JOI
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Airi Yamamoto
Year 15 JOI Coordinator,
Murray State University in Kentucky

MURRAY STATE UNIVERSITY

The Japan Foundation Center for Global Partnership
The Laurasian Institution
1. Special Event/Project

International Kite Festival
My supervisor and I created a new event, the International Kite Festival, which was held on Saturday, April 29, at the MSU Arboretum. We set up this event for the same day as the annual plant sale for the Arboretum. It was the first collaborative event for the MSU College of Humanities and Fine Arts and the Murray State Arboretum, which is part of the School of Agriculture. We advertised the event, got donated prizes, found volunteer students, and set up cultural booths hosted by international students from six different countries. Participants at the festival were able to construct and fly their own kites and visit booths for a passport stamp. There was a food truck, Chinese dumplings for sale, and plants for purchase. We had three Kite Contests and gave prizes for the Most Beautiful Kite, the Most Creative Kite, and the Highest-Flying Kite. We also gave a few door prizes—free ice cream from a local restaurant. Children at the festival enjoyed making and flying their own kites, and children visited and learned about various countries. There were over 200 visitors at the International Kite Festival. It was a huge success, and our involvement helped the Arboretum make over $3000 more in sales. Also, we received media coverage in the Paducah Sun, the Murray Ledger, The Murray State News, and on social media. We are now gathering feedback via a survey sent electronically to participants, so that this new annual event can improve for next year.
Culture Exchange Project

I am working with Murray Elementary School on the Culture Exchange Project. A second-grade class at Murray Elementary learned about Japanese culture and school life in Japan. This summer, I visited Saroma Elementary School in Hokkaido, Japan, and introduced American culture and school life in the United States. The students were very excited to learn about cultural differences. I filmed many questions from Japanese students to American students, and I filmed their school life. I will take them to Murray Elementary in the Fall and film the answers. I aim to expand this project next semester.

Collaboration with a JOI coordinator

I had a chance to visit and collaborate with the year 15 JOI coordinator, Aya Murata, in Arkansas. Aya and I had a Japanese House Cooking activity at Hendrix Collage and cooking lessons at an elementary school near her site.
Public Library

Calloway County Public Library is the place where I have done activities and presentations most of the time. This public library offers many great activities and events that are open to the public, and a series featuring Japan has been part of their programming. In addition to reaching community members who attend workshops, I have had increased exposure because the library featured my work in the local newspaper several times. I have given presentations for people ranging from young children to adults. The series included the following sessions: “Japanese Folktale and Origami Afternoon,” ”Making Sushi for adults / children,” and ”Japanese Greeting Card Make and Take Session.” In addition to these presentations, I started an After School Japanese Club (6weeks) for the elementary school students to middle school students. I had the maximum number of student participants last semester. Before I started this program, I had seen many students spend time after school in the library waiting for their parents to pick them up; therefore, I believed this program would help students learn Japanese and culture in their spare time. The After School Japanese Club is focused on learning the Japanese language, and we have also had many hands-on activities or physical activities. The aim of this program is to sow seeds of interest in the students’ minds. I hope this program helps to open their mind to learn about a different culture, so they will start self-learning about Japan or pursue more formal education in high school or college. The Calloway County Public Library and I are planning to continue this program next semester by offering another 6-week club.

Women’s Cooking Club

I am a member of the Murray Women’s Society Cooking Club, Reading Club and Lunch Bunch. It is great to be a member of the Murray Woman’s Society. I have met so many people through this community. I especially enjoy the Cooking Club. Food is a great tool for learning about a different culture. I learned a lot form the people who are in the club, and I showed them how to cook Japanese food and taught food culture. Making roll sushi was a big success because everyone has had roll sushi before, but no one knew how to make roll sushi. Therefore we started to make roll sushi from the very beginning. When I demonstrate cooking Japanese food, I bring a recipe with me and use ingredients that people can get easily in this area.
Local Restaurant
One of the restaurants in a town near Murray and I had an event: Japan Night at the Sunshine Café. We had meetings and promoted the event. We got many reservations and served 55 meals and sides in a night. The restaurant and I are planning to have another event in the future to help raise awareness of Japanese food culture and raise funds for the Japan Club at Murray State.

International Events
I had a cultural booth at many different events such as the International Bazaar at MSU, World Thinking Day with the Girl Scouts, the Language Showcase at MSU, International Night at Reidland Elementary School in Paducah, and Cultural Day at Calloway County North Elementary School.

Local Schools
I visited pre-schools, elementary schools, and middle schools in Murray. My presentations usually start with a Japanese greeting song and asking students to find Murray, KY, and Japan on a world map. The students in these schools learned origami, traditional clothes, Japanese food, and many others with hands-on activities and a quiz. Also, I started an After School Japanese Club at Calloway County Middle School. We met every Wednesday for one hour to learn Japanese language and culture.

4-H Cooking Club
Kids from the 4-H Cooking Club learned Japanese culture and made roll sushi. It was the first time they had seen seaweed and made Japanese food for all of the kids there. Also, they learned how to use chopsticks and enjoyed pieces of sushi that they made. The kids took lots of sushi and the sushi recipe home and were excited to make sushi again with their family.
3. Activity on Campus

Collaboration
I had many chances to collaborate with many groups on campus and in the community throughout the year. I have collaborated with the International Cultures and Languages Association (ICALA), the International Student Organization (ISO), the Honors College, and a dormitory to have new events. I gave the introduction and led discussion at Cinema International, a film series sponsored by the Modern Languages Department. I gave an Origami Workshop, Calligraphy Night with ICALA, and a Sushi-making workshop for the Honors College. Also I visited several schools and taught some Japanese words with the Fun with Languages Program. I taught basic Japanese at an MSU Super Saturday Program for gifted children. The participant kids visited MSU on three Saturdays and studied a new language for 4 hours each day. The kids learned a lot of Japanese through activities and games.

Japanese Cooking Club
The Japanese Cooking Club is the most successful activity that I created. I run this activity twice a month. I thought people who study Japanese or English need some hands-on activities that don’t require any experience or language skill. This activity has successfully made people get closer, and I heard many positive comments from both Japanese and American students. I would like to continue this activity in the fall, and I plan for Japan Club to continue this activity after I leave.

Homecoming Tent City
Japan Club students and I were able to join the parade and have a food booth at the MSU Homecoming Tent City, and event in the stadium before the football game. Some students and I wore Yukata and walked around at the parade, and we sold several flavored rice balls and origami earrings at Tent City to raise money for Japan Club.
Japan Club
Students at Murray State University run a Japan Club, which meets weekly to have a cultural exchange between American and Japanese students. Since the fall semester, I have been involved as an officer-level member. We organize fun activities such as trips to Nashville for the Japanese Cherry Blossom Festival or selling Japanese food at Homecoming.

Japanese Language Table
Professors at Murray State University organize a Japanese Language Table that meets once a week. Students who major in Japanese and Japanese international students meet up and practice conversation in Japanese and English. I participated weekly.

Assistant teaching
Murray State University has two Japanese professors. I observed their classes to learn how students learn Japanese. When professors need a cultural activity or teaching assistant, I assist them.

International Panel discussion
I was invited to a class in the College of Education and Human Services to talk about Japanese culture and had a discussion with MSU students.

Comment from the supervisor
Murray State and the surrounding communities are fortunate to have JOI Coordinator Airi Yamamoto because she is dedicated to helping others learn about Japan. Her background in education and warm personality make her the perfect teacher—from the adults in her cooking club to the pre-school students who learned origami. For example, after one of Airi’s presentations at a headstart pre-school for students with special needs, an autistic child with no language skills began murmuring a Japanese word—his first word! Airi simply has that effect on people—they want to soak up the information and skills she can provide. Her work in our community is invaluable for creating interest in Japan, which may lead to more students in Murray State’s Japanese classes and more people willing to host international students or visit Japan. Thank you, Airi!
Activities

1. FOR KIDS
   International Kite Festival

2. FOR COMMUNITIES
   1000 Crane Project

3. FOR TEACHERS
   ACTFL Workshop

4. FOR UNIVERSITY
   Japanese Cooking Club

Airi Yamamoto
Year 15 JOI Coordinator,
Murray State University in Kentucky
In 2017, my supervisor, Staci Stone, and I created the International Kite Festival. The second year of this festival was held on Saturday, April 21, 2018, at the MSU Arboretum. We set up this event for the same day as the annual plant sale for the Arboretum. It was the first collaborative event for the MSU College of Humanities and Fine Arts and the Murray State Arboretum, which is part of the School of Agriculture. We advertised the event, received donated prizes, recruited volunteer students, and set up cultural booths hosted by international students from eight different countries. Participants at the festival were able to construct and fly their own kites, as well as, visit booths for a passport stamps representing the cultural booths. Refreshments were donated by Murray State University Town and Gown this year. The Horticulture Club sold plants for purchase. We had three Kite Contests and gave prizes for the Most Beautiful Kite, the Most Creative Kite, and the Highest-Flying Kite. We also gave a few door prizes, free ice cream from a local restaurant, and free movie tickets from a local theater. Children at the festival enjoyed making and flying their own kites, and culture learning about various countries. There were over 200 visitors at the International Kite Festival making it more successful than last year. Our involvement helped the Arboretum raise over $3000 more in plant sales. The event received media coverage in the Paducah Sun, Murray Ledger and Times, The Murray State News, and on social media. We have sent out surveys to gather feedback on how to improve the event in future years.

Opportunity to learn world culture

1. International Kite Festival
2. 1000 Crane Project

The 1000 Crane Project began in February and was completed in May of 2018. This project required making 1000 paper cranes, “snebazuru”, to be given to Marshall County High School and the Marshall County community when completed. The school shooting occurred at Marshall County High School in Benton, Kentucky, on January 23, 2018 where two students were killed and eighteen injured. Benton is only twenty miles away from my host site, Murray, KY. This news horribly broke people’s hearts in this area. Everybody was looking for something they could do for the school, the families who lost their loved ones, and the Benton community. I hosted crane folding sessions to pray for them, as the crane is symbolic of happiness, long life, and peace. In Japan, people fold 1,000 paper cranes for the ill and for world peace. I held folding sessions on Murray State University campus, the public library, local schools, other communities, Tennessee State University, Vanderbilt University, Nashville Cherry Blossom Festival, and the International Kite Festival in Murray. Also, this project had been showcased in local newspapers and in television broadcasts. 1,000 Cranes were delivered to Marshall County High School, and is now displayed in the commons hall. I hope that when people in Marshall County see the 1,000 cranes they remember that the people of the surrounding communities are thinking of them.

3. ACTFL Workshop

ACTFL (The American Council on The Teaching of Foreign Languages): I held a workshop booth at the ACTFL annual convention and world languages expo to promote the JOI program and to demonstrate a hands-on activity. I provided language teachers with materials and skills to bring Japanese culture into their classrooms. I also introduced the Japanese word mottainai and taught recycled paper gift-box making. People learned the Japanese sense of regret concerning waste at my booth by making a craft and receiving handouts.
4. Japanese Cooking Club

Japanese Cooking Club

The Japanese Cooking Club is the most successful activity that I created. I ran this activity twice a month, and was open to Murray State students and the public. Cooking is a great way to learn culture. The activities don’t require any experience or language skill. It has successfully made people get closer, and I heard many positive comments from both Japanese and American students. Japan Club offered to continue it in the future.

Local Restaurant

The Sunshine Café (a local restaurant) and I held Japan Night. Japanese Cooking Club and the restaurant had meetings and promoted the event. We took reservations and ended up serving 55 meals and sides in a single night. The restaurant and I are planning to have another event in the future to help raise awareness of Japanese food culture and raise funds for the Japan Club at Murray State.

I am very happy and honored to be involved in the JOI program. I loved the challenge of creating new connections, and new projects. Now I am still in the process of trial and error, but all of these challenges are invaluable experiences for me. Looking back on this 2-year program, I learned how much this outreach is worth to the local communities. While my outreach is not huge, I believe that teaching Japanese culture face to face and one on one is both memorable and very meaningful for the participants and myself. I believe these two years to be the best part of my life. The JOI experience also gave me new interests. I have appreciated all the people who I have had the opportunity to work with.
Comments from Supervisors

Murray State University was fortunate to have Airi Yamamoto assigned as JOI Coordinator. Airi’s teaching background prepared her well for the diverse, numerous activities needed in the region. Airi quickly acclimated to our community and welcomed the opportunity to teach people of all ages about Japanese culture. Her work ranged from staffing tables at various culture day events to creating a series of Japanese culture classes for elementary and middle school students. She also worked closely with our Japanese faculty and students—teaching culture and language in classes, at the Japanese conversation table, and at Japan Club meetings and events. Her impact on our campus and community is meaningful and lasting. The 1000 Cranes will remain at Marshall County High School for years, and the culture classes at the local library will continue, as will the annual International Kite Festival, which Airi began. It was a joy to work with Airi as her supervisor; JOI should be proud of the work Airi completed.

Stacy Stone

I first met Airi when I became Chair of the new department of Global Languages and Theatre Arts. I was amazed by how self motivated Airi is, and how she assembled so many meaningful and excellent programs. The two that I had the greatest pleasure working with her on where the 1000 Cranes and International Kite Festival. It was joy to watch children and their families build and then fly kites. There is no greater joy then watching children have fun. They then interacted with several cultures. I new this was an event we had to continue when I heard a little boy ask his mom how to learn a different language. Her presence at our University has been immensely rewarding for faculty, students, and the community as a whole. We will miss her.

Brent Menchinger