

Rocky Mountain JETAA Newsletter



December 2008

Winter Edition

Happy Holidays!



It snowed again last night, so it is definitely beginning to feel like the holidays are here! With Thanksgiving so late in November, it seems December just snuck up on all of us way too soon... But the holiday music can be heard in every store, lights are twinkling all over town, and rushed shoppers are trying to wrap up all the shopping and gifts.

Amidst all the holiday frenzy and cheer, RMJETAA has been busy (too bad we don't have any of Santa's elves to help us out...) making plans for our annual Shinnenkai to be held in January (see page 4 for details) and wrapping up all our business for 2008. In October we hosted another successful Career Forum followed by a social hour in LoDo. In November we held our annual JET welcome-back reception and sushi-rolling event at the

Consul-General's residence. All in all, a very busy couple of months since the last newsletter!

We were happy to see so many JETs at the reception and sushi rolling, and we invite you to get involved in your local RMJETAA community and join us to help plan all our great events, like the upcoming Shinnenkai. You can check out our new website for the latest details and future meetings at www.rmjetalumni.org.

Monthly Meetings

We've been shaking things up with our monthly meetings, changing times and locations, but we finally seem to have landed in a good spot and plan to hold our next meeting. Join us on Sunday, January 11, at 10:00 AM at Shangri-La Coffee, located at 1575 Boulder Street, Denver, CO 80211.

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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Recent Events

2008 Career Forum

The 2008 Career Forum was a great success and offered a wealth of knowledge, know-how, and tips for those interested in sharpening their career advancement skills. This year, we featured three great speakers who covered topics ranging from resume refinement, how to stand out from the crowd, how to get the interview, and how to be chosen for a job that fits your skills and interests. We also had on hand an HR representative from a local Japanese company who spoke to participants interested in positions within her company.

After the event, everyone was treated to a great sushi meal at Sushi Han in Writers Square.

We want to thank the Japanese Consulate for hosting the event at their offices, and a huge thanks to the fantastic speakers and participants! We hope to see you next year's Career Forum!



2008 CAREER FORUM



The Consulate-General of Japan along with Rocky Mountain JETAA and the Japan America Society of Colorado invites you to the 2008 Career Forum.

Building on the success of last year's event, we are once again offering this exceptional opportunity. Some 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.
- An academic advisor from the University of Colorado exploring graduate programs and continuing education.
- A human resources consultant from an area HR consulting firm providing tips on job search from the employer's point of view.

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!

Welcome Back Party / Sushi Rolling

Close to 150 people attended RMJETAA's sushi rolling event on Sunday, November 2. Once again this year, the annual event was combined with a welcome back party for returning JETs.

In years past, the event has been held at Denver University's International House, but this year we coordinated with the Consulate General of Japan at Denver to expand invitations outside our normal JET alumni circle and held the event at the Consul General's private residence.



Needless to say, more people than ever before showed up for this unique opportunity to be hosted by the Consulate General and his staff. In appreciation for Consul General Kubo-san's graciousness and continued support of RMJETAA, the RMJETAA board presented the Consulate with a gift of three scenic photographs taken around Colorado by our vice president, Stephen Cacciatore.



After the welcoming speeches by the Consulate and members of the RMJETAA board, several new JETs offered to share their stories and JET experiences with the gathered crowd. Outside, the weather was sunny and warm, offering a beautiful view of the surrounding area and lots of space for the many children to run and play as their parents had a chance to talk to friends old and new.

The Consulate's personal chef prepared a delicious variety of sushi and Japanese fare, as well as later leading the sushi-rolling demonstrations for anyone who wanted to try their hand at making sushi.

As the event drew to a close, everyone expressed their appreciation for the wonderful food, location, and company. The Consul General's wife also brought a smile to the children's faces as decorative Halloween trick-or-treat bags were handed out as a parting gift. All in all, the day was a huge success and we would like to thank everyone who made this event a memorable experience!



Announcements



2009 RMJETAA Elections

Elections for the RMJETAA board will be held at our regular monthly March meeting, on March 8, 2009,

We encourage anyone who is interested to run for a position, as positions are re-elected every year. We are looking for candidates for all of the board positions (president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, newsletter editor, and webmaster) as well as for new positions that may be of interest such as public relations and events planner.

We are also looking for members at large, who are not able to commit as much time, but would still like to be involved and provide support to RMJETAA and its board and activities.

Please send your candidate platform to president@rm-jetalumni.org by February 28, 2009. In your platform please include what position you're running for, a brief introduction, and what your goals are for the position for the next year. An e-mail announcing candidates will be sent out via the list serve by March 3 for voting and the new board members will be announced at the meeting on March 8 (location TBD; check the RMJETAA website).

2009 Shinnenkai

Sunday, January 25, 1:00 to 4:00, International House

Join us for our annual Shinnenkai, this year celebrating the Year of the Cow. We'll have Japanese snacks, music, prizes, and entertainment, as well as delicious sushi. Everyone is welcome!

Please look for your invitation via postcard and/or e-mail soon.

Newsletter Submissions

Have a favorite memory or a funny story to tell of your time in Japan? Current JETs, would you like to share your experiences so far? JET alumni, do you have any words of wisdom for our current JETs in Japan?

We encourage you to submit articles for the next quarterly newsletter. The deadline for submission is March 1, 2009, and winners receive a \$25 gift certificate to the Japanese business or restaurant of their choice.

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/>.

Japanese Holidays



Emperor's Birthday (tenno no tanjōbi)

December 23—The birthday of the reigning emperor is a national holiday. Emperor Akihito was born on this date in 1933. The Imperial Palace in Tokyo is open to the public, and hundreds of thousands of well-wishers wave flags in honor of the occasion.

Christmas

December 24/25—Christmas is not a national holiday, but it is celebrated by an increasing number of Japanese.

New Year (shōgatsu)

January 1—This is the most important holiday in Japan. While only January 1 is designated as a national holiday, many businesses remain closed through January 3.

Coming of Age (seijin no hi)

Second Monday of January—The coming of age of 20-year-old men and women is celebrated on this national holiday.

Beginning of spring (setsubun)

February 3—Setsubun is not a national holiday, but celebrated at shrines and temples nationwide.

National Foundation Day (kenkoku kinenbi)

February 11—According to the earliest Japanese history records, on this day in the year 660 BC the first Japanese emperor was crowned.

Valentine's Day

February 14—In Japan, women give chocolates to men on Valentine's Day.

Spreading the JET Word

Can you imagine what your life would have been like if you had never heard of JET, applied for JET, gotten accepted to JET and then gone on JET? I'm sitting here trying to imagine what alternate course my life may have taken, but I'm coming up with a complete blank. I mean, perhaps I would have invented the battery powered toothbrush or written fortunes for fortune cookies (Confucius say you have heart as big as Texas.), or maybe been a traveling cow hoof trimmer, but honestly, I don't think any of those endeavors would have touched my heart in quite the same way.

Recruiting for JET is kind of like a fragmented two-month road trip with a very specific purpose: give the opportunity of Japan to those who want it.

So, as fall recruiting season arrived, I felt motivated and inspired even, to share the prospect of JET with as many people as possible. How awesome to be in the position to give this opportunity to others! For nearly all of September and October, Yumi Yamagata and I took JET on the road through Wyoming, Utah, New Mexico (if anyone needs a recommendation of a great restaurant in Santa Fe... I've got one!), and Colorado. We met with 740 students from 13 different universities, talked to professors, career counselors, etc., and attended anime conventions (wow... what a subculture!).



We set up information booths, ran information sessions, and attended career fairs. Yumi spoke more English in one day than she ever bargained for at some of the larger university career fairs, explaining the virtues of life in Japan. I explained the inner-workings of the JET Program and answered all those questions like "They actually pay you for this?" We shook hands, handed



out applications, gave away JET goodies and did lots of smiling. We rented cars, read road maps, packed and unpacked, enjoyed the scenery, and played the alphabet game in the car.

One thing that stood out to me no matter where we were was the number of alumni we met. At every recruiting session we ran or attended, someone would approach me to let me know that either they had done JET or someone they knew had done JET and that it had changed the course of their life somehow.

Now, I know it sounds cheesy, but think back to my initial question: Can you imagine what your life would have been like if you had never gone on JET? Most likely, the answer is a loud, resounding NO.

Hopefully all the marketing and recruiting will produce another year of great JETs to depart from the Rocky Mountain region. Hopefully JET will change the lives of all those people who go. And just maybe, when they get back, they will realize that they can't imagine what their lives would have been like had they never gone on JET.

JetWit.com—A new site for JET Alumni

JetWit.com is a website for the JET alumni community across the U.S. and abroad, created by Steven Horowitz (Aichi-ken, 1992–1994), editor of the JETAA NY Newsletter from 2002 to 2008. JetWit.com is a place for:

JET alums to publish and promote their writings, translations and other creations and/or to have opportunities in general to stay connected with the JET alumni community

Job seekers to find jobs and helpful career information and post their professional profiles

Employers to post job listings and find JET alum professionals with a range of skills

JETAA chapters and newsletters to find information and articles to share with their members, and to share job listings and other information with the greater JET alumni community.

Current JETs to find jobs and learn what various people do after JET

Prospective JETs to learn more about the JET Programme and the people who completed it through their writings and other creations.

CLAIR to locate JET alumni with particular skills or backgrounds.

Advertisers to reach a national audience of JET alumni and other people with a connection to Japan.

The Backstory

After nearly 7 years as the editor of the JETAA NY Newsletter and several months of running the Writers Interpreters Translators (WIT) email group, I decided to create JetWit.com as a resource to serve the JET alumni community of writers, interpreters, translators, and other professionals, and also to let everyone know the wonderful things that so many alumni are doing. In many ways, the JET alumni community remains a great, untapped resource, and JetWit.com is an effort to help tie us together, build community, and demonstrate our strengths.

Among other things, my goal is to help JET alumni promote their work and gain exposure while providing entertaining and relevant content for JET alums to read. So feel free to get in touch and use JetWit.com to your advantage. I'm always happy to chat and brainstorm. JetWit.com is very much an evolving work in progress, and the more people contribute, the better a resource it will be.

The following is excerpted from an article that appeared on Japan Times Online on December 18. For the full article, visit <http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/nn20081218a1>.

New U.S. Travel Authorization Plan Has Airlines on Edge Before Launch

by ALEX MARTIN, Staff writer, Japan Times

A new border control system the United States will start using to screen short-term foreign travelers in January remains relatively unknown less than a month before launch, and people in the airline and tourism industries are worried the lack of awareness will wreak havoc at airports nationwide.

The new Electronic System for Travel Authorization requires travelers from Visa Waiver Countries who wish to stay in the U.S. for 90 days or less to use the Internet to apply for permission to enter the country three days before departure. Travelers with visas are not affected.

Those who come to the airport without ESTA authorization are likely to be forced to reschedule their flights or cancel, which is causing growing concern among airlines and travel agencies.

The system takes effect Jan. 12 and will replace the written application process used by those seeking visa-free stays. It will be valid for two years or until the applicant's passport expires.

Although the U.S. Department of Homeland Security initially announced plans for the ESTA system in June, public awareness still appears low, airlines and travel agencies said Wednesday.

The application is about 20 questions long and asks applicants if they have a criminal record or a history of drug abuse, and requests other basic biographical information. It must be submitted no later than 72 hours prior to departure Shimada said the airline group, which includes Japan Airlines Corp. and All Nippon Airways Co., will distribute leaflets at Narita airport to boost awareness of the new system because the U.S. government doesn't appear to be doing much to get the word out.

If an application is denied, it will prohibit the passenger from traveling under the VWP but will not affect one's visa eligibility. In the case of last-minute applications, Narita International Airport employee Eiichiro Takasu said Internet access is available through the airport's wireless LAN network, provided that travelers have computers and a valid Internet service provider.

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.

Return to my JET Hometown

Catherine Ishida, Fukuoka (1995–1998)

“We’ll pick up right where we left off.” This is what my husband said about the future of his friendship with his supervisor as he left his CIR position of two years in 1999.

I never understood this sentiment until this past summer.

In my mind, relationships certainly change when one does not see a friend s/he is accustomed to seeing every day and no longer has knowledge about their daily life. In Japan, where relationships and the maintenance of those relationships are so important, I felt it an unattainable challenge to keep up all those friendships I made in Japan after returning to the United States.

Let’s face it: international phone calls—in consideration of the time difference with Japan, expense, and lack of non-verbal communication enhancements—are not a substitute. As a JET when e-mail had yet to exist, I sent New Year’s cards and birthday presents, but always felt they were not enough tribute to the kindness I was shown.

After a six-year hiatus, I got the chance to go back this summer to the town where I worked as a CIR from 1996 to 1998. In an instant, I was home again...and my friends, former coworkers, and I “picked up right where we left off.”

Making one elementary school visit, I reconnected with teachers I worked with from several of the elementary schools in town. What a nice feeling that they remembered me after 10 years (and many CIRs and ALTs later)!

The town hall was a sea of familiar faces, all excited to see me. It was very satisfying to see that my coworkers, whose desks were at the bottom of the hierarchy in the late 90s, now were seated at the top of the clusters in section-chief positions.

Later in the evening, my town hall buddies and their families gathered at my former supervisor’s house, as we had before on many occasions.

Some families grew. Yet, five-year-old Chiho, whom I’d never met, and her older sister, Chihiro, who probably doesn’t remember coming to my wedding in Maryland when she was barely two years old, sat down with me and played a Disney princess board game as if we did it every week since I left Japan. We took advantage of technology, using a webcam to connect with my husband so he could “meet” Chiho and give our friends a virtual tour of our home in Colorado. My former supervisor (and good friend), her daughters, and I stayed up late talking and watching TV in the tatami family room as we did many weekends while I was a CIR.



For me, the most endearing and important aspect of Japan is its people. Although it is impossible to see or talk to them frequently, I now know that our relationships are forever and we’ll pick up right where we left off the next time we see each other. My husband hasn’t been back to Japan to reunite with friends from his JET experience, and I hope that he and his friends will soon get a chance to “pick up right where they left off” as I did this summer.

Greetings from Japan: December 4, 2008

Tyler Cronk (*Takamori*)

What a wonderful opportunity this has been for me! Getting to actually live and work in Japan. Since I've been here, I've learned more than I ever expected I would.

To be honest, after studying abroad for a semester in Osaka two years ago, and after taking four full years of Japanese in college, I considered myself pretty much an expert on all things Japanese. Was I ever mistaken! Each day is a new experience. Every day I discover something new about Japan, be it the culture, language, people, or something else entirely.

It's currently the end of autumn over here. Every day the temperature drops another few degrees. I am based out of Nagano prefecture in a small town in the south called Takamori. My house is quite old and the walls are paper-thin. Why the Japanese are so vehemently opposed to the idea of insulation I'll never know! This does not mean I haven't tried to find out. On the contrary, I've asked dang near everyone I know. This has led to another discovery; the Japanese inability to answer a direct question with a direct answer. That they accept such uncomfortable housing without complaint is an affront to my American sensibilities!

My students are a constant source of both entertainment and aggravation. The way the girls avoid answering a question by lowering their heads and hiding their faces behind a curtain of black hair is maddening! Besides my junior high students, I teach at an elementary school and have an adult class as well. It turns out I'm a big hit at karaoke, since I know a couple obscure Japanese songs. A few lyrics of 'Otoko wa Tsurai yo' provides endless amusement to all assembled.

Currently, I'm in the process of buying a used car now that the cold weather has made riding my scooter all but unbearable. My first outing on the scooter ended with me in a gutter on the side of the road. I'm hoping that my first attempt with a 'yellow plate' will end more favorably.

Needless to say, not everything I experience is good, or leaves me feeling positive about the situation. In many ways, I'd say the negative experiences are more memorable! But, when all is said and done, I cannot help but feel infinitely pleased with myself for having made the decision to come here.



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 for updates and announcements.

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

Q4 Meetings & Events

January	Meeting, January 11 Shinnenkai, January 25
February	Meeting, February 8
March	Meeting & Elections, March 8

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