Japan Outreach Initiative

Annual Report

(August 2018 - July 2019)

Year 17

Airi Mori

Troy University
Troy, AL
Troy University is fortunate to have an energetic young lady, Airi Mori, serving as our JOI coordinator. Airi’s enthusiasm to engage students and teach Japanese culture to all has allowed our stakeholders an opportunity to experience Japanese culture and tradition in Troy, Alabama.

Airi has done tremendous things at Troy during her time here – sharing culture in meetings on campus, at elementary schools, fairs and festivals off-campus and everywhere in between. Airi even had an incident where she was unable to park her car, and when an individual in the parking lot assisted her, Airi brought her into the office, shared what she did and ended up in that individual classroom sharing Japan with her elementary school students. There is no question she never meets a stranger and never passes up on an opportunity to promote Japanese culture.

This summer, Airi is actively involved in a weeklong camp that Troy University will host and the country of focus will be Japan. These young kids have a unique opportunity to learn from a native and I am sure this is an experience that they will hold dear. This builds upon the school visits Airi has conducted during her time here. In fact, she is often mentioned locally when teachers are looking for a global activity in their classroom. The Origami and Fisherman’s Dance appear to be the activities of choice.

On campus, Airi is engaged in workshops, classes, exhibitions and speaking opportunities. She exposes our university students to Japanese culture and creates a desire to visit and study in Japan, which has helped our study abroad initiative. Her involvement on campus has drawn attention from Consul General Shinozuka in Atlanta, who has visited us a couple of time to support the spread of Japanese culture on campus.

Finally, as we would say in the South, “Airi is good people.” She is a fit for Troy University. She understands Troy University. She never gives up an opportunity to teach. She never passes on an opportunity to learn.
Airi has been an important member of the Troy family. In her short time here, she has made huge inroads with departments across campus and throughout the state. She has attended several Japanese events and recently led a Japanese camp on campus. This fall she will be showcasing Japan as the country of interest for our International Student week. She has work extensively with our Japanese club and visiting scholars from Japan. She is a wonderful addition to the international culture at Troy University.
1. SUMMER CAMP 2019

【Date】6/9〜6/13, 2019
【Place】Troy University
【Target】77 students
15〜18 years old
【Program】GEAR UP!
※GEAR UP! (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) is a federal discretionary grant program designed to increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education.

【Participating Schools】11 high schools
1. Jeff Davis High School
2. Greenville High School
3. Central High School
4. Booker T. Washington Magnet High School
5. Brewbaker Technology Magnet High School
6. Carver High School
7. LAMP High School
8. Park Crossing High School
9. Robert E. Lee High School
10. Sidney Lanier High School
11. Pickens County High School

【Overall】
I organized this camp this year. Actually, Troy University holds the GEAR UP camp as a Chinese Cultural Program every year because there are lots of Chinese students who can teach their culture. There are about 350 Chinese students, which means they occupy a third of the international students in Troy University. Since I am here to promote Japanese culture, this year I had the camp held as a Japanese Cultural Program.

STEP 1

【Japanese Cultural Training for Troy University students】
I recruited Troy University students to help me. I was able to recruit 13 students. Since they didn’t know anything about Japanese culture, I held Japanese Cultural Training for them before the summer camp.
【Organizing Schedules】
I planned 16 Japanese cultural activities with presentations and workshops, and I invited two special guests. One was Ms. Keiko Matsuda as a Koto player from Huntsville. The other was Ms. Carol Y Hara as a Ribbon dancer and a speaker (She is a third generation Japanese-American, and she was born in a Prison Camp during World War 2) from Dothan.
I divided the high school students into three groups: Ninja group, Geisha group, and Samurai group. The high school students really enjoyed the group names.

The activities that I made
1. Traditional instrument and clothes /Ms.Matsuda (Koto player)
2. Ice Breakers (Fruits Basket and Janken Ressha)
3. Food and Chopsticks challenge
4. Cooking (Japanese Curry, Udon, Makizushi)
5. Calligraphy
6. Japanese seasonal event (Children's Day), Kabuto
7. Japanese general knowledge, bookmark
8. Japanese tour spot
9. Traditional dance (Soran-bushi)
10. Japanese seasonal event (Star’s Festival), Kirie
11. Japanese pop culture, Origami (Pikachu)
12. Japanese traditional toys, Kamideppo, Ayatori, Kendama, Taketombo, Sumo
13. Japanese language
14. Tea Ceremony
16. Japanese Prefecture presentation
【Lessons in the Camp】
Each lessons have a presentation I made and hands-on workshop. Since there are three classes at the same time, not only me but also some Troy students gave a presentation about Japanese culture.
High school students’ Presentations
On the last day of the camp, the high school students gave a presentation about regions of Japan including what they learned from the lessons.

This group got a 1st place for the presentation. They gave a presentation about Chugoku Region of Japan. They got Kendama for winning prizes. They did a great job!
2. LOCAL SCHOOL VISITS

I visited several local schools to teach Japanese culture. I got those opportunities with several ways. First of all, I went to my supervisor’s daughter’s school. Next I went to my co-workers’ sons and daughter’s school. Then I went to my church members’ sons and daughters’ school. I even got a chance when I struggled to park my car. The person who helped me was an elementary school teacher. I was lucky to have a lot of teachers around me.

Teaching contents depend on the teachers’ requests, but I usually include short presentation plus hands-on activities.

For presentations, I did general knowledge like “Where is Japan?” and “Which is Japanese national flag?”, Japanese greetings, numbers in Japanese, Japanese currency and Japanese kids’ songs. The most successful topic was Japanese school life. Children were really curious about different country’s school life.

For hands-on activities, I did Origami cup and dog, newspaper Kabuto, chopstick challenge, bookmark with children’s name in Japanese, fish printing and Soran-bushi. Children enjoyed these activities very much.
I hold Japanese cultural workshops twice a week at Troy University. Not only Troy students but also adults joined and enjoyed my workshop a lot.

I set a variety of topics. For example, Calligraphy, Tea ceremony, Origami, Chopstick challenge, Onigiri cooking, Maki-zushi cooking, Okonomiyaki cooking, Daifuku and Dango making, Japanese New Year, Doll’s Day, Japanese physical games, Original Sugoroku, Letter exchange program with Japanese Elementary school, Hokkaido Earthquake Smile Project, Paper cutting and so on. One of the most popular workshops was the Pikachu curry rice cooking workshop.

I will keep doing my best to teach Japanese culture!
I joined and helped several events and festivals in Troy, as well as other cities and states. I set up Origami booth and fish printing classes for high school students during International Educational Week in Troy University. Also, I taught Soran-bushi to Troy students and we performed together at the ISCO (International Students Cultural Organization) festival.

Also, I did Calligraphy session, Origami session and Soran-bushi performance at the Spring and Autumn festival held Huntsville Alabama. For Soran-bushi, I taught UAH (University of Alabama in Huntsville) students as well, and they collaborated with Troy University students.

I helped Mobile International Festival with Troy students. We made bookmarks with guests’ names in Japanese and did Japanese character body paintings.

Moreover, I helped Origami and bookmark workshop at Cherry Blossom Festival in Nashville Tennessee and where we also performed Soran-bushi with Troy students at Asian Pacific Islander events in Fort Rucker Military base.

I want to join more festivals to promote Japanese culture on my second year as well!
JAPAN OUTREACH INITIATIVE

ANNUAL REPORT

AUGUST 2019 - JULY 2020

YEAR 17

AIRI MORI
TROY UNIVERSITY
TROY, AL
Troy University holds International Education Week in November every year. Many people, from adults to children, come to the campus during this Week. I joined the event as a representative of Japan. I asked several people and groups to help with my activities.

First, I asked Troy University’s International Arts Center to collaborate. I did an Origami booth, a bookmark with guests’ Japanese name making booth, a traditional toy booth, a Japanese dish experience booth and a Japanese garments experience booth with some Troy University students.

Second, I recruited the students who wanted to perform Japanese traditional dance with me at the Rotary Club reception and ISCO Festival (International Students Culture Organization). This year, I performed with them the Hanagasa Ondo (Flower straw hat dance). While last year we performed Soran-bushi (fisherman dance). I taught the students how to make the hats for the dance and how to perform it. Both of the participants and the audiences enjoyed it very much.

Third, I could connect with many of the teachers from Pike county’s schools during this week. These encounters allowed me to visit their schools. I could visit Kindergarten, Elementary schools, Junior high schools and High schools near Troy to introduce Japanese culture to them.
First, I joined many of the festivals and events across Alabama. The furthest place was about 6 hours away from Troy by car. I went to perform traditional dances, Origami, Calligraphy, traditional toys, cooking Japanese foods and so on, along with Troy University students. We went to Montgomery, Birmingham, Huntsville, Mobile and other places. I always recruited students who were willing to help me with each event. Not only the participants of these events, but also the students who helped me, experienced and learned a lot about Japanese culture. Even though I got several offers for more events and festivals in March, April, May and June, I had to cancel all of these because of Covid-19, which was disappointing.

Second, JOI Fall training in October was also a big event for me. I welcomed year 18 Coordinators at Troy University, and took them on a campus tour, to an elementary school, a college business class, a cultural workshop, two history of civil rights movement museums and local restaurants where they could experience Southern foods. There was a lot of effort put into the schedule so that they could spend a wonderful time here. I hope they enjoyed their time and learned a lot.
I held Japanese cultural workshops every week at Troy University. Since the University had closed due to Covid-19, I switched to online to continue my workshops. I introduced many kinds of Japanese content for the Troy University students, sometimes even adults, kids and different University students as well. They learned a lot about Japan through my workshops. I hope the Troy University Japan club will continue these Japanese cultural workshops after leaving.

【My plan after returning to Japan】
First, I created a google account to restore my data, including cultural power points, videos, pictures and music, so that they can use them anytime. Also, in the International Program building (Hawkins Hall) where my office was, I left a lot of Japanese items such as Origami, Calligraphy set, Rice cooker, Taiyaki maker and so on, with instructions. The contents that I taught to them are, for example, language, tour spots, cooking, tea ceremony, Japanese seasonal events, Origami, Calligraphy, cutting paper, pop culture, traditional toys, traditional dances, hot spring and so on. I encouraged them to join International Education Week and ISCO Festival (International Students Culture Organization) in November to show Japanese culture to everyone.

Second, I connected them to some Japanese Festivals’ organizations outside of Troy such as Huntsville, Birmingham, Mobile and Montgomery. I encouraged them to continue joining the festivals as Fisherman dance performers or Flower hats dance performers in the same way as I took them before.

Third, I hope the letter exchange program that I created will continue. I planned this program with an ex-coworker who is working at an elementary school in Japan. We paired up students first, and then Troy University students tried to write a letter in Japanese, and the Japanese students tried to reply in English. I did this program every year, and both the students from Troy and Japan enjoyed it very much.

In conclusion, I got to do many wonderful activities with great help from my supervisors, coworkers, students, organizers of festivals, friends, Troy University and JOI staffs for 2 years. I really appreciated this opportunity that was given to me. Thank you, everyone!
Sohail Agboatwala

(Associate Vice Chancellor, International Operations)

This has been a rather unusual year for Airi in this role. The fall went off well, including successfully hosting the JOI coordinators in Troy, Alabama and allowing them to experience a true college town with Southern hospitality, as well as demonstrating successful programs and the power of interaction. Airi continued with outreach, on campus, in the local community as well as the State – promoting all things Japan.

Then, we have the once in a lifetime event that changed everything and restricted direct interaction, travel and curtailed all the planned activities. Despite these challenges, Airi adapted and adopted new methods for outreach, rather successfully. She followed guidelines, stayed at home, interacted through the computer and kept to her task.

Not looking forward to when Airi leaves. She will be missed, but she will leave a legacy at Troy university.

Barrett Heusch

(ESL Instructor / Adjunct Instructor of Japanese)

These two years that Airi has been here at Troy University have flown by and that is undoubtedly because she was so active and involved with university community and beyond. Every week she not only assisted the Japan Club in its meetings and events but also conducted her own culture corner, even after the coronavirus necessitated that these be done on Zoom. Before the shutdown, Airi was constantly involved in outreach with the local community, attending local elementary, middle, and high schools and running a summer camp for high school students focused on learning about Japan. She was also very active assisting in events all around Alabama, from cherry blossom festivals to other festivals from north to south. We will miss her infectious spirit, constant cheerfulness, and willingness to anything to help others.

Lance Noe

(ESL Programs Director)

Airi was the busiest person on our campus. She worked with the Japanese classes, conversation partners, visiting scholars’ program, and the ESL short-term programs. She also attended and performed at various festivals and schools throughout the state, and brought the Japanese culture to students who would have otherwise never met anyone from the country. She helped break down barriers and stereotypes as well as educate and entertain. She was a valued part of the Troy family and will be missed greatly.