last month for a big dinner (generously subsidized by JETAA) and some karaoke action. Too big to fit into a private room (definitely my venue of choice), we monopolized the downstairs bar for a couple of hours, rifling through the books and cheering each other on.

Turns out, our treasurer Chris is a secret singing fiend. Those Japanese favorites, the Carpenters, also made an appearance, and I personally made an extremely ill-starred but epic attempt at a song from *Les Miserables* (I swear, it was so funny when I was in a small private room full of theatre majors!) Unfortunately for me, we couldn't switch over to the Japanese system, so I didn't get to trot out my favorites, "Sampo" from *My Neighbor Totoro*, or "Ue o Mui" ("Sukiyaki Song"). Something for next time.

Go hit up Mori's private boxes yourself when you're feeling a little natsukashii: Mori Japanese Restaurant, 2019 Market Street, 303-298-1864. Hours: 11:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m., 5-10 p.m. Monday-Saturday. ■



The Japanese Game of Go

Solomon Smilack

RMJETAA Member

Go appeals to me on several different levels. Part of it is how sophisticated and challenging the game is: No matter how much I progress there is still more for me to learn. Then there is the visual effect of black and white stones shining in a delicate dance across the wooden board. Finally, there is the simple fact that Go is the first game in which I can trounce my older brothers.

Go is an ancient game, but it is widely popular in Japan, China, and Korea. It's growing in popularity, but it still lives in relative obscurity in the United States. There are a handful of places to play in Colorado, from the Go Club that meets at the VFW building on Tuesday nights to the group that frequents the Mercury Cafe on Sunday afternoons. There is a club for beginners that meets at the Boulder Public Library on Sundays, which is ushering in a new crowd of Go-playing youngsters.

As a foreigner who played Go, I made many more contacts in Japan than I would have made otherwise. I met several men who owned businesses that were happy to talk to me over a game or two of Go. Although I was relatively new to the game, I was able to play evenly against these men because their skills had grown rusty - most had not played in years, because they had to focus on their careers.

To play, first draw a cross-hatched board 19 lines by 19 lines. Players take turns placing stones on the intersections, with black going first. A stone or group of stones that becomes surrounded is captured and removed as prisoners. At the end of the game, when there are no beneficial moves left, the player that has the most territory and prisoners wins. There is an excellent handicap system, so that two players of different strengths can still play an even game. The rules of Go are simple in comparison to chess, because the pieces don't move. Still, the best Go-playing computers can't come close to beating a pro, or even a strong amateur.

I'll be giving a demonstration on go at the Shinnenkai in January, and I'll have some instructional pamphlets to hand out. If you want to get a head start, get a copy of Carl Baker's "The Way to Go" through the US Go Association: <http://www.usgo.org/usa/waytogo/index.asp> ■

From left to right RMJETAA members, Karen Onizuka, Nick McGrane & Michelle Carriger enjoy a nostalgic evening of Karaoke at Mori's Sushi Restaurant.

My First Few Experiences in Denver

Mami Kawada

Denver Japanese Consulate JETAA Budget Coordinator

Hello, everyone! My name is Mami. I am from Kyoto. I came to Denver three months ago for my job working at the Consulate-General of Japan. I was teaching English and home economics at junior high schools and elementary schools in Kyoto before I came here. Of course, I was working with JETs in Kyoto. Therefore, it is great to work with the JET Program here. Also, I enjoy visiting schools and introducing Japanese culture and education to Americans.

Working at the Japanese Consulate is very different from teaching at school and I had a hard time at the beginning getting used to my work here. About three months have passed and now I am getting used to it and driving in America!

I've experienced many new things in my first month here in Denver. I like driving, but driving here was so scary the first time. I had never driven in America before, but I had to drive right after I got a car even though I didn't know the traffic laws. As I expected, it took me 15 minutes to get out of downtown, which now it takes 1 minute, and of course, I turned the wrong way down a one way street and many cars were coming at me with honking! Everybody must have been surprised at this drunk-like car, but nobody knew that the driver was sober.

Here is another first month experience...I was driving after work to explore the town. I got lost again and again and I just kept following other cars. Eventually I ended up at a supermarket. I bought some food there, and then felt like "now what?" I didn't know how I got there so I spoke to a guard at the supermarket and said, "I don't know how to get home. I came here by accident. How can I get home???" He was very surprised at me, but I was serious. I am sure that many JETs had similar experiences in Japan when first arrived.

I like Denver except for the cold. Some students send me e-mails, saying hi and asking how Denver is which cheers me up. I reply to them, "It is much colder than Kyoto!! You cannot say it's very cold over there in Kyoto!" The cold is one of the descriptions for Colorado, so I'll try to enjoy it while I am in Colorado. The Rocky Mountains are amazingly beautiful and I am so lucky I can see them everyday. I sent some pictures of the Rocky Mountains to the students and they also loved them, and now they really want to visit Denver someday. However, they have no idea how cold it is here...

I am so excited to spend time in Denver and I am looking forward to working with all of the RMJET Alumni. Please talk to me and say hi anytime! Don't hesitate to contact me at mkawada@qwest.net if you have any questions or advice for living in America.

(Mami arrived in September and will be here for two years. -Editor) ■

Annual RMJETAA Movie Night

Gina Carosa

Vice President / Editor



This year the annual Rocky Mountain JETAA movie night was held on Friday December 9th. The movie of the night was Japan's award winning anime "Spirited Away", which was shown downtown in the large screen movie theater at the Parkway Club House.

RMJETAA generously provided the sushi, drinks and beer and everyone who turned out for the event seemed to have had a great time catching up, telling stories and enjoying the event. Next year we may change our annual movie night to a different time of year which is less busy in hopes that more JETAA will be able to attend. Thanks to everyone who attended and we hope to see you again next year! ■



Mami poses with her junior high school students from Kyoto

19th Annual Colorado Japanese Speech Contest

The 19th Annual Colorado Japanese Speech Contest was held at the University of Colorado at Boulder on the 12th of November. This year's contest included 33 participants from 6 universities and colleges.

In this year's contest, College I participants presented a variety of skits. College II, II, and IV participants did speech presentations. There were a wide variety of speech topics and creative skits.

This was also the first time the RMJETAA donated \$200 to support this event and promote the study of Japanese by Colorado's youth. The RMJETAA would like to congratulate everyone who participated in this year's Japanese Speech Contest and we wish all of the participants all the best in their Japanese studies. ■



Rocky Mountain JET Alumni Association
 PMB #464
 1550 Larimer Street
 Denver, CO 80202-1610

Email: info@rmjetalumni.org
 Website: www.rmjetalumni.org
 Yahoo Group: rmjetaa@hotmail.com

Officer Contact Information

President:

Desiree Thorp rmjetaa@hotmail.com

Vice President/Newsletter Editor:

Gina Carosa gcarosa@hotmail.com

Treasurer:

Chris McMorran

Webmaster:

James Barron

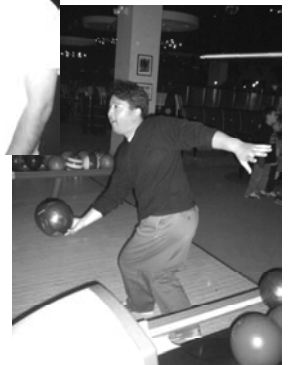
November RMJETAA Meeting at Jillian's Bowling Alley

Chris McMorran

Treasurer

The RMJETAA regular meeting for November took place at Jillian's, at the Colorado Mills Mall near Denver. Following a brief meeting, participants enjoyed Buffalo wings and bowling. Fifteen JETAA members, family, and friends talked about life in the Rocky Mountain region and shared memories of Japan.

As for the bowling itself, two teams of five squared off, and as chance would have it, they tied. The high roller for the day was Joel Weierman (ALT and CIR, Chiba Pref. 1994-97), who scored a smoking 164. Thanks to all who participated. ■



Top: Matt Lemme, Chris McMorran, Joel Weierman and Solomon Smilack pose for a group shot before the bowling begins! Middle: Shinya Ishida gets ready to bowl a strike! Bottom: Kim Lemme takes a break to smile at the camera.