JOI Annual Report
2021 summer-2022 summer

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How did I expand the outreach area?
What I have been doing to make Japanese interests sustainable.

My host site is Mayville State University in North Dakota. Mayville is a small town that has a population of less than 2000, located between Fargo and Grand Forks. I joined Office of Diversity and Inclusion which supports the University's Commitment to practice principles of diversity, equity and inclusion for all students, faculty and staff. My supervisor, Amy Fuglestad coordinates this office and advises the Intercultural club on campus, which meets weekly.

I tried to expand outreach areas not only in Mayville but to other cities. Since making many connections, I've been able to reach out to a wide range of people, spanning the generation from kids to senior citizens.

On-campus, I hosted several activities following the seasonal events. I held regular Japanese language classes and Japanese game nights. My first big event for kids was on the education day, Marketplace for Kids which is a local nonprofit organization designed to ignite the spirit of innovation in students. These events and connections with the university's education department created many opportunities for school visits and expanded my outreach area. In total, I had 36 classes (K5-K12) visits this year.

Also, I visited a special education school in Portland twice a month and gave a small presentation at the senior citizens center as well.

As there are no Japanese programs offered in ND schools or universities I was afraid that my outreach efforts to raise Japanese interest would end after I'm gone. Thanks to Consul-General in Chicago and Honorary Consul in Minnesota, I have connected with the North Dakota State Commerce, North Dakota Trade Office, and Japan America Society of Minnesota (JASM). I believe these great connections will enrich the relationships between North Dakota and Japan. By connecting people to people, my friends supported hosting a big event in downtown Fargo with “Fargo Meets Japan” which is the local group learning Japanese language and culture.

Mayville State University is on the way to getting a scholarship for students to study in Japan from JASM.
Setsubun - On Campus Events

The biggest event on campus was Setsubun on February 3rd. Although it was a very cold day, 20 students joined this event. For the preparation, several students helped me to cut vegetables and decorate the room. For the hook to start this event, I shared how to fold origami cups so that they could use them for bean throwing. Then, I had a small presentation about what Setsubun is. Actually, students were so quiet during my presentation, that I wasn’t sure if they enjoyed it or not. After my presentation, students made Ehomaki by themselves using Makisu. When it was time to eat Ehomaki, all students tried to eat their Ehomaki without speaking and sat facing the luck direction. I noticed that they just tried to follow my presentation very carefully! I know students love to talk while eating so it was weird but fun! The best part was they picked the ingredients which they like to make their own Ehomaki roll. Also, I taught “Oni wa Soto!, Fuku wa Uchi!” which means “Devils Out! Happiness In!”. They used their own origami cup to throw beans at the pictures of Red Devil and Blue Devil. They had so much fun! Thanks to a Trail County Tribune writer coming, our event was focused in the local newspaper. It featured this event and international students at Mayville State University.
Japanese Calligraphy (Shodo) Workshop

One of the reasons I became a JOI coordinator was that I wanted to teach Japanese calligraphy here in the United States. Since arriving here, I’ve had many chances to give Shodo workshops at Mayville State University, University of North Dakota, Minnesota State University Moorhead, and Japanese Culture Camp for Kids.

When I teach Shodo, I always start with a picture of my family. My grandmother, my grandma’s sister, and my mother are Shodo teachers. That helps students feel closer to me. While teaching a series of Shodo classes in Mayville State’s Education Department, I informed the future elementary school teachers how the Japanese school system is. They were so surprised to learn that Shodo is one of the subjects taught in Japan.

As I taught the basic strokes of writing with the brush, I introduced the Japanese terms “Tome”: stop, “Hane”: upwards, and “Harai”: sweeping. Students followed the way to use the brush and I was glad they made great progress. Students love to learn how to write their name with Japanese.

I felt very happy that I could share Shodo and help students enjoy the process and feel good about their work.
I had many chances to visit local schools this year. The one I visited the most is Northwood public school. I had 24 classes there. The activities I held were cooking (rice balls, miso soup, and Ehomaki sushi rolls), Origami folding, Chopsticks challenge, Radio calisthenics, dance with the presentation of some seasonal events, the history of Japan and North Dakota, the importance of learning about foreign culture, the useful Japanese phrases and so on. Also, I offered the pen pal program for 5-6 graders and had an online meeting between the North Dakota and Japanese students. Because of my many visits to Northwood, I have many great stories to share. One of the teachers wrote an article about my classes in the local newspaper Gleaner. Thanks to the article, I got an email from people who used to live in Japan and had kept a lot of Japanese items in their home. They wanted to show them to me if I could use those items for other school visits. Although North Dakota has few connections with Japan, there are some people who have great memories of staying in Japan for a long time ago. They didn’t have any chance to share those items. I was so glad they reached out to me and was able to hear how they love Japan. Another story was on the Mayville campus. While I had a meeting with my supervisor Amy in the library, a woman asked me “Are you the one who visited Northwood Public School?” I said “Yes”. She told me that her daughter was in my class, and had asked her to buy Japanese white rice to make her own sushi roll at home after that class. A woman asked for a handshake and showed such appreciation. I was so happy to hear that by attending my class, her daughter now cooks sushi rolls by herself at home and shares it with her family.
SUPERVISOR COMMENTS

We are so fortunate at Mayville State University to be the first site in North Dakota to host a JOI Coordinator. Having Aiko Hatano as that coordinator is amazing! She is delightful and dynamic, making friends and connections wherever she goes. From University language classes and game nights to rural school visits to attending Ag Business tours with state and regional government agencies, Aiko is making connections and creating valuable partnerships between North Dakota and Japan.

PHOTOS FROM ACTIVITIES