2018-2019

JOI annual report

Chiemi Shimizu
University of Central Arkansas (UCA)

1. JAPANESE CONCERT
2. SCHOOL VISIT AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH
3. FESTIVALS IN COMMUNITY
I organised a Japanese Concert on December 5th, 2018. Since I am a music-loving person, that was one of the activities I wanted others to see. A total 18 musicians played in this concert from UCA, Hendrix College and Arkansas Tech University. I was so glad that people from various universities who wanted to play Japanese songs gathered. I played the Koto and Shamisen and other musicians played Japanese anime songs, Japanese classical pieces and pop song. The venue was full and some people couldn’t find a seat. I was so moved especially when audiences sang a “Ponyo’s Theme Song” with our performance and chorus team’s performance “Ue wo muite aruko”. One of audience told me “I really enjoyed concert since there were various genre music and I was able to know new Japanese aspect though music”. I will plan to concert in second year and clear improvement points such as the size of venue.
2. School visit and Community outreach

I visited 18 schools, 5 libraries and 1 nursing home in my 1st year in Arkansas. Since I used to be a teacher, visiting school is very special for me. I always have two purposes for going to schools. First, to increase global understanding by teaching others about Japanese culture. Second, to talk about how children are affected by their environment and financial status with teachers. Some schools here do not have foreign teachers, which means that I could be the first foreign teacher for them. The children at the schools stare at me and once I start to speak the Japanese language they start to laugh or be surprised. The children asked me many questions and gave me many hugs. Every time I meet such kids, I admire their curiosity. It is the most important to me that they find foreign cultures “interesting”. I hope this will be a first step to World Peace. Also, there are many new discoveries and differences between Japanese schools and US schools. Teacher lounge, lunch staffs, backpack system, full-time counsellors, teacher break times and things like that give me a new view toward education environment. At the same time, caring for poor children and foreign children has common problems with Japan. I would like to talk and see many educational sites and expand global perspective more and more.
3. Festivals in Community

2018 Sep. Memphis Japan Festival (Memphis, Tennessee)
2018 Oct. Conway Eco+Art Festival (Conway, Arkansas)
2019 Feb. Cherry Blossom Festival (Hot springs, Arkansas)
2019 Apr. Nashville Cherry Blossom Festival (Nashville, Tennessee)

I joined several festivals in Arkansas and Tennessee with UCA Japanese Club members, Hendrix College, Troy University, Austin Peay State University and Murray State University. These universities are where the JOI coordinators used to work. We really enjoyed inter-university exchange. At the festival, we can meet consulate-general staff and Japan-America association. It is a great opportunity to exchange information. We introduced Origami, Calligraphy, Japanese toys and Yukata. Since many people with Japanese interests (wide rage ages people) came to our booth, conversations with them were very fun.
**Supervisor’s Comment - David House**

Chiemi Shimizu has played a vital role in creating Japan-related educational experiences here in Arkansas. The popularity of her events, the motivation she generates in our community to participate in her activities, and the attention of university and community leaders she has drawn to Japanese language and culture all testify to the high quality of her work. Chiemi has clearly made it her mission to inspire interest and joy through education, and dedicated to that purpose she works hard to make connections in the U.S. and create the best opportunities to share her native language and culture. Although she might not admit it, she is an excellent organiser and leader, and through her activities she has proven to me that a JOI Coordinator can work together with those around her to help people of all ages to learn something new and -- more importantly -- want to learn more about Japan. My own students as well as people Chiemi and I sometimes meet in the community recognise her and ask about upcoming activities, and I often get emails and messages on social media asking when the next JOI event will be. Chiemi has added significant value both to my institution and the educational experiences available in our community. This next year’s focus will be on sustainability of the JOI mission after Chiemi leaves; I believe the mission will certainly continue without her at UCA and in central Arkansas, but I don't think she will ever truly "leave us." Her care and hard work has laid a strong foundation for great opportunities for Japanese and American people to work closely together to build a more understanding world.

**Conclusion**

My host site, University of Central Arkansas has a Japanese club. There are 6 main members: 2 American students and 4 Japanese students. They have motivated others to come to each event and work hard to make the events memorable. Surprisingly, some students already have traditional Japanese experiences. Every time I suggest a plan, we had a great discussion and made good events and classes in local school that would attract students and children. Moreover, we would help some events with the Japanese club at Hendrix College where a former JOI Coordinator, Aya Murata had worked. The fun and significance of the organised club event are passed on from seniors to new students. This relationship is very important for us because it is not only a way that we can create better events, but that we can also create a sustainable connection between the Japanese culture and central Arkansas. We are planning the Japanese festival in this fall and making with other universities’ students. I’m sure that this festival will be more impact for central Arkansas.
JOI ANNUAL REPORT

University of Central Arkansas

CHIEMI SHIMIZU

TOP3 Activities

1. OMATSURI Japanese Festival
2. Outreach through Japanese music
3. Japanese camp
My biggest project in my second year was the Japanese Festival at UCA, my host site. I started planning it as a project manager with my supervisor in February of 2019 and I applied for a CGP Education grant. My desire was to create a space where people could interact with one another beyond simple descriptions of culture. Through our Japanese Festival, we were able to use traditional art, food and culture of Japan to appeal to the senses of sight, taste, and hearing. We had 80 volunteers from different universities, over 420 guests, and both our university’s president and our director of International Engagement came and enjoyed it. Most of the people stayed at the venue and had fun until we closed. We provided foods (Takoyaki, Yakisoba, Yakitori, Onigiri, Japanese breads), activities (Calligraphy, Origami, Yukata, Yo-yo sukui, Katanuki, Face painting, etc), and performances that were different from those of the previous festival held in Conway. We also featured a "Japan Quiz time" with over 90 participants, a cosplay contest, and a raffle so that people of all ages and levels of interest could participate and enjoy. I’m positive this festival had a great impact on people in Arkansas and helped increase understanding and tolerance for Japanese culture. The most important thing is that this festival was made by students and community members. From the beginning, there were many difficulties regarding budget, location, and foods. But I had wonderful supporters that helped a lot. I have felt a sense of accomplishment, and I also learned about the difficulties of organizing an event that shares Japanese culture to many people. This experience has helped me mature as an educator. I feel very lucky that I was able to work on this project.
From the survey

*I really enjoyed the diversity between modern J-pop dances to traditional dances performed from generations to generation.

*I was impressed with the large turnout. Everyone seemed so happy and busy. I enjoyed Bon Odori dance and the later dances as well. My favorite event was the Kendo demonstration. I studied in Honolulu in the late 70’s. It brings back memories of good times.

*I think they were all quite interesting, but I personally enjoyed watching the dances the most, especially Otaku dance.

*Thanks for the amazing opportunity with the festival. I had a blast and would love to come again if it is decided to be held this year as well.
Introducing classic Japanese music was one of my reasons for participating in JOI. I played Shamisen and Koto in my first year, and I was able to expand on this during the second year. I was very honored to be able to play music and to show classical Japanese culture at different festivals and to a few of the universities' music classes. When I visited music classes in some universities, I always enjoyed talking about music and music education with the professors and students. More people than I had expected are familiar with Koto and Shamisen. Surprisingly, they knew them from anime and movies. Sometimes, I was able to observe their regular classes. These experiences were very interesting to me as a teacher. Also, when I played the Koto at the moon-viewing festival, two students said to me, "The Koto's sound was very beautiful. It was a great night." their eyes sparkling. I'm sure I will never forget their words. Truly, it was an amazing night.
I was involved in two different camps, one at UCA and the other at Hendrix college. At UCA there was "Bear Camps" for kids during summer vacation. My supervisor, David House, was the director of this camp. Together, we planned the Japanese education program. I was in charge of elementary students for a week. The biggest difference from regular outreach was teaching the same students every day. We taught language, songs, games, dances, and ways of making foods. It was challenging but I really enjoyed their reactions. Further, Japanese students and I negotiated with the owner of some bamboo, and we made the equipment for nagashisomen. That was a very unique experience. If I were in Japan, I wouldn't have made it. The kids were so excited by this!

The other camp was a Japanese immersion program organized by Hendrix College. I created the content of this program along with Gwen Stockwell, who was the former JOI coordinator's supervisor. We prepared language and culture lessons, cooking, and games. Most of her students had already taken Japanese classes, so we focused on speaking and practical conversation review. There are many students who aim to become a JET teacher, and I would like to keep supporting them in their goal.
Conclusion

My perception of the US has changed over the past two years. I decided to join the JOI program to expand my perspective as an educator and to encourage global understanding between people by teaching about Japan. It's very special that JOI Coordinators get to research Japan and introduce it to the people in the US. I have really enjoyed this and learned a lot from the process. I have been able to understand more about the people and culture of the US through this outreach. This experience has made me more flexible and diverse. Especially in the beginning of 2020 I have had many opportunities to think about this. Some times it has been tough, but I think it has been important to experience this in the world. Through JOI activities, there have been many opportunities to meet fans of Japan, so often times I only saw the positive side. Only seeing the positive is not my true goal, and I'll keep thinking about cross cultural understanding. Finally, I really appreciate my supervisor, David. He always helped out with my projects, gave me good advice, and was always encouraging. I have been very lucky to be able to come to UCA as a JOI coordinator.

Comment from supervisor
This past year, Chiemi more than proved the value of having a local JOI Coordinator. She was able to plan and run a number and wide variety of events, especially our amazing Japanese Festival. Chiemi brought together students, faculty, and community members from all over central Arkansas to help make things happen; because of her successes, we’re all keeping in touch and excited to continue her mission even after she has to leave.

David House
Visiting Lecturer, Japanese Language
University of Central Arkansas

Comment from Host site
Despite the closure of campus in March, 2020 due to the pandemic, I am happy to say that Ms Chiemi Shimizu completed her term was our JOI coordinator with great success. The highlight of her year was undoubtedly the Japanese Autumn Festival held on campus in November 2018. UCA President Houston Davis welcomed hundreds of guests from across the a State. We are very grateful to the Japan Foundation for their support in providing our campus and region this wonderful cultural enrichment!"

Phillip Bailey
Associate Vice-President for International Education and Engagement
University of Central Arkansas

Comment from the honorary consul of Japan
Chiemi's contribution to Arkansas's Japanese culture has been tremendous during her time as JOI Coordinator. In many instances, the public would have had no opportunity to experience Japanese culture locally without the outreach activities that Chiemi planned, coordinated, promoted and presented. My sincerest thanks to Chiemi and to JOI!

Mary Zunick
The honorary consul of Japan in Hot Springs

This is a Youtube video that I made during quarantine. 47 Japanese people participated in this project for introducing their own dialects.