OVERVIEW 2018 SUMMER - 2019 SUMMER

12972 people reached out in total
46 organizations & schools reached out
1785 miles driving in total (2872.6km*)

*This distance is almost same distance as Japan from north to south.

After I settled in, I started to reach out to local schools and community. Once I reached one elementary school, I had many opportunities to reach out to schools and local communities. I reached out not only to schools and libraries but also Cub clubs, Girl Scouts, ladies book club, youth group, church and international festival at some big companies.

I created JOI web page on Asia Society Texas Center in which helps people access me and ask for outreach opportunities. The web page has ideas of what I can bring to communities.

Thanks to Harris County Library outreach, I had opportunities to reach out outside of Houston area. People are really interested in Japanese culture no matter what ages they are.

In this report, I would like to highlite top three outreach activities.

TOP THREE ACTIVITIES

BIG IMPACT FOR PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN TEXAS, HOUSTON

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SPRING BREAK EVENT AT ASIA SOCIETY TX
MARCH 11-15 2019
703 PEOPLE REACHED OUT

LIBRARY OUTREACH
HARRIS COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY
APRIL-JULY 2019
410 PEOPLE REACHED OUT

SCHOOL OUTREACH
AUGUST 2018-JULY 2019
2315 PEOPLE REACHED OUT
My biggest project my first year was creating one week event at Asia Society Texas Center. This event was held on March 11th through 15th collaborating with Consulate General of Japan in Houston. The goal of this event was giving people a sense of spring Japanese culture. I prepared more than 15 activities throughout the week such as spring origami, leaning spring Japanese characters, and bento and onigiri activity for cherry blossom viewing.

Thanks to Consulate General of Japan in Houston, this event was able to screening 5 different movies every day.

This event was open to public for free during spring break, so that many people visit Asia Society and spend fun times. Through the activities, participants learn about and understand Japanese culture. Most of the visitors were not families with Japanese culture. After they spent time at the event, they became interested in Japanese culture.

Free Japanese Spring Event for All

Everyday Activity
- Monday: Origami Spring Flowers
- Tuesday: Japanese Spring Characters
- Wednesday: Origami and Bento
- Thursday: Doll’s Festival
- Friday: Children’s Day

Everyday Movie Screening
- Lu Over the Wall (2017)
- Pokemon the First Movie (1998)
- Oblivion Island
- Haruka and the Magic Mirror (2009)
- Mirai (2018)
- Astro Boy (2009)

Newspaper article about this event

I also put my effort another event at Asia Society such as Persian and Japanese paper cutting workshop and Night market-Japanese Matsuri Booth etc. Including Japanese element to the event is very important and big impact to the community.
LIBRARY OUTREACH

As part of celebration of Asian Pacific American Heritage Month, I had the opportunity to reach out 17 different Harris County Library in May. Harris County Library is widely spread, having many branches out side of the Houston area. Since Houston is a diverse area, this outreach project was very important to give people experience of Japanese culture. I brought many different programs to each library. Audience was K to adult.

ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

Harris County Public Library highly spotlighted Japanese program. My outreach schedule and big poster was displayed each library branches. Thanks to this program, I could have so many connection with each librarian. So that librarians can easily reach out to me having Japanese related program.

Programs that I brought to the community
- Kamishibai
- Tea Ceremony
- Japanese Etiquette (chopsticks challenge)
- Pop Culture
- Calligraphy
- Origami
- Paper Dyeing
- Japanese Games and Rhythm Activity
Since Asia Society Texas Center has school tour for the exhibition learning of Asian culture including Japanese culture for students (3-K), my main focus of first year was school outreach. My outreach program could bring many students to host site as a school trip. Students will learn global issues and history from contemporary arts.

School outreach has a variety way to reach out to students. Sometimes I took over usual class, and sometimes school prepared special class for students. Another time I had table for representative of Japan for some International Festival and cultural night. Each time activity and way to share the Japanese culture has to be changed depends on numbers of students or to meet the school curriculum. It was challenging sometimes but it was also fun to think of audience to enjoy and learn Japanese culture.
FOR THE NEXT YEAR

SUSTAINABILITY WAY OF GIVING AWARENESS OF JAPANESE CULTURE IN TEXAS

I have been thinking about what is a sustainable way to share the Japanese culture to the community. I have done training or sharing Japanese culture to office members. Office member create program for the public. To tell them about real Japanese culture would give them some ideas of making some programs. However, I think I should do something more big scale. My second year of JOI carrier will be more focus on find and create sustainable way to share Japanese culture in Texas.

Some of my ideas are creating web site to share Japanese culture then share the link to the teaches, training university students as a cultural leader of Japan or building annual big event at Asia Society Texas Center. These are still just ideas but if I can accomplish some of these big goals, that would be a great impact for community.

COMMENT FROM SUPERVISOR

Nina done an excellent job of planning and executing activities both at Asia Society and throughout the Houston metropolitan area. Her spring break program at our center was extremely successful, bringing in 700 visitors to learn about Japan through games, crafts, and food. Her library outreach brought her into rural Houston communities. Her work at our summer camps has enhanced learning about Japan for the campers. I am looking forward to working with her during year two, as she as many exciting ideas for programming such as a Sports Day, a Bento workshop, and Kabuki activities. She is also very interested in making her work sustainable beyond her tenure with us, and I hope to support her in making her vision a reality.

Jennifer Kapral
Director of Education and Outreach
Asia Society Texas Center
In my first year, I reached out to many elementary and middle schools, so another goal for my second year was reaching out to high schools and universities. Thanks to the connections I made in the first year, I received several new outreach offers from schools and organizations that included my target of reaching more high schools and universities. Since The Olympics originally were slated to be held in Tokyo, 2020 many school festivals focused on Japan and many people also were paying attention to Japanese culture as well because of this event.

One of my goals for the second year was to try some activities that I couldn’t offer during the first year. This is why I have done many food related workshops such as a Bento Workshop, Sushi Workshop, Onigiri Action Workshop and a Japanese Noodle Workshop in the community this year. Food related workshops can be challenging sometimes because of allergies or people’s habits etc, however food is one of the most impactful ways to share Japanese culture. Everyone who participated in these food workshops enjoyed learning Japan’s diet and making Japanese food.

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Top Three Activities

Biggest Impact for People Who Live in Houston, TX

Japanese Sports Day
Asia Society Texas Center
October 12, 2020
182 People Welcomed

Onigiri Action
Harris County Public Library
October 17 - November 20, 2020
216 People Reached Out

1000 Cranes for Hope
Asia Society Texas Center
2020 May - June
2230 Cranes Pictures Collected
One of my biggest projects my second year was creating the Japanese Sports Day event at my host site, Asia Society Texas Center. Sports Day is such a unique and fun part of Japanese culture. Since it was also one of my favorite school events in Japan, I really wanted people to experience something similar in America, especially since the 2020 Olympics was approaching. The challenging thing for creating this event was how to create team competitions. Usually schools hold a sports day festival so it is easier to divide participants into teams beforehand, but I wanted people to come whenever they wanted to, especially since we never know how many people will actually show up to the event.

Discussing this with my colleagues and supervisor, we decided that when participants showed up to the event, each person could choose the red and white team, or people showing up together can join the same color team. Preparing the score table for each activity was also meant to encourage the participants, by adding weight to their contributions for their team.

For this event, I arranged three partners: The SHUN Japanese Kitchen, The Health Museum and The CG of Japan. It was my first time to contacting a food vendor, which was also quite the learning experience.

SHUN Japanese Kitchen Link
The Scavenger Hunt Sheet and Prizes

Many Stations to Enjoy at the Event
We prepared 14 stations for participants, in an attempt to have many options for people to spend some spare time, so they could always find something interesting to do. To encourage visiting every station, I requested that our communication team hold a scavenger hunt. If participants received stamps from each station, they could get a Japanese button, Japanese phrasebook, or a passport book cover from the Japan Foundation.

Welcomed Many Young Adults for The Event
The biggest success for this event was the ability to reach many young adults. Asia Society originally was created as a business focused institution so our team and organization’s mission was bringing many youth from the community to these events and our building. Education and Outreach team created many family day events, often welcoming children and their parents, but rarely young adults. Possibly, since manga and anime have a “Sports Festival” episode, the connection to these youth could be established over the curiosity about participating in one. Thanks to our high school internship students and volunteers, participants engaged in each station very well.

Japanese Sports Day Activities

- Relay Activities
  - Chopsticks Challenge
  - Deka-pan (Big pants) Relay
  - Balloon Carrying Relay
  - Tsunahiki (Tag or War)
  - Tama-ire (Ball Tossing)

- Craft and Other Activities
  - Kendama Making
  - Giant Sudoku Station
  - Sports Day Trivia Bingo Booth
  - Japanese Letter Writing Booth
  - Kite Making by CG of Japan
  - The Health Museum Booth
  - Shun Japanese Kitchen Food
  - Japanese Snack Station

The Event Created New Outreach Opportunities
During this event, I received many positive comments from participants such as: “Thank you so much for having such a fun event!”, “It is so nice to have a Sports Day event indoors, rather than outside”, and “I really enjoyed this event”. What surprised me and excited me most was a couple of people reached out to me, requesting that I help their school’s Japan focused festivals. They would attest, “I was so inspired by the Japanese Sports Day event”, and “I want to bring these kind of fun activities to my daughter’s school”.

Giant Sudoku and Japanese Letter Writing Booth

Sports Day Trivia Bingo Booth by Internship Students

So-ran Boshi Dance
ONIGIRI ACTION OUTREACH

I held nine Onigiri Action workshops in the community during the campaign. The non-profit organization: Table for Two, holds the Onigiri Action campaign from mid October to mid November annually. If we post a photo with onigiri, then the supporting organization or company will deliver 5 school meals to people in need. I used this opportunity to campaign and hold various outreaches, during which I helped instruct participants in the community on how to make Onigiri as well as sharing basic information about Japanese food culture.

Onigiri Action Workshop Locations

10/17 The Health Museum
11/1 Northwest Branch Library
11/7 St Thomas University
11/12 Aldine Branch Library
11/14 Crosby Branch Library
11/15 Asia Society Texas Center (school tour)
11/15 Galena Park Branch Library
11/19 Katy Branch Library
11/20 Atascocita Branch Library

113 PICTURES POSTED ON SOCIAL MEDIA

For the Health Museum’s World Food Day event, I prepared 120 mini Onigiri for tasting. For Most of the people who stopped by our booth it was their first time seeing or trying Onigiri. Upon seeing the snack for the first time, some even thought that it was actually Sushi!

Thanks to connections made in my first year, I could bring Onigiri Action Workshops to many branches of the Harris County Public Library. Since Onigiri often shows up in manga and anime, participants were quite curious about what exactly it was. First, I gave a presentation about Japanese food, which included the history of Onigiri and “Ichijyuu Sansai” (one soup and three side dishes) as well as other information about Japanese food culture. At the end of these outreaches I would instruct the participants on how to make Onigiri. For the fillings, I brought authentic items such as Umeboshi (pickled plum) and Okaka (bonito flakes with soy sauce), Konbu (salty kelp) and Takuan (pickled daikon radish) which provided enough variety for everyone to find something they would enjoy.
Since there were many difficulties arising from the situation in the world, “senbazuru” (1000 cranes) was an idea brought up during a meeting with colleagues at Asia Society. Since senbazuru have a positive connotation, and are a traditional symbol of healing in Japanese culture. We hoped people could feel a sense of community with this program. We asked people to fold a crane and take a picture of it, send it to us, then once we reached 1000 pictures, Asia Society would create a compilation video of these images. For this big project, I was playing the very important role of teaching participants how to fold an origami crane. I created a crane folding tutorial video for Asia Society. The total view count of this video has reached over 600 so far. I also again assisted Harris County Public Library, I taught library patrons how to fold cranes on various live streams. One of the biggest tutorial sessions, had me instructing Houston Independent School District Art Teachers. More than 80 teachers participated in the session and learned how to make an origami crane.

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Another instance had me teaching the folding method on Asia Society Texas Center's Facebook live page. This experience taught me that it can be difficult to teach origami virtually, since I can’t help them directly. Yet there is a benefit, in that I can reach out to many people whom I wouldn’t be able to reach in person. I am glad this project was well received by many people regardless of their age or experience with origami. Since among the participants, it could be the first time hearing of the significance of the crane in Japan or other Asian Countries, it could be the first time to try folding origami, and so on.

Thank You So Much for Joining the Event

Consul-General, Mr. Fukushima and His Family
Houston Cityscape
Mayor of Houston, Mr. Sylvester Turner

Photos from across the world
THE unexpected realization that I find most important about my time here, is the idea that someone who had no idea about Houston, can come here and become a fully-fledged Houstonian in just two short years. After driving over 3,200 miles and reaching out to over 19,000 people, some who were interested in Japanese culture, some who originally did not, it feels like quite the journey... even if it felt quite fast. My impact on this area during my time as a JOI coordinator, made me feel like a representative of Japan. Although I was tasked with contributing my culture to this community, I feel like in the end, IT contributed a lot more to ME. Ultimately I was a foreigner and a newcomer to Houston, Texas and the United States as a whole, so almost everything was learning experience. Everything from living, working, adapting, communicating, experiencing different perspectives and opinions of Japan and Japanese culture, and learning more about American culture. Throughout all of these experiences... I feel like I grew up in many different aspects, all of which wildly exceeded any of my initial expectations.
Also talking with colleagues about Asian and Japanese culture introduced me to many new perspectives. Such as the view that Japan is a high technology country, which isn't wrong necessarily. But it is also true that much of the country is very traditional slow to change. These views are all about perspective, and everyone's perspective is different. From my perspective I always felt that America is the most technologically advanced country in the world. I think these differences in perspective come from the fact that is can be hard to see or notice something if you are surrounded by a specific environment.

Through my experiences participating in outreach, I could feel the people's curiosity about Japanese culture and their willingness to learn more about it. This curiosity always brought me joy and gave me the drive to keep sharing the culture that much more.

When attending the Montgomery County Memorial Library's Anime Club, one of the students said "It is my first time to meet an actual Japanese person! I have been watching Anime since I was a little, but I never thought I could meet you here!" with bright eyes. That was a very special moment for me, since I had hoped I could give her some realistic expectations of the image of a Japanese person. Hopefully encouraging her to learn the language or visit to Japan someday.

Initially in April, I planned to hold a large scale Anime Culture Night at Asia Society Texas Center by utilizing part of the grant program provided by the Japan Foundation Center for Global Partnership. Yet, due to the circumstances surrounding the pandemic, I was unable to complete the project. The plan was to create a community and learning place for people who love anime and manga. We planned to showcase a panel session component from a creator's perspective, a station for learning deeper culture through anime and manga and some fun games as well. This event would have been a perfect fit for the Asia Society Texas Center's mission of bringing young adults in our targeted age range to our building. Not only this event but also there are other potential event ideas which I still haven't done yet. Hence, I still hope to try and find a way to keep sharing Japanese culture with the west, even while I am in Japan.
According to the data from the Japan Business Association of Houston, the Japanese population in the greater Houston area and Texas as a whole is growing every year. Proving that Japanese companies and immigrants are increasing and becoming more prominent. With more Japanese comes more of a necessity to facilitate communication and understanding of Japanese culture, especially for Americans who work for these Japanese companies. As a result, I felt some sense of purpose in my time with JOI, and extreme joy from every outreach or activity I participated in.

I’m grateful and honored to have been a JOI coordinator, especially at the Asia Society Texas Center. My host site always gave countless opportunities for me to share Japanese culture in a way that felt fulfilling and purposeful. Thus, I would like to express my gratitude to Asia Society Texas Center, Laurasian Institution and the Japan Foundation Center for Global Partnership for the support over these past two years. Additionally, Harris County Public Library was also gracious and welcoming for all of my programs throughout the various branches. I can’t express enough my gratitude for the president, supervisors, colleagues and friends who helped me make tons of unforgettable memories.

SUPERVISOR’S COMMENTS

I can’t believe Nina’s time with the Asia Society Texas Center is coming to an end! Her second year started with a whirlwind of activities. She kicked off the year by hosting a sold-out Back-to-School Bento night, in which families attended to learn about the history and culture behind Bento before trying their hand at making their own. She then immersed herself in our Tsuruya Kokei: Modern Kabuki Prints Revised and Revisited exhibit, helping develop lesson plans and activities for students related to kabuki theatre and woodblock printing. Our favorite fall event was the Japanese Sports Day, which brought families and teenagers to Asia Society for a fun-filled day of activities, competitions, food, and even dancing.
For the spring, Nina took the lead in planning a lot of our spring break activities, which included partnering with the Consulate General of Japan to host daily craft activities, Japanese films, and more Bento! We were set to launch 10 events for spring break when the unexpected challenges of COVID-19 arrived, causing us to cancel everything. But Nina rose to the occasion and pivoted quickly to online outreach, continuing to have a huge impact on the community. She had an already-established strong partnership with Harris County Libraries, and they immediately reached out to her to start virtual outreach. Her sessions were widely popular, one having nearly 80 participants log in.

In Year 2, it was inspiring to watch Nina’s confidence grow and blossom. She had a clear vision for activities and events she wanted to organize, and executed these plans very well. She developed skills in coordinating interns, volunteers, and staff members, and learned the nuances of how to adapt her presentation style to diverse audiences and online audiences.

As her time with us comes to an end, we are all missing her already! We imagined a beautiful dinner at a restaurant, large gatherings of Nina’s friends, and lots of hugs. But, as we celebrate her time with us safely and virtually, we know this is not a goodbye, but a goodbye—for-now. We hope to see her often virtually when she returns to Japan, and to continue our connections with her and all the wonderful support folks from the Laurasian Institution.

Jennifer Kapral
Director of Education and Outreach
Asia Society Texas Center

Spring Event Poster & Online Outreach Flyers

School Visit: Library Time

With Supervisor

Women’s Empowerment Tea Event