

Rocky Mountain JETAA Newsletter



June 2008

Summer Edition

Happy Summer!



Wow... It's hard to believe it's June already! It doesn't seem that long ago that we were getting in those last few weekends of skiing and planning Memorial Day cookouts and waiting for the swimming pools to open.

Spring was busy for RMJETAA... Our annual Sing into Spring was a huge success and we were busy planning the JET Q&A session. In June we held two happy hours for departing JETs, with two more planned for July.

Once we see the new JETs safely off to Japan, we'll be hard at work once again gearing up for all our great upcoming events like the Career Forum in September and the Welcome Back Sushi Rolling Party in October.

We've got a lot of exciting things going on, so come join us to celebrate our successes and plan future events. You can check out our new website for the latest details and future meetings at www.rmjetalumni.org.

Monthly Meeting Changes

As the saying goes, "Nothing ever stays the same," including the monthly RMJETAA meeting.

Starting in June, the meeting time was changed from 11:00 to 10:00 to allow everyone to get an earlier start on their day. We will still meet the second Sunday of the month, just one hour earlier.

Just for fun, July's meeting will be a cookout at the Cacciatore residence at 1:00 on July 13th. Please join us at 9824A Grove Street, Westminster, CO 80031 (303.862.8112) for some grilled food and fun, courtesy of RMJETAA.

Starting in August, the meetings will be moving from their long-standing location on Lowell Boulevard to a new coffee house with more room and a more convenient location. Stay tuned for further details.

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Recent Events

2008 Sing into Spring!

Turnout for this year's Sing Into Spring was truly amazing. Over 35 people showed up to Sushi Zanmai in Boulder on May 31 to dine on delicious sushi and regale us with their singing prowess on the karaoke stage. It was very crowded, but a lot of fun.

Many people took to the stage and did a great job. And we had a special treat with the Japanese flute duet done by David Wheeler and his student and future JET, Ryan Anglim. It was very moving. We were happy to see five new JETs among the guests. It was exciting talking to them and answering their questions. It reminded many alumni of their days as JETs and we wish them luck.

Thank you all for making this event such a hit!



RMJETAA/JET Happy Hours

To offer the soon-to-be-departing JETs a more relaxed, informal setting to meet former JETs and ask questions, Jessyca Wilcox, JET Program & PR Coordinator, arranged four happy hours, two each in Boulder and Denver.

The first two, held June 12 at the Purple Martini in Boulder and June 13 at Via Italian Eatery in Denver, both had good turnouts and provided the new JETs a chance to mix and mingle and get a feel for the new adventure they are about to embark upon.

Here are some of the comments from the soon-to-be-departing JETs:

The happy hour was very helpful to meet other JETs in a setting that allowed us to discuss things that most people wouldn't feel comfortable discussing in a large group setting. We were able to discuss various subjects and get to meet each other in an informal setting. I was able to meet other JETs in my area to connect with them before we leave the U.S. Now I have beginner Japanese study buddies and I met them at a perfect time to give us a month and a half to study.

—Cassandra Sandoval (*Kikuyo-machi, Kumamoto-ken*)

I just wanted to let you know how beneficial the happy hour gatherings have been. I found the meetings in both Denver and Boulder with fellow JET participants and alumni very helpful. I enjoyed the informal atmosphere that made it easy to ask questions and to have conversations that clarified and reassured. It was in these settings that I was able to get to know other JETs without the pressure of trying to hurry-up-and-meet-everyone, which is something I was trying to do at the Sing into Spring gathering. We were able to talk casually in groups, finding out a little more about each other, the program, and Japan.

—Denae Parker (*Takayama-shi, Gifu-ken*)

The happy hour was a great chance to get to meet the other JETs from the local area before everything gets crazy, and gives us a chance to build a base before scattering across Japan. Personally, I'm hoping to travel around Japan quite a bit, and this was a nice chance to talk to everyone about where they're going (and that I plan on crashing at their place sometime). It was interesting to see the variety of people heading over; I was surprised that there were people going who know nothing about Japan, and know absolutely no Japanese. I think for them it's good to hear questions from people with more familiarity about the program and culture, who have a more extensive knowledge of what to expect. These chances to meet will definitely help get everybody on the same page and give people a chance to formulate specific questions over the next couple weeks. I'm also glad that people were interested in exchanging language study materials and experiences from former trips.

—Van Milton (*Okayama-ken*)

I just wanted to let you know that I really enjoyed having an informal happy hour because I was able to gain a wider understanding about all of the things that had not been addressed through the information we had received (although very extensive, the information packets

did not do the actual JETs justice—especially concerning personal questions). The happy hour lasted longer than just an hour, but since the conversation was flowing so well no one even took notice! Everyone was extremely helpful and since it wasn't such a formal setting we were able to get to know one another and swap stories. I was able to see how much this program really meant to so many people and since I got to sit and talk with JET alumni, I was able to put some of my fears and worries to rest. I was also able to get a better idea of what my future holds for me and how people just like me felt before, during, and after their experiences in Japan. I was able to connect with someone in my prefecture, learn how to set things up when I get there, and hear what to anticipate from the airport to the orientation to the schools to traveling. This was extremely helpful for me as it helped me tighten my JET community and just meet some all-around cool people. It is a great addition to this already wonderful program and something I would recommend continuing in the future!

—Jessica Dawkins (*Kumamoto-ken*)

The next two happy hours are scheduled for July 10 at Code 3 in Denver and July 11 at B-side Lounge in Boulder, both starting at 5:00. No RSVP is necessary, and we hope to see you there!



Asia Day Celebrates and Educates about Asian Culture and Traditions

On Saturday March 8, the Center for Asian Studies held its seventh-annual Asia Day on the CU-Boulder campus. Asia Day is an outreach event for the Colorado community that offers a wonderful opportunity to share the expertise of CU faculty, staff, students, and community members on many facets of Asian life.

Cathy Ishida taught the movements and significance of Japanese Folk Dance. Yunn Pann presented a calligraphy performance with her authentic big brush.

Each year, the varied activities include something of interest to children, families, and adults. This year, a number of sessions also specifically targeted K-12 teachers.

The Center for Asian Studies at the University of Colorado is now designated by the U.S. Department of Education as one of only three National Resource Centers for Asian Studies nationwide. With this designation and expansion, this year's Asia Day offered an especially broad range of presentations, including Hindi, Farsi, and Indonesian language sessions; performances of Taiko drumming, Tibetan circle dance, and classical Indian music; calligraphy, Indonesian martial arts, Japanese folk dance, and Thai fruit sculpture demonstrations; and talks on the Olympics in China, Yemen, and the coffee trade; and life in Vietnam.

RMJETAA Board Members Attend Dinner at Consul-General's

In April, RMJETAA board members were invited to a special dinner at Consul General Kazuaki Kubo's private residence. A full three course feast was carefully prepared by Mr. and Mrs. Kubo's private chef and eloquently served by the residence's staff. Deputy Consul General Mr. Kashima and his wife were also in attendance.



Conversation circled around U.S.–Japan relations, the JET Program, and Mr. Kubo's love of shogi (Japanese chess), of which he later showed us a NHK match that he had won against a professional shogi player. The night ended with a game of American chess between Mr. Kubo and RMJETAA board member, Sam Goodman, who maintained control of the match throughout but lost in the end by a cleverly disguised attack from Mr. Kubo's rook.



RMJETAA would like to again extend a warm thank you to Mr. and Mrs. Kubo for their generous hospitality.

2008 Sakura Matsuri

The 36th Annual Denver Cherry Blossom Festival—or “Sakura Matsuri”—was held on Saturday and Sunday, June 28th and 29th at Sakura Square in Downtown Denver.

The cool weather brought out countless participants to check out the wares of the many Japanese and Asian vendors, witness a great variety of Japanese music and stage performances, sample food and drink at the Denver Buddhist Temple, and some of the best people watching in town.



RMJETAA/JET again shared a booth with the Japan America Society of Colorado (JASC). The booth was buzzing with people wanting to learn about both JET and JASC programs, and to purchase JASC raffle tickets for the chance to win two round trip tickets from Denver to Japan.

The weekend was lots of fun and we were lucky to meet lots of great people. Many thanks to the Denver Buddhist Temple for all their hard work!



JET Q&A Session 2008



On Saturday, June 28, the JET Q&A Session was held at the Consulate General of Japan in downtown Denver. We had about 45 people in attendance! There were JETs and JET families in the audience and a fantastic panel consisting of RMJETAA members, Deputy-Consul General Kashima, Consulate Attache Yumi Yamagata, JET Program Coordinator Jessyca Wilcox, and two staff members from the NETU travel agency who heard about the Q&A Session all the way out in San Francisco and flew in for the event. (See how popular it was??)

We had great topics ranging from gender roles in Japanese society to Japanese etiquette to JTE-ALT relationships to how to get involved at your school. The RMJETAA panel consisted of Gina Carosa, Sam Goodman, James Barron, Stephen Cacciatore, Jessica Oppenheim, and the dynamic duo of Chris and Hisako McMorran, who all did a fantastic job sharing their insights on being a successful JET in Japan. The information helped this year’s JETs be better prepared for the challenges and experiences waiting for them and answered practical and logistical questions regarding banking, driving, and luggage. The parents in attendance were also able to gain a better understanding of the adventure their children are about to embark on.

After the formal part of the Q&A Session, JETs had a chance to rifle through Jessyca Wilcox’s personal memorabilia: letters from students, photos and scrap books, postal bank books, her hanko, and other various bits and pieces of a JET’s life. Then it was obento time! Sonoda’s prepared fantastic obentos for all panelists and JETs who wished to partake in lunch. It was an authentic obento, giving the JETs a taste of what’s to come in Japan. Lunch was a great opportunity for the JETs to get to know each other a bit more and take advantage of the informal atmosphere to chat with the seasoned veterans of JET as well.

All in all, this year’s Q&A Session was a great success, made so by the panelists, the attendees, and the energy everyone brought to the event!

Upcoming Events & Announcements

July RMJETAA Meeting / Cookout

July 13, Cacciatore residence, Westminster

Dragon Boat Festival

July 26 and 27, Sloan Lake, Denver

<http://cdbf.org/>

JETAA National Conference

August 21 to 24, Seattle, Washington

RMJETAA Career Forum

September, Denver (TBA; check website)

Welcome Back / Sushi Rolling Party

October, Denver (TBA; check website)

2009 Shinnenkai

January, Denver (TBA; check website)



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.

Q4 Newsletter Entry Winner

Congratulations to Katherine Buranapiyawong, our Q4 newsletter entry winner, for her book club article. Katherine received a \$25 gift certificate to Domo.

We encourage you all to submit articles to the quarterly newsletter. Winners receive a \$25 gift certificate to the Japanese business or restaurant of their choice.

Colorado House Has a New Blog!



Tomoko Goodman of Colorado House International has created a new blog on the daily quirks and experiences of living as a "nippon-jin" in Colorado. You can check it out at <http://www.coho-online.com/wp>. The blog is updated daily.

Colorado House International provides eco tours, homestays, and retreats for Japanese clientele. For more information on current and future programs, contact Sam or Tomoko Goodman at info@coho-online.com or visit <http://www.coho-online.com/cms>.

JETAA Job Guide

The JET Programme website offers a wealth of information for prospective, new, current, and past JETs. Access the site at <http://www.jetprogramme.org/>.

One particular page of interest is the JETAA Job Guide, where JETs can browse recent jobs, search for jobs meeting specific criteria, and research companies who include JET alumni in their recruiting strategies. (Employers can post jobs and profiles for free.) You can access the Job Guide at <http://cheno.com/job/>.

JASC Kaiwa Club has a New Home

The JASC Kaiwa Club has moved to Buzz Café. It's close to downtown, offers lots of parking, and has tasty coffee, muffins, and munchies. Everyone is welcome, so join us at the next meeting!

When: 6:30 p.m. – 8 p.m. every Wednesday

(Does not meet on 5th week Wednesday)

Where: Buzz Fill'er Up Café at 1229 East 6th Avenue, Denver, CO 80218 (corner of 6th Avenue and Marion)

Upcoming Dates: July 9, 16, 23; August 6, 13, 20, 27; September 3, 10, 17, 24

RMJETAA Stories ~

As the RMJETAA newsletter goes 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.

The ALT Experience (2007/2008): Hikone Higashi Senior High School

by Byron Cook

They say there are phases one goes through when moving to another country. Once you've made that decision to leave your family, friends, and country of birth behind, your mind doesn't quite grasp the plunge into another culture until you're actually off the plane and on the ground. It is then that the "honeymoon" (or nightmare for some) begins. For some this may last a day, a week, or even a matter of months. Eventually (so they say), the newness fades, the excitement of discovery dissipates, and the monotony of normalcy settles over you like an old worn sweatshirt.

And yet, here I am—a year and a half into my own fledgling marriage with this thing called the JET Program. My bride is still just as young and radiant as the day we were wed! Oh sure, I have spent enough time with her now to see some of her imperfections: spending an hour at the bank for the simplest of transactions, more and more frequent train delays, and not being able to find a size 12 pair of shoes on the entire island. I can't lie, and claim that I haven't missed home—you know... watching sports center on my big screen inside my huge (by Japanese standards), centrally heated house, waiting for the brats and burgers on the grill, and owning a refrigerator I CANNOT lift myself.

But as I start to see our (mine and my family's) eminent departure from Nippon next summer, I've come to realize that Japan remains anything *but* normal. I have yet to really emerge from the honeymoon. I still notice the sweet smell of cedar and incense while walking down a narrow road packed with tiny shops selling bikes, or hashi, or pottery. And each time I stop at my favorite sidewalk sushi shop, (the one with the impossibly fresh Maguro) or the ramen restaurant with its four seats barely fitting inside the sliding door, I think of all the things I'll miss when I leave this place.

If it's true that JET can help to foster priceless memories, and memories equate to a sort of wealth, then the JET program has made my family and me very wealthy indeed.

JET, Japan, and the Next Generation: Hikone Shoyo Senior High School

by Elycia Cook

One day, my 6-year-old daughter looked at me and asked, "Mommy, am I a JET?" I answered, "Sort of." Then she said, "Because I sure look forward to going to JET events!"

This is my second time around with JET: 15 years ago, I was in the program as a single. Of course back then; JET certainly wasn't what it is today. In fact, it was rare that I even saw another JET. There were no PAs (advisors), no Internet, no block-meetings (local gatherings of JETS), no mid-year conferences, and certainly no Facebook. It was great for being immersed in the culture and learning the language so I was content with no need to hang around a bunch of non-Japanese folks.

This time it is very different. It has been so great for my family to be able to build an extended family within the JET community. Being one of the "more mature" JETs, I love being a mother/older sister and friend to many JETS and having children that can be their little sisters/nieces. As living here has many rewards, it can also become very lonely. It is our desire to help battle loneliness with love, warmth of family, and tasty home-cooked meals. Likewise, the Shiga JET family has given us much in return. We have great big sisters and babysitters for our children, We've had crash courses in new age computer literacy and text messaging.

The JET program has also been instrumental in teaching my children that English speakers come from more places than just the U.S. and that there are many different American faces, not just those that look like them and their friends—although the Asian Americans tend to confuse my 2-year-old Mi-chan (she usually speaks Japanese to those that look Asian and English to those who don't). Nonetheless, the Shiga JET community has been like family to us, so much so that my children think that they are *already* JETs and hope to become JETs *again* when they are all grown up. What a testimony to one of the many beauties of the JET Program; spreading internationalism to the next generation.

RMJETAA 2008 Calendar of Meetings, Agendas, 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 for updates and announcements.

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

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|-----------|---|---------------|---------------------|
| May | Meeting May 11 | October | Meeting October 12 |
| June | Meeting June 8 | November | Meeting November 9 |
| July | Meeting July 13 - cookout at Cacciatore residence | December | Meeting December 14 |
| August | Meeting August 10 - new location - check website! | January 2009 | Meeting January 11 |
| September | Meeting September 14 | February 2009 | Meeting February 8 |

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