

Rocky Mountain JETAA Newsletter



June 2007

Summer Edition

Summer Greetings!



Flowers are blooming, the grass is green, and we can be almost (fingers crossed!) certain the last of winter and snow is behind us. At least that's what I'm hoping, since I've been told it can snow here in June. This is my first spring in Denver, having relocated here last summer from Flagstaff (via Cincinnati via Chicago), and I'm enjoying the promise of warmer days to come.

As I write this, the trees are in full bloom, delicate blossoms fluttering in the wind, blanketing the green grass in white petals, much like the snow that we hope is a distant memory. It's reassuring, these tangible, beautiful signs of the seasons changing.

Change... Even with a set schedule, like the seasons, change is always welcome, with the hint of new things to come. This newsletter is no exception. With the recent RMJETAA elections, the reins have been passed from Sam to me and this is my first issue as the new editor. The look may be different, but I hope you find it as informational and enjoyable as ever.

I'm in publishing and have been an editor most of my career. Taking on the newsletter seemed like a natural step for me and I hope my experience and willingness to learn from other RMJETAA members will serve the newsletter—and you all—well. Please let me know how I can help you and RMJETAA stay connected and informed. Drop me an e-mail at newsletter@rmjetalumni.org. I welcome your feedback, comments, questions, or concerns. And, of course, news items and articles (you can win a \$25 gift certificate)!

Until the next newsletter, I hope you can take some time to stop and smell the blossoms and enjoy the season to come!

Cami Cacciatore
Newsletter Editor

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Monthly Meeting at Coffee on the Lowell

4995 Lowell Blvd, Denver, CO 80221

(on the southwest corner of 50th Avenue and Lowell)

April meeting (from left around to right):

Nikki Dawson, Cathy Ishida, Shingo Ishida, Sam Goodman, Gina Carosa, Tomoko Goodman, Hans Thompson, Stephen Cacciatore, Cami Cacciatore, and Jessica Openheim

Meet the RMJETAA Board

Last issue we told you about the RMJETAA election for 2007–2008. This issue we would like to introduce the board and members at large. We're a fun group of people (if you don't believe me, check out the Sing into Spring article!) so join us at Coffee on the Lowell for our next meeting and find out for yourself... Friendly people, fun events... And did I mention the free coffee??

Our next meetings will be July 15, August 19, and September 16, so mark your calendars!

President

For those of you who don't know me, let me reintroduce myself as the president of the Rocky Mountain Jet Alumni Association. My name is **Gina Carosa**, and this is my second term serving RMJETAA as president. My JET experience took place in Okinawa from 2002 to 2004. I considered myself very fortunate to have been placed near the ocean considering I grew up in the mountains of Colorado. Currently I work for Monigle Associates as an Account Executive. I am looking forward to this next year and am really excited to be working with such a great group of individuals who represent the 2007–2008 RMJETAA board. I think this will be the best year yet as we have many events and Japanese cultural activities planned for the upcoming year. Please feel free to contact me at president@rmjetalumni.org.

Vice-President / Treasurer

I'm **Jessica Oppenheim** (Yamagata 2003–2006) and I have served as RMJETAA vice-president since last fall. I hope to continue serving JET alumni with exciting events and renewed membership. I recently finished up a five month internship at the Consulate-General of Japan at Denver, and I feel I have gained networking connections that will help with future events. I am also a member of the Japanese Student Association (JSA) at the University of Denver and have connections with JSA groups around the Rocky Mountain region. It is my hope that I can help plan activities in which people will want to participate so we can continue to gather together and share our experiences of living and working in Japan. I am open to any suggestions for JETAA events and can be reached at vicepresident@rmjetalumni.org.

Secretary

My name is **James Barron** and I am the new secretary for the RMJETAA, having served as webmaster last year. From 2002 to 2004, I was an ALT in Denver's sister city, Takayama, a small city in the middle of the mountainous region of northern Gifu. It's a beautiful area with lots of pretty skiing and hiking areas as well as fantastic onsen. I taught at a junior high school four days a week and one of three elementary schools once a week. It was a wonderful experience. I loved working with the kids, especially the elementary kids. They wore me out, but it was great fun. It was difficult coming back, and the culture shock was enormous. But I readjusted long ago and am now a computer programmer for a GPS company in Boulder. My eventual plans are to go to graduate school for physics and then teach and do research.

Newsletter Editor

My name is **Cami Cacciatore** and, unlike most of my fellow RMJETAA officers, I am not a JET. I come to the position through my husband Stephen (see below), an alum of the Chicago program (from UW-Madison). After his return, he eventually ended up in Chicago, where we met. In the last three years we've moved from Chicago to Cincinnati to Flagstaff to Denver. Stephen was invited to his first RMJETAA meeting in the fall and we were hooked. We became members-at-large shortly thereafter and have thoroughly enjoyed helping with events, being involved, and doing what we can for the growth and success of RMJETAA.

Webmaster

Hi, I'm **Sam Goodman**, former secretary and newsletter editor, and now newly elected web coordinator and returnees guide. I was a JET in Kyoto from 2001 to 2004.

Members at Large

Hans Thompson

I am the JET coordinator for this region (Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming). I began working for the Japanese Consulate shortly after returning from my own stint on the JET program, where I was an ALT in Tottori prefecture from 2003 to 2005, and became involved with RMJETAA around the same time. I have been interested in Japan for some time, and majored in East Asian Studies with a concentration in Japanese at the University of Arizona. I'm very happy to continue to be a part of the JET program, both through my job and as a member at large. If you have any questions about the JET program, feel free to contact me at the Consulate by phone or by email. I can be reached at (303) 534-1151 or cgjd-pr@qwest.net.

Catherine Vail Higbee Ishida

I was a JET in Fukuoka prefecture (1995–1998). The first year I was an ALT for the Amagi-shi Board of Education and the second two years I was a CIR for the Town of Okagaki. With stints in Japan from high school to graduate school, with JET in between, I have lived in Japan for a total of seven years. A native of Maryland, my position of Japan Project Coordinator at the Program for Teaching East Asia at the University of Colorado at Boulder brought me to Colorado in 2005.

Shingo Ishida

I am from Vancouver, Canada but I participated as a JET from Toronto, where I went to university. I was a CIR/Prefectural Advisor for two years at the Fukuoka Kencho/Prefectural Office (1997–1999) and a JET Programme Coordinator at the Council for Local Authorities and International Relations (CLAIR) for three years (1999–2002). I married Cathy and immigrated to the U.S. upon my return from Japan and worked for three years as a Field Producer for the Washington, DC Bureau of TV Asahi America before moving to Colorado in 2005, when Cathy got her gig at the University of Colorado. Like my wife, I am Colorado State property—I work as the Division Communications Coordinator at the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment.

Stephen Cacciatore

My route to becoming a JET was a little different than most. After high school I joined the Army and went to Monterey, California to attend the Defense Language Institute in the first Japanese class for enlisted personnel offered in nearly two decades. After my service I went to the University of Wisconsin–Madison and double majored in Japanese language and literature and International Relations. I joined the JET program and went to the Niigata prefecture from July 1990 to August 1993. After two years as an AET in Kashiwazaki city, I moved to Niigata-shi and become a CIR and worked on the sister-state relationship between Niigata and Illinois and the economic development of international trade between Niigata and the Japan Sea Rim nations. After returning to the U.S., I worked as a commodities trader for Mitsui & Company, and later ran the North American operations for a Japan-based manufacturing company. I now serve as the Executive Director of the Japan America Society of Colorado.

Recent Events

Sing into Spring

Sushi, saki, singing... A night to remember!

We had a great turnout for this year's Sing into Spring event held Friday, May 18 at Mori Sushi in downtown Denver. About fifteen fun-loving JETAs showed up—and brought friends—to help us celebrate spring. We had a large table full of food, fun, drinks, and lots of great stories about JETA experiences in Japan.

After a couple of hours of dining (and drinking?!?) the truly fearless were separated from the fearful as we moved into the bar for the karaoke portion of the evening. Suddenly twenty or so were a mere eight or nine and only a brave six found themselves center stage, mic in hand, for the next few hours. Jessica was among the truly brave as she was the first to take the stage singing Alanis Morissette, followed by a duet turn on "Don't Go Breaking My Heart" by Mike and Cami's friend Kristine. "Crocodile Rock" was a huge hit as Jessica, Kristine, and Cami on backup found the spotlight. Dusty took a valiant turn and Stephen did a soulful rendition of "Let's Get It On." Sam, Gina, and Mami cheered everyone on and the place was soon filled with post-Rockies revelers who offered some great comic relief with "Sweet Caroline" and one true American-Idol potential sang "Jack and Diane". By midnight the bar was full, the sound was loud, and spring had definitely been sung!

Thanks to everyone who showed up to make the night a huge success... And don't worry, what happens at Mori's stays at Mori's... Until next year! — ED



“This year's Sing Into Spring was the best one yet! Of course, it was my first karaoke with RMJETAA so I have nothing to compare it to, but it was good in that it was the first Sing Into Spring for a lot of members, so RMJETAA activities are attracting a lot of different people who have been out of touch for awhile. With about 20 people (15 being JETAA members) there were a lot of new introductions and the one thing that tied us together was our love for Japan. Although not everyone loved karaoke as much as me (and Mike who also stayed until the end), we all loved the sushi, which was provided free for JETAA members. Inviting JETs-to-be (those leaving in July) was new this year. We shared a wonderful meal at Mori's and those who stayed for karaoke were able to sing all of the English songs we had practiced in Japan. I hope next year's Sing Into Spring is just as much fun!” — **Jessica Oppenheim, Vice-President (Yamagata '03-'06)**



Left: Jessica is the first brave victim; Dusty and Kristine do a duet; Shingo presents sushi; and Sam cheers Stephen on.



Right: Mami, Gina, and Ann Marie pose for the camera; and Jessica, Cami, and Kristine sing "Lady Marmalade"



JET Alumni Meet with Japanese Prime Minister on Inaugural U.S. Visit

Friday, April 27, 2007 — Shinzo Abe's first U.S. visit as prime minister comes as a gesture of personal appreciation from President Bush for Tokyo's commitment to U.S. foreign policy. As part of the weekend's festivities, Abe pays a visit to the Japanese Ambassador's residence in Washington D.C., where he meets with JETAA representatives from around the country, including RMJETAA Chapter President Gina Carosa.

The opportunity to meet the Prime Minister was presented to me April 24th by the Denver Consulate. I had three days to book a flight, find a hotel, decide what to wear, and finagle with my supervisor for the day off. All that checked off, I was eager to get through the rest of the week.

With the 27th finally in sight, I awoke at 4:00 am in Denver ready to be transported to Washington D.C. Barely squeaking by, I made it to the hotel with an hour to spare. Dashing out of the room, I had a chance encounter with a friend and JET alumni member, Warren McAllen of the Heartland chapter. We caught a ride together to the afternoon reception, held at the official residence of Japanese Ambassador Ryozo Kato.

The residence, as one might expect, was breathtaking. The astonishing and luxurious property housed a magnificent Japanese-style garden and a traditional tea house as well as beautifully decorated reception rooms. The schedule for the day was to interact and mingle with other JET Alumni and JET supporters prior to the Prime Minister's arrival.

After an hour, we were escorted into the main reception hall and instructed to shuffle into rows. As we awaited the arrival of the guest of honor, the energy level in the room rose and buzzed with anticipation. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe arrived in grand style and was accompanied by his wife Akie Abe and Deputy Cabinet Secretary Shimomura Hakubun. He chatted with a few of the people nearest to him, and then took to the podium to share his words. I was standing in the second row on the left and in close proximity to the Prime Minister.

During his short speech, entirely in Japanese, Prime Minister Abe highlighted the importance of 20 years of the JET Program in U.S.-Japan relations. *"Government-to-government relations are not enough to further solidify the relationship between our countries, it is the people-to-people connection that is absolutely essential."*

Following his speech, I expected the Prime Minister to say his goodbyes and dash off, but to his honor, he worked his way around the room, making a point of shaking each person's hand and speaking with each for several minutes. Needless to say, I definitely got to test out my Japanese! He then graciously posed for photos with everyone, taken by official government photographers and the Japanese press.



Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and RMJETAA President Gina Carosa.

During the Primer Minister's speech, we weren't allowed to leave for security reasons, but following his departure, the room cleared and everyone left in a state of excitement and awe.

I think I walked away knowing of Prime Minister Abe already as a prominent international figure, but more so as a relevant player in the future world of foreign relations—especially as the U.S. strengthens ties in the Asian sphere. His speech was directed to a group of former teachers, but I think the bigger lesson is that there is even greater hope for bringing different cultures together, and for that, I am proud of the role we have all played as JET Alumni. This was one of those truly unique "once-in-a-lifetime" opportunities and I am honored to have been a part of it all. Thank you for the memories, and I look forward to more chances to bring our two worlds closer together.

Gina Carosa, President (Okinawa '02-'04)

Japan Association's 100th Anniversary of Japanese in Colorado

The Japanese Association's 100th anniversary event was a terrific day highlighted by various Japanese cultural displays and practices, such as the traditional tea ceremony, a moving performance by Mirai Taiko Drum Troupe, and a photo exhibition covering 100 years of Japanese culture and history in Colorado. The evening featured book signings and speeches by distinguished guests during a wonderful reception. We would like to congratulate the Japanese Association for its 100th anniversary, and thank JA for hosting a truly exceptional event!

Stephen Cacciatore (Niigata '90-'93)

Upcoming Events



JET Q&A

On Saturday, June 16th, the Consulate-General of Japan will be hosting an informal Q&A session for 2007 JET participants. The session is scheduled from 9:30 AM to 12:30 PM at the Arvada Center, 6901 Wadsworth Boulevard in Arvada. RMJETAA members will relate their experiences to new JET participants, as well as answer any questions new JETs may have.

Following the Q&A desk there will be a guided tour of the Pacific Mercantile (Asian grocery and goods store) in downtown Denver, to help familiarize JET participants with items commonly found in Japanese grocery stores.

More detailed information will be available closer to the date of the event. If you are interested in helping out with either of these events, or would like more information, please contact Hans Thompson at cgjd-pr@qwest.net or (303) 534-1151. This is a great opportunity to help out new JETs and share your experiences, so please join us on June 16th!

Japanese Holidays



July (or August) Star Festival *Tanabata*

Known as the day of the Star Festival, Tanabata is originally of Chinese origin. This is the one night on which the lovers Orihime (the weaver princess) and Hikoboshi (the cowherd), separated by the princess's father, are able to meet. They had married with the father's approval, but in their wedded contentment, were neglecting their weaving and herding; for this, the father (the Emperor of Heaven) placed them on opposite sides of the river. Japanese people celebrate by decorating the shops and streets with bamboo and colorful plastic ornaments. They write their wishes on poem-cards and tie them to the bamboo.

July 16 Marine Day *Umi no hi* (National Holiday)

This national holiday is a day of gratitude for the blessings of the oceans and for hoping for the prosperity of the maritime nation that Japan is.

August 13–15 *Obon*

This annual holiday honors one's ancestors. It is common that large and very crowded cities like Tokyo seem relatively quiet since many people travel back to their hometowns to be with family during this important holiday.

Cherry Blossom Event

For Japanese food, entertainment and fun, head down to Sakura Square on 19th and Lawrence for Denver's annual *Sakura Matsuri* which will take place this year on Saturday and Sunday, June 23 and 24. The festival includes events such as *taiko* (drumming), *bon odori* (summer dancing), and *ikebana* (flower arranging) as well as various booths to learn more about Japan. Japanese food and arts and crafts will also be available for purchase. For more information and a complete list of activities, please visit www.tsdbt.org/cherryblossom. *Denver ni aimashyo* (See you in Denver!)



Japan America Society of Colorado (JASC) Golf Tournament

The 19th Annual Consul General Colorado Charity Golf Tournament is July 16th. Corporate sponsorship positions are still available (contact JASC for rates) and individual registration is \$200 per golfer, which includes a welcome package (not to mention a great chance to network and the satisfying feeling of helping out a good cause!).

Reservations to the post-tournament awards banquet (6:30pm) are \$35. The evening includes food provided in part by Restaurant Japon, entertainment, and door prizes, including a raffle drawing for two round-trip tickets to Japan (raffle tickets are purchased separately and you must be present to win).

Even if you don't consider yourself a golfer, you still have an opportunity to support JASC's fundraising efforts by purchasing a raffle ticket for the tickets to Japan. We also welcome volunteers to help out with the event. No golfing or knowledge of golf terms involved, just the joy of good company and a beautiful summer's day spent outdoors! Contact Stephen Cacciatore at jascolorado@att.net or 303-592-5364 for information or to register or volunteer.

Announcements



RMJETAA Newsletter Going Electronic!

In an effort to streamline our processes and save some trees, RMJETAA will be switching over to an electronic version of the newsletter in the next six months. Please update your information with us and send us your preferred e-mail address so we can be sure you continue to receive our quarterly RMJETAA Newsletters. As the date of the switch approaches we will send out additional notices and reminders. Please contact us at info@rmjetalumni.org with your information or if you have any questions or concerns.



RMJETAA Book Club

On Sunday, April 15, the RMJETAA met for its kick-off meeting at the Barnes and Noble at 92nd and Sheridan in Westminster. Cathy Ishida (Fukuoka '95-'98) and Buck Lewerke (Osaka '00-'03) were in attendance. The selected book for the month was *Ash* by Holly Thompson. Set in 1985, the book tells the story of Caitlyn, a young English teacher in Kagoshima struggling with a family tragedy that took place in Kyoto when she was seven years old. While in Kagoshima, Caitlyn meets a teenager named Naomi whose father is American and mother is Japanese. Caitlyn and Naomi become unlikely friends who share and support each other in their challenges of crossing cultures and personal struggles.

As we discussed the book, we liked the author's technique of demarking conversation in Japanese via italics.

Thompson portrays cultural differences between American and Japanese culture accurately and in a non-judging way. Although the main character is an English teacher (technically a pre-JET) who does many one-shot visits, the story is about her life outside of work. We could relate to many of the experiences Caitlyn goes through in Kagoshima and on her return trip to Kyoto. Relying on our own personal experiences as ALTs, we found that we had the added bonus of being able to fill in a part of the character's life that was not discussed!

For the next book club meeting we will read *Shipwrecks* by prize-winning Japanese author Akira Yoshimura, "a thrilling tale of murder and retribution set on the wild seacoast of medieval Japan." We will meet on Sunday, June 10, 2007 at 10am at Coffee on the Lowell (4995 Lowell Blvd, Denver, CO 80221. We welcome all RMJETAA members and friends of JETs who want to join us. Contact Cathy at Catherine.Ishida@colorado.edu for more info and future dates.

Colorado House

RMJETAA webmaster and former newsletter editor Sam Goodman has started a new business, Colorado House. Though still in its infancy, Colorado House is an educational homestay program for Japanese clients. Colorado House will offer not only English lessons, tours around Colorado, outdoor fitness opportunities, and cross-cultural interaction, but also projects where clients can meet experts, visit facilities, and participate in various activities related to a given topic. This year's project is on organic food, sustainable living, and alternative energy.

For more information, visit the Colorado House website at www.coho-online.com. If you're interested in helping out, contact Sam at info@coho-online.com. He is currently in need of translators and guides for summer programs.

Internship Opportunities at the Japan America Society of Colorado (JASC)

The JASC is now accepting applications for open college internship positions that offer practical experience in the international, nonprofit environment. The JASC is located in downtown Denver in the World Trade Center offices.

Typical responsibilities include event planning, communications, and member relations. If you are interested in applying for an internship position with the JASC, please contact Stephen Cacciatore via email at jascolorado@att.net or by telephone at 303-592-5364.

Kaiwa Club

Want to practice your Japanese conversation skills over coffee or tea? Then join us for the JASC Kaiwa Club on the first and third Tuesdays and second and fourth Wednesdays of every month from 6:30 to 8:00 pm at Scooter Joe's Cafe, 726 Lincoln Street, Denver. **June's meeting dates are the 5th, 13th, 19th, and 27th.**

Everyone is welcome, especially those fluent in Japanese and Japanese nationalists to serve as volunteers and participants. For meeting formats and more information, visit www.jascolorado.org/events_kaiwa.htm. Hope to see you soon!

日本語で
話しましょう！



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