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**First year’s OVERVIEW**

The main areas I have covered are my host university, the Jackson State University (JSU) and elementary schools in Jackson, Mississippi. At JSU, there is Kidz College, an after-school daycare, as well. Moreover, I reached out to Japanese Anime club at JSU. Meanwhile, in the community of Jackson, I took part in a church and an African dance class, volunteered as a Concert Usher, volunteered for kids in a base of air force, international class in a church, international meetings at JSU, and so on in order to meet new people and learn new culture.

Population of Jackson is about 164,000. JSU has about 7,250 students. At this point of time, I have reached out to 2,905 people.

To put it briefly, the first year was like a roller-coaster. At first, I was challenged by many new things to settle down. Then, after settling down, my new life as a JOI coordinator began. Against my prediction, the stable productive days did not last long. The pandemic happened, and soon thereafter, the Black Lives Matter movement flared up...

According to the Chart 1, obviously the number dramatically dropped when the pandemic started and keeps staying low. However, I still found benefits in the midst of this situation. I was able to get multiple opportunities. First, I gained an understanding of history and various values in the US. Likewise, I was able to notice the difference between Japanese and American education system and learn how to continue working online.

In this report, I am describing my outreach both, in person and online.
Outreach for University

[The main sites I have covered]

1. Anime club at JSU
2. Other class at JSU & another Univ.
3. Japanese class at JSU

Fortunately, JSU has an Anime club. There I engaged in the club to meet the members. They spent most of the time watching an anime. I thought it was amusing for them to touch on the Japanese culture, which they were familiar through an anime. I arranged workshops, and it seemed they enjoyed them. One of the activities was Fukuwarai. First, I showed a short anime so that they could know Japanese Oshogatsu culture such as Aisatsu, foods and toys. Then, we tried to do the main activity. I thought this age would like competing and I made a small prize for a winner. The winner was indeed really happy.

I have also taken part in another Japanese club at Mississippi State University (MSU) and delivered outreach there. MSU is over 100 miles away from JSU. Thankfully, I got an opportunity to meet a former JOI coordinator who had worked there. Warmly, she spared time to refer me to some employees at MSU and the Starkville School District who were associated with her outreach. However, she did not know anyone in the Japanese club, so I found a Facebook group and contacted the club president.

At MSU, there are official Japanese classes and a Japanese club. The number of the members in the club was almost the same as JSU, though they covered many different topics. Referring to their activities, I would like to deliver more various topics to JSU students.

At JSU, some of the classes related to cultural fields have interest in the Japanese culture. Through my supervisor, a professor offered me to introduce the Japanese culture in one of her classes. I was able to pleasantly surprise students who were not initially interested with fascinating facts about Japan.
Outreach for Children

[The main sites I have covered]
1. Kidz College at JSU
2. Pecan Park Elementary school
3. Other elementary schools.

My supervisor referred me to a Kidz College director. She let me engage a K-3rd class every week. In the beginning, she was attending my classes, however, after she had faith in me, she did not visit my classes. At first, I needed some help with handling the students and instruction, then I got along with student workers, and they helped me a lot.

What I felt challenging was figuring out a topic every week. I was brainstorming a lot and got different ideas. I also went to Pecan Park Elementary school every week, and I felt that way with the elementary school as well as Kidz College. I covered more grades, K-5th, than in Kidz College. Sometimes, the topics I was teaching would get mixed up. Therefore, I kept records of what I taught, the number of student and students' reaction to my instruction. This was effective to brush up my presentations and activities. Besides, even after a long vacation from schools, I was able to refresh the key points of what I should take care of during the outreach.

At New Jerusalem Christian Academy, there were about 100 students. Children enjoyed Origami thanks to teachers' help. I learned how important it is to get support.

At Pecan Elementary school, I introduced "Soroban" and "Origami" as learning tools.
We have already held meetings 12 times. For the purpose of continuing this group, I took a survey and feedback after the meetings. I am going to keep improving it and making it enjoyable.

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Outreach Online
[The main sites I have covered]
1. Virtual International Group
2. Online Workshop
3. Online Japanese class

After the pandemic started, I was struggling to find a new way to reach out to people. However, I considered it as a new opportunity. On the web, there is no geographic border. Also, one of my goals is to construct a sustainable connection between Japan and the US. I organized an online international group in order to build a continual connection between Japanese people and American people. To gather participants, I contacted not only JSU students, but also professors at MSU and Los Angeles City College, students at the University of New Orleans and JOI coordinators.

We took a picture with “Shi-sa-” pose because there were Okinawan participants.

In addition to that, I started online workshops, such as "Tanabata", "Radio Taiso" and "Soran-bushi". Unfortunately, only a few participants joined. PR is the issue to solve. I am still figuring out how to attain many participants in virtual workshops as workshops in person.
Besides the JOI activity, I looked for and joined a lot of community groups. Those connections gave me new opportunities and ideas to enrich the JOI activity.

I took many chances to meet new people and expanded my world.

With a director from Delta State University ↓

↑ Shinnen-kai with the America-Japan Society and companies in Mississippi

Japan Fes at NOLA

African Dance class

Japan Fes at Memphis

International visitors for JSU

Volunteer for kids at a base

a Concert
First year's

SUMMARY

Thanks to the support from so many people around me, my first year was fulfilled with a lot of smiles and new experiences, and I learned various cultures and diverse values. Besides JOI activity, I tried to meet new people spontaneously. It created more opportunities to promote my JOI activity. After the pandemic started, I was struggling with reaching out to people. However, I noticed there was the same method, "Take action!"

Supervisor's comment

The introduction of the JOI program at JSU has been a tremendous asset to the university, community and state. Through the tireless efforts and dedication of our JOI coordinator, the students and general population of Mississippi has been able to gain first-hand experience with the people and cultures of Japan. With language classes, workshops, classroom presentations and discussions the JOI coordinator has brought Japan to Mississippi’s doorsteps. Aside from his professional and cultural contributions to our space, the friendly demeanor and “can-do” attitude of our coordinator has lifted the spirits of many people he has encountered.

On all fronts possible he has proven himself and the JOI program to be an overall valuable addition to the international community in Mississippi...We look forward to an amazing second year.

Thousand thanks to everyone...
Overview

This year, everyone including me in the world faced a challenging time because of Covid-19. The number of people I reached decreased from last year, however I still reached 2,585 people this year (last year was 2,874) and I believe I achieved the mission of JOI. In this report, I’d like to highlight my top 3 outreach activities. I have accomplished those activities with great support from my hosting institution, Jackson State University, and many community partners here in Mississippi.
1. FUN EVENTS TO KNOW JAPAN

"Japanese Trivia & Game Night"

I have thought of many online activities after the pandemic started. The Japanese Trivia & Game Night was one of my enjoyable events to know Japan. I have tried to use two new applications “Kahoot” and “Nearpod” for the first time. It was difficult to figure out how I can use it effectively, however, after the event, this activity was referred to by other universities and contributed to their new challenge. So I believe it was successful.

Yr.18 JOI Collaboration Project “Virtual Travel to Japan”

In the event “Virtual Travel to Japan”, all yr18 JOI coordinators worked together for it for the first time. As a result, the event was also very successful. Over 120 people participated in the event and we received good feedback after the event such as they learned a lot of new things about Japan. In this event, we have made a itinerary and gave it to participants in advance so that participants could enjoy it more and feel it’s real trip. Also, I used “Tour Creator” to show Japan in 3D and I’m sure participants felt more real Japan than 2D pictures.

Presentation "Unconventional mask use"

Presentation "Business in Japan"
2. FIELD OF EDUCATION

Yr.17 and 18 JOI Collaboration Event "American Education System & Japanese Education Systems"

I have been hoping to contribute to Japanese education for young Japanese people and Japan’s future. Not only Americans, but also Japanese people joined this event and both of us made a presentation so that we learned about each other's education system. This event’s purpose is providing the chance to learn another education system and get hints to improve both of our education.

JOI & J-leap Collaboration Event “アメリカから考える日本の教育”

Many Japanese teachers attended this event. This event is a collaboration with another JOI coordinator Mai and J-leap members. We also invited our supervisors and a Japanese equipped teacher as a commentator. In this event, We have provided what we learned in the US such as what American education system is, what active learning is, American new type schools, how to use education techs and so on.

Presentation for a JP High School “Mississippi and JOI Coordinator”

I’ve done this presentation several times to Japanese high school students. I talked about MS, my experience and job as a JOI coordinator. I’ve often felt JP students don’t have many chances to know outside of their school, many kinds of jobs and other worlds. Because of this, in my opinion, many students can’t see their future clearly. I’d like to provide a chance for them to know more options for their future. I believe that once they find their dream, they would be motivated to study for it and make a better future for Japan.
I organized the first Mississippi Japan Festival on July 18th 2021 at the Mississippi Museum of Art. The number of participants was over 1,500 which is much bigger than I thought. I started to plan this festival in December 2020. At that time, I was not sure if I could accomplish this festival because of the pandemic and budget. Coordinators were temporarily in Japan and I had worked on the project there, but many things would have been easier if I worked from Mississippi. Fortunately, I could return to Mississippi at the end of May, and also regarding the budget, the Japanese companies, Nissan and Unipres, sponsored the festival, and the Japan Foundation CGP granted us. By the festival day, we got many materials and performers from far places like Louisiana, Florida, New York, Washington DC and Tennessee thanks to them.

I have faced many other challenges other than those such as recruiting volunteers, staffing, advertisement, vendors, Japanese activities and so on. At first, I couldn’t find many volunteers, but my office, JSU global, helped me to find volunteers, and in the end we had almost 40 volunteers at the festival. Additionally, I had too many things on my plate and I didn’t have much time for staffing, but committee members helped me a lot with it. Advertisement was also one of my worries. I was afraid there were not many participants and made performers who came from far away disappointed, but my supervisor gave me a lot of good advice like using not only SNS (FB, Instagram, Twitter) but also doing a press release and we got many participants. Also, I believe the website I made for the first time contributed to getting participants. Thanks to my supervisor, we got many vendors as well. Besides that, in the festival, I planned some activities which could only be handled by Japanese volunteers. I really appreciate their helping those booths without taking a break in the festival.
I’m very satisfied and glad that many people here experienced Japanese culture, got interested in it and gave us a lot of positive feedback. This was the first experience for me, so I also have many reflection points. For example, I should have prepared more materials. I’ve seen some booths have run out of the materials earlier. Also, I should have shared my thoughts ahead of time in detail to committee members. If I did it, I could have left work to them and wouldn’t have to take care of almost everything. Concerning cleaning up, I should have thought about how to take down materials effectively in cooperation with volunteers. We borrowed many materials from Japanese Consulate and I was the only person who could sort materials, and volunteers needed to wait until I finished organizing those materials. The most important thing which I felt is, though it’s basics, sharing background, thoughts and details with teammates is essential for the success of a project.

Although I have many reflection points, I believe the project was a great success. I’ve heard and seen that not only participants but also volunteers enjoyed the festival.

Jackson Free Press article

MS Japan Fest in Local news
“Summary”

Throughout the two years, I have felt very grateful for being JOI coordinator in Mississippi. I sincerely appreciate everyone’s support for not only the festival but also every other thing in these two years. Thank you, my MS family, JSU global office members, and American, Japanese volunteers, committee members, performers and Consulate for the festival, also CGP staff, Nissan, Unipres, friends and my supervisor. For the future, I will make use of this great experience to contribute to Japan’s future.

SUPERVISOR’S COMMENT

The year’s closing report ends on a high note. Mr. Daiki Suematsu has gone above and beyond what anyone could have imagined. The attendance, activities, and performances of the state’s first ever Japan Festival was amazingly and expertly coordinated. From the rolling video screens of sites of Japan, to traditional dancers and drummers, the event was a grand success and a quite appropriate ending activity to end our hosting of a JOI Coordinator. Jackson State University and the state of Mississippi now have a better understanding of the people and cultures of Japan because of his work. We honor and celebrate the time he has dedicated to our great state and the education and cultural emersion of its people. In all good faith we will strive to ensure his work continues in his physical absence, whether that be through a study abroad experience or continuing to hold Japan Festivals in the upcoming years.