Japan Outreach Initiative

Annual Report
Summer 2016- Summer 2017

AYA MURATA

JAPAN OUTREACH INITIATIVE COORDINATOR
HENDRIX COLLEGE
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JAPAN OUTREACH INITIATIVE COORDINATOR
HENDRIX COLLEGE (CONWAY, AR)

Summer 2016-Summer 2017

Top 3 activities

1. 1000 CRANES ORIGAMI PROJECT

2. SCHOOL VISITS & COMMUNITY OUTREACH

3. JAPANESE CULTURE HOUSE

1000 CRANES ORIGAMI PROJECT

A strong message of peace from Arkansas to the world through origami cranes, a symbol of peace in Japanese culture.

I launched this activity as a part of a collaborative project between Hendrix College, the University of Central Arkansas, the Conway public schools and the Conway community, commemorating the 75th Anniversary of Executive Order #9066 and the Internment of Japanese Americans during World War II.

I wanted to introduce cranes as a symbol of good fortune and longevity in Japanese culture and as a way of sharing the idea that our wishes for world peace could come true if we folded 1000 origami cranes.

Since February 2017, approximately 250 people in Central Arkansas have made over 700 origami cranes with me, from 5th graders to adults.

I will continue this project into my second year as a JOI coordinator until we achieve our goal. Ultimately, the 1000 origami cranes will be displayed at Hendrix College next to a painting by Japanese American intern and artist Henry Sugimoto.

250 people

700 Origami Cranes
SCHOOL VISITS AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Over the past year, I have visited numerous public schools (K-12), libraries, community events, and international festivals, introducing a variety of Japanese cultural activities to the community members of Central Arkansas.

I have now visited half of the Conway elementary schools and all of its middle schools, leading activities at some elementary schools over 20 times.

Through these activities, I have introduced Japanese seasonal events to students through games and hands-on activities, such as kite making, fukuwarai paper game and origami hinamatsuri dolls. Students also thoroughly enjoyed watching me put yukata on their teachers and learning the Japanese language.

Now most of my students (including teachers and staff) say “Konnichiwa! (Hello)!” when they see me at their school!!

Comments from high school students after a calligraphy lesson

"Very interesting to learn about the different characters. It was fun to try calligraphy."
"I really enjoyed learning how to print like someone else across the planet, as well as learning extra tidbits from Aya. I wish we had more time!"
"I loved the history and culture information before doing the calligraphy. I am very thankful for the lesson and am grateful for this experience."
"I learned more about Japan and the language. I really want to visit Japan."

Comment from a librarian at Ida Burns Elementary School

Aya worked with 170 3rd and 4th grade students to share the Japanese culture.

In January of 2017, she taught the students about Japanese New Year’s tradition and kite making. The students loved flying the kites out doors! In February 2017, Aya taught the students about the art of sushi making. The students had a wonderful time making and eating the sushi! Most of the students were trying sushi for the first time. In March 2017, Aya taught the students about traditional Japanese Fisherman’s dance and festivals. Then we made hachimaki headbands!

All students were so engaged in every learning activity Aya provided! She was an amazing teacher who connected well with the students and delivered her lessons with tremendous professionalism. We are looking forward to her returning this year to provide more fun and learning for our students!

(Sharon Cone, Library Media Specialist at Ida Burns Elementary School)
Japanese Culture House

The Japanese Culture House (2016-2018) is a residential experience for students at Hendrix College, featuring intensive engagement with Japanese culture (language, literature, food, popular culture) through both in-house and off-campus activities. As the director of the house, I live with 9 students and organize weekly activities such as seasonal events, Japanese cooking and movie nights. I also introduce Japanese culture with house members at campus events for students and faculty at Hendrix College.

Seasonal Activities Calendar: Tsukimi (Sept.), Haiku-Hike (Oct.), Tea Ceremony (Nov.), Calligraphy (Jan.), Setsubun (Feb.), Hinamatsuri (Mar.), Hanami (Apr.)

So-ran Bushi -Japanese Fisherman's Dance-

I formed a So-ran Bushi Dance Team with 5 Hendrix students who had never tried Japanese dance before. After a few weeks of practice, they mastered the dance and we performed in front of over 100 people at an international festival at a middle school. We were also invited to perform at a community event and taught the dance to kids and their parents. Next May, we are going to perform at the largest international festival in Central Arkansas!!

Supervisor's comment

"Aya has brought together numerous members of our community through her sharing of Japanese culture and piqued the interest of thousands of students to learn more about Japan. Thanks for giving so much to our community, Aya!!"

-Gwen Stockwell, Hendrix College
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JAPAN OUTREACH INITIATIVE

AYA MURATA

JAPAN OUTREACH INITIATIVE COORDINATOR
HENDRIX COLLEGE, ARKANSAS
Top 3 Goals

1. Fostering Collaboration among Central Arkansas Colleges and the local Japanese community
2. Building sustainability at Hendrix College
3. Expanding outreach activities in Central Arkansas

1. FOSTERING COLLABORATION AMONG CENTRAL ARKANSAS COLLEGES AND THE LOCAL JAPANESE COMMUNITY

One of Aya’s biggest goals as a JOI Coordinator was to connect with people in Central Arkansas through various Japanese-related events and to continue these activities after her JOI term ended. The close relationships that were built among three Central Arkansas colleges and the local Japanese community over the past two years have made it possible for Aya to organize a variety of events to introduce cultural activities such as calligraphy, haiku and kendo to the Central Arkansas community. It also made it possible to successfully create the first ever Central Arkansas ‘Omatsuri’ Festival, which involved the participation of over 70 volunteers from four Arkansas colleges as well as numerous local Japanese residents. The festival attracted an audience of approximately 400 children and adults from Central Arkansas and provided school children the chance to learn even more about Japanese culture.

The connections and partnerships that were made through these activities brought more opportunities for both American and Japanese people to get to know each other and cooperate regardless of their nationality, gender or age. This mutual understanding will surely help build a bridge between the people of the two countries in Central Arkansas.

EVENTS 2017-2018

Kendo workshop (Sep. 2017)
Haiku-Hike (Oct. 2017)
International Week -Tea Ceremony, Yukata, Japanese foods- (Nov, 2017)
Sushi workshop (Dec, 2017)
Calligraphy and Mochi making (Jan, 2018)
Japanese Language Immersion Weekend (Feb, 2018)
Omatsuri Japanese Festival (Apr, 2018)
Multicultural Dance Performance-Soran bushi- (Apr, 2018)
Arkansas Governor’s School (June, 2018)
Community Language Camp (July, 2018)

MEDIA COVERAGE

The JOI program and Aya’s outreach activities in Central Arkansas were featured in media, such as local TV news, articles, and magazines both in Arkansas and Japan. Aya explained why she wanted to bring Japanese culture to this community and how she thought it helped to deepen mutual understanding between the people of Japan and Arkansas.
During Aya’s second year, she changed her focus from providing activities for Hendrix students to teaching Hendrix students interested in Japan how to become leaders of Japanese culture on campus. Since the fall of 2016, Aya has led workshops teaching origami, tea ceremony, calligraphy, the traditional Soran bushi dance, and sushi making. She continued the same large events during her second year, but during the second year, she had students become active leaders and organizers of the events. For example, Aya met with students before each event to teach them a particular skill, such as tea making, so that they could then lead the activity at the actual event.

She also encouraged them to create a student-run Japanese Language and Culture Club so that students could lead the activities without Aya in future years. In addition, Aya and her supervisor, Ms. Gwen Stockwell, sought to further deepen students’ connection to Japan, and therefore commitment to continuing Japanese cultural activities at Hendrix, by leading a two day, off-campus Japanese language immersion weekend.

Aya has high hopes that this group of enthusiastic ambassadors (faculty, staff and students) of Japanese culture will continue to serve as Japan-U.S. leaders on campus and in the community.

SUPERVISOR'S COMMENT

Through her numerous activities and warm enthusiasm, Aya has brought together a large group of people throughout Central Arkansas who are passionate about Japan and sharing Japanese Culture with those in Central Arkansas. In addition, Aya has inspired students, faculty and staff at Hendrix to become leaders of Japanese culture on our campus and in the community. Her enthusiastic leadership has led to a greatly increased number of students enrolling in Japanese language and history courses, studying abroad in Japan and applying for the JET program.

(Gwen Stockwell, Hendrix College)
3. Expanding Outreach Activities in Central Arkansas

During Aya’s second year, Aya visited and shared Japanese culture with an increasing number of public schools in rural areas. Within the Conway and Little Rock area, she expanded the kinds of sites she visited to include libraries, daycare centers, after school programs for underprivileged children, assisted living centers, and local festivals. In the summers of 2017 and 2018, she led cultural activities for the Arkansas Governor’s School (a state funded summer program for selected high school students in Arkansas) and taught Japanese language and culture to elementary school aged children in the University of Central Arkansas’ Bear Camp.

11,780 people served

Map of Aya’s Outreach

Number of JOI Activities

Over 50 schools, libraries, community events attended