

# Rocky Mountain JETAA Newsletter



September 2009

Fall Edition

## Change is in the air...



The days are slowly but surely getting a little shorter and the nights a little cooler. Soon the aspens will be in their full golden glory and Halloween is just around the corner.

Change... It's in the air, not just in the turning of the leaves, but in RMJETAA as well. As of the September 13 meeting, two board members resigned their positions, citing work and personal time constraints. Stephen Cacciatore has stepped down as president and Cami Cacciatore is handing over the newsletter duties to a new editor. An interim election will be held at the October 11 meeting to fill these two positions.

Despite these changes in RMJETAA, we are still crazy busy these days... We recently saw the latest group of new JETs off to Japan, including the annual Q&A Session (page 3) and two pre-departure happy hours (page 4). And right now we are preparing for the upcoming 2009 Career Forum, which will be held Friday, October 16th, and planning the annual Sushi Rolling event. You can check out our website for the latest details, updates, and future meetings at [www.rmjetalumni.org](http://www.rmjetalumni.org). Or, join us on Facebook... See below for details!

### RMJETAA on Facebook

RMJETAA is now on Facebook! Search for "Rocky Mountain JET Alumni Association" in Groups and click to join. We'll post all our meetings, events, photos, and announcements, so stay connected... Join RMJETAA on Facebook!

### October Meeting

Please plan to join us for our October 11 meeting at Fluid Coffee Bar at 501 E. 19th Avenue, Denver 80203 (near 19th and Broadway).

Come for the company, come for the fun, come for the free coffee, come and see what your RMJETAA is all about!

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# 2009 JETAA National Conference in Chicago

This year's JETAA National Conference was hosted by the Chicago chapter in the aptly named Windy City from August 21-23. It was a bit tenuous as to whether or not we'd have a conference this year, as no one volunteered to host the conference until quite late. Thankfully, Chicago stepped up to the plate and outdid themselves hosting this event along with support from their Consulate and CLAIR.

This year's conference was attended by delegates from every chapter. We had 18 of the 19 chapters represented, with only Alaska unable to make the trip (due to differing regulations and some chapter challenges Alaska is facing), as well as delegates from CLAIR New York and staff members from the Chicago Consulate. Consul General Hisaeda welcomed us all to the conference. One of his past jobs was working for JET in Tokyo, so being a hosting member of this conference was obviously very meaningful to him. The Chicago JETAA as a group were also wonderful hosts and did an excellent job of putting together a shining conference as well as fitting in some real Chicago local flavor whenever possible.

The quality of delegates at this year's conference was outstanding. We were able to get a lot of things done as a cohesive JETAA USA group. There was a lot of great energy floating about the weekend and we worked as a group to really identify some issues that we all would like to dive into deeper for next year's conference: becoming nonprofit organization, and technology challenges in maintaining active websites and keeping accurate databases that ensure our membership stays strong. To that end, a few committees were formed to start working on those issues.

Several topics were discussed, but here are a few to give you an idea:

- Moving towards making JETAA USA and it's chapters an NPO
- IT challenges that chapters face
- The changes to Grant in Aid (which allows the chapters to financially function)
- The ever-elusive CMS program

Also, a Regional Conference in Portland was established for this coming winter. Rocky Mountain will be sending a delegate to that conference as well, which will

focus on internet/computer skills and applications that can make our chapter more effective as a whole. We had a great planning team to get this Regional Conference up off the ground and are excited to move JETAA chapters forward in this context.

New York volunteered to host next year's conference (that should inspire lots of folks to run for a RMJETAA board member position—a free trip to NYC!!) and it sounds like they already have ideas of how to do a bang-up job and continue to move our organization as a whole forward in the direction we want to go. Our Country Representatives (Shree Kurlekar, Ryan Hart and Randall Crow) will be attending the JETAA International Conference in Jamaica (rough!) to represent the U.S. this coming October. We were able to accomplish what we needed to at the National level to send those three off to Jamaica with a clear view as to what direction JETAA USA is headed and what we can bring to the table to assist other countries.

All in all, it was an extremely successful conference that could not have been done without the support of CLAIR, the Chicago Consulate, our JETAA USA Country Representatives, and the incredible team of folks that make up the core of the Chicago Chapter of JETAA.

—*Jessyca Wilcox, RMJETAA Treasurer and attending delegate from RMJETAA*



A work session at the National Conference.

# Recent Events

## 2009 JET Q&A Session

The smells of summer filled the air. It was festival season in Japan, and I was filled with wonder and questions as I pulled my *jinbe* from my closet. I wondered what it would be like and what new experiences I would walk away with. As I tied the *jinbe* top across my body, slipped on my *geta*, and walked out the door, I knew that I would be a different person the next time I came through this door. As I got closer to the venue and parked the car, my excitement continued to build. Clickety-clock, clickety-clock, the sound of my *geta* on the pavement reminded me of the ancient Japanese samurai and how they must have felt each time they were required to present themselves for the Emperor. As I arrived at the venue, I was greeted by Yumi. She welcomed me to the Japanese Consulate in Denver and thanked me for participating in the 2009 JET Q&A session.

Jessyca Wilcox had asked all the panelists to bring some things from their time in Japan as a show and tell. I brought several items from my time in Okinawa including my *sanshin*, karate black belt, *inkan*, and scrapbook. After the long walk from the parking lot, my items were weighing me down like a small Japanese child, so my first stop inside the room was at the show and tell table to unload. Several of the other panelists were already there reminiscing about their time in Japan as they carefully laid their memorabilia out on the table. I must confess that I shared one or two anecdotes of my own. All of the panelists seemed just as excited as I was to be there and share their knowledge with the soon-to-depart 2009 JETs. This set me at ease as I thought it a bit strange to be so excited to sit around and talk about my time in Japan. I mean, it wasn't like I was one of the JETs who would be going over to Japan this go-round.

The Q&A session began with a series of panel discussions, which were largely composed of us former JETs spouting information and stories about when we were on the Programme and how great an experience it was. There were times when it was challenging to allow the future JETs to ask questions. I felt like a grandparent telling all my great stories and trying to pass on knowledge when I wasn't actually sure if anyone out in the audience was listening or interested. There were definitely times when it seemed that our JET grandchildren were politely feigning interest to show their respect to us elderly, former JETs.

Each panelist was “in charge” of a different topic related to life in Japan, but each presentation quickly turned into a smorgasbord for the other panelists. None of us could wait to chime in and share our little packets of knowledge as if we were children sitting beside the present-laden Christmas tree on Christmas morning waiting for our parents to wake up.

After the panel discussions, there were several breakout sessions on more gender and geographic specific topics. Either the panel discussions were so full of the knowledge that the breakout sessions were unnecessary or many of the future JETs were still in shock from being selected to go to Japan. I prefer to believe it was the former. Either way, the sessions allowed a little more personal time to be shared between the future and former JETs.

To end the day, everyone was provided a traditional Japanese obento. Talk about reminiscing. I must have spent at least three minutes in deep thought remembering lunch time at school or school events. They had the standard piece of pink fish with silver skin, mysterious fried tempura bits, sliced and diced veggies, and, of course, Japanese sticky white rice.

As many of the future JETs left, they thanked the former JETs who had made a significant impact on them during that Saturday morning. It gave each of us a warm, fuzzy feeling deep down inside. As I packed my Japan memories back into my daypack and walked down the corridor, clickety-clock, clickety-clock, I was overwhelmed by a feeling of contentment that I had been able to experience Japan in a new and interesting way.

—Nick Fabrizio (*Miyakojima-shi, Okinawa-ken 2002-2007*)



## Boulder Pre-departure Happy Hour

The JETAA happy hour in Boulder on June 19 was quite the success. With about 20 people in attendance and appetizers and drinks on the house, everyone seemed to enjoy their time and got to know one another.

The happy hour was set up for the new JETs to meet JET alumni and there was a good mix between the two. The new JETs were able to talk about their excitement and concerns regarding their departure in July and ask questions of their *senpai* (seniors). I stayed busy chatting with a former co-worker JET in Yamagata who I remembered meeting at a similar happy hour event before our departure five years ago. It is great that JETAA allows these connections to continue.

I also spoke with a new JET leaving for Yamagata and my former co-worker and I were able to fill him in on all the little details of what to expect although, we know that every situation is different! As long as he has no expectations, a good attitude, and makes the most of every experience, then Japan will treat him just fine. *Kanpai* to that!

—Jessica Oppenheim (Yamagata-ken 2003–2006)



## Denver Pre-departure Happy Hour

Having never been to a JET pre-departure happy hour, I didn't quite know what to expect. The fact it was held at a place called Brother's Bar sure piqued my interest, though. It's located just behind the R.E.I. flagship store in Denver, and from the outside, it didn't look like much—just a brick building with no sign to let you know you're in the right place. The inside was another story. The entire place has a dark-stained wood décor, and with the lighting low, it had that olde towne feel.

All of the soon-to-be JETs had already arrived when we made our way around to the back of the restaurant. Appetizers had been served up, and everyone was deep in conversations about their upcoming shift in occupation. Living in Japan was a major topic as well. Concerns like, "Is a car worth it?" and "How bad can the driver's test really be?" were among the top worries. We also hit on good things to do in the classroom, how to work with the wildly varying teaching styles of the JETs, and generally how to have an awesome time in the JET lifestyle.

As someone brought up in the Q&A Session, 'nomu'nication is king. And we all demonstrated how good it can be at the happy hour. The drinks flowed, as did the conversation. The former JETs reminisced as they shared their stories of a former life, and the new JETs listened with a voracious hunger for the juicy bits of knowledge to help them prepare. All in all, the experience was rewarding for both sides. Here's to a successful transition. *Kampai!*

—John McMillen (Maruoka, Fukui Prefecture 2006–2008)

# Upcoming Events

## 2009 CAREER FORUM



The Consulate-General of Japan and the Rocky Mountain JETAA invite you to the 2009 Career Forum.

We are pleased to once again be able to offer this exceptional opportunity. Some of the topics and speakers include

- The senior director of community relations from Jobing.com offering guidance on the Denver job market internet job search, personal branding, and interview skills.
- A human resources consultant from an area HR consulting firm providing tips on job search from the employer's point of view.
- A former JET and now career counselor at Metro State College of Denver to discuss career selection and other career-related issues.

A social hour will follow the Career Forum at Sushi Han in Writer's Square. We invite you to join us to mix, mingle, and network with other attendees. It's a great way to make contacts, meet new people, and have some fun!



Rocky Mountain JETAA  
1550 Larimer St PMB #464  
Denver, CO 80202-1610

- What** 2009 CAREER FORUM
- Where** Consulate General of Japan  
Main Hall  
1225 17th Street, Suite 3000  
Denver, CO 80202
- When** Friday, October 16, 2009  
4:00 PM to 6:00 PM
- Who** Recently returned JETs, JET alumni, future and recent graduates. **THIS IS AN OPEN EVENT!**

**Space is limited to 50 attendees.  
Please RSVP by October 12 to  
Jessyca Wilcox at [jet.program.denver@gmail.com](mailto:jet.program.denver@gmail.com)**

Have you been receiving your newsletters and announcements?  
Please update your e-mail address with us so you won't miss  
any issues or events! Send your current e-mail address to  
[secretary@rmjetalumni.org](mailto:secretary@rmjetalumni.org)

[www.rmjetalumni.org](http://www.rmjetalumni.org)



### 2009 Sushi Rolling Event

We are also busy planning the annual Sushi Rolling event to be held later this fall.

Unfortunately, DU has recently closed the use of the I-House to outside organizations, so we are searching for a new venue for not only the Sushi Rolling, but the Shinnenkai and other RMJETAA events as well.

If you know of any suitable locations that would be willing to let us hold events, please contact our PR/Events coordinator, Jessica Oppenheim, at [events@rmjetalumni.org](mailto:events@rmjetalumni.org).

## Come One, Come All: JET Recruiting Time!

It's the fall, the leaves are turning, that brisk feeling to the morning light is here, and it's time for students to go back to school and attend.... Career Fairs! It is recruiting season for JET and we've got a full schedule this year. Both Ayako Ide (Consulate Attache) and I (Jessyca Wilcox, JET Program Coordinator) will be hitting the road to visit as many schools as possible to spread the word about JET.

If you'd like to come and help us out for a day, part of a day, or whatever may fit into your schedule, we'd love to have your company! This is a great time to come and share your enthusiasm about the JET Program and how it changed your life with other potential JETs. It's always good to have alumni help out with these events, as it makes the possibility for interested candidates that much more real and personal when they have a chance to speak with someone who has "been there and done that". Our schedule is below. If you'd like to help out or join us for any of it, please send an email to Jessyca Wilcox at: [JET.Program.Denver@gmail.com](mailto:JET.Program.Denver@gmail.com).

School	Date	Time	Location	Event
<b>University of CO at Boulder Metropolitan State College &amp; University of CO at Denver</b>	October 6 <i>(Tuesday)</i>	1 pm – 6 pm	Coors Event Center <i>(Boulder, CO)</i>	Career Fair
	October 8 <i>(Thursday)</i>	10 am – 2:30 pm	Tivoli Student Union Building <i>(Denver, CO)</i>	Info Booth
<b>University of Northern CO</b>	October 13 <i>(Tuesday)</i>	10 am – 3 pm	University Center Ballrooms <i>(Greeley, CO)</i>	Career Fair
<b>Colorado College</b>	October 27 <i>(Thursday)</i>	11 am – 2 pm	Worner Student Center <i>(Colorado Springs, CO)</i>	Info Booth
<b>University of Denver</b>	October 28 <i>(Wednesday)</i>	3pm – 6pm	Driscoll Ballroom North <i>(Denver, CO)</i>	Career Fair
<b>University of Utah</b>	October 1 <i>(Thursday)</i>	9 am – 2 pm	Union Building <i>(Salt Lake City, UT)</i>	Info Booth
<b>St. John's College</b>	October 21 <i>(Wednesday)</i>	11 am – 1:30 pm	Peterson Student Center <i>(Santa Fe, NM)</i>	Info Booth
<b>University of New Mexico</b>	October 22 <i>(Thursday)</i>	10 am – 2 pm	Student Union Building <i>(Albuquerque, NM)</i>	Info Booth

# RMJETAA Stories ~

*Now that the RMJETAA newsletter is electronic and we are no longer limited to the printed format, we would like to extend an invitation to you to share some of your personal stories and experiences with us. Any articles submitted by non-board members will be entered into a quarterly drawing for a \$25 gift certificate. To submit a story or article of interest, please send an e-mail to [newsletter@rmjetalumni.org](mailto:newsletter@rmjetalumni.org).*

## **Elizabeth Harball St. John's College SF 2009 Kagoshima Prefecture, Kirishima-shi**

After four years of immersion in the world of St. John's College, I decided that the best thing to do after graduation was travel. I signed up for the JET Program because of my interest in Japan, in addition to my need for a completely new kind of challenge. And what an amazing challenge it has been!

I have only been in Japan for about a month now, so I can't really put forth a complete idea of the JET Program or Japan, but my initial thoughts are as follows: Japan is so far the perfect compliment to four years spent with my nose in a book! I have had the opportunity to see so many amazing things and meet so many amazing people already in my short time here. It feels amazing to experience the world after philosophizing about it for four years.

Needless to say, my study of Ancient Greek and French hasn't helped me too much in Kirishima, but I do feel up to the challenge of learning Japanese. Very few people speak English in this area, and I have had to struggle along with the little Japanese I learned just before I left the America. Out of necessity and desperation, however, I have picked up a little bit every day, and most of the time (MOST of the time...) I can communicate when I really need to.

My brief experience in Japan has been busy and extraordinarily fun. The area of Kirishima is beautiful, especially after four years in the desert! I am very close to Kinko Bay, and the Amori river flows just past my apartment. Sakurajima, the local volcano, periodically dusts the area with ash, but mostly remains a large and harmless mass on the horizon. The area is very green and mountainous, much resembling a Japanese scroll. I have already been hiking in the mountains, and swimming in the river and the ocean— an essential activity in the incredible summer heat! On other days, I have attempted a Japanese tea ceremony and fallen in love

with okonomiyaki—a sort of indescribably delicious fried food. I have also attended a local summer festival, where there were fireworks, taiko drummers, and many of my future students. I begin teaching English in September, which I am very much looking forward to. I will teach at 4 junior high schools, 12 elementary schools, and 2 kindergartens—quite a lineup, but all my coworkers are lovely and very helpful, so I think it will be doable under such conditions.

Of course, there are many more things to see and do. I have yet to try the hot springs near my house (I'll wait until fall—it is too hot now!) and I am sure there are other foods awaiting my taste test in local restaurants. And I haven't even begun to teach yet, which is, after all, my job here! Every day is a new adventure, and I am so glad to be starting a new life here in Kirishima.



Me at a caldera lake on the Ebino plateau, near Kirishima.



Kagoshima temple

# RMJETAA 2009 – 2010 Calendar of Meetings and Events

Although RMJETAA meetings are scheduled for the second Sunday of each month at 10:00 a.m., dates, times, and agendas are subject to change. Please visit our website at [www.rmjetalumni.org](http://www.rmjetalumni.org) or **Facebook** for updates and announcements.

Quarter 1	April, May, June
Quarter 2	July, August, September
Quarter 3	October, November, December
Quarter 4	January, February, March

## Meetings

**October**            **October 11 @  
Fluid Coffee**

**Novemeber**        **November 8 (TBD)**

**December**         **December 13 (TBD)**

## Events

**Career Forum**    **October 16**

**Sushi Rolling**    **TBD**

**Shinnenkai**       **TBD**

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