1. Japanese concert

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.

MAIN EVENT AT UCA
2018-2019
2018 Oct. Tea Ceremony (53 people)
2018 Nov. Halloween Festival (125 people)
2018 Nov. Haiku-Hike (24 people)
2018 Dec. Japanese Concert (82 people)
2019 Feb. Mochi-tsuki (89 people)
2019 Mar. Cooking Class 1 (26 people)
2019 Apr. Cooking Class 2 (22 people)

Community language school
Beginner class 2018 Sep - Dec
Beginner class / Intermediate class 2019 Feb - Apr
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.
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.