After settling in, I created an Instagram and Facebook page to promote JOI Program activities. In addition, I was able to make a page for the JOI Program on Western Carolina University's Japanese Program website. The page contains ideas of what I can bring to the community, as well as a brochure, a monthly newsletter, and a request form.

Since obtaining my North Carolina driver's license, I have been active on campus as well as in libraries and schools by being able to reach out to a wider range of ages and communities. For these reasons, I am grateful to the Japan Foundation Global Partnerships Department, the Laurasian Institution, and Western Carolina University's Japanese Program and Office of Global Engagement (WCU Global) for this wonderful opportunity to bring Japan-related activities and exchange opportunities to Western North Carolina.

In this report, I would like to highlight my top three outreach activities during my first year: the Onigiri Action, the Japanese Calligraphy Exhibition, and the Western Carolina University's International Festival. These activities were made possible by the great support of my host institution, Western Carolina University, and the community.

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<th>Number of Organizations and Schools Reached Out To:</th>
<th>Number of Events and Workshops Held:</th>
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**TOP 3 ACTIVITIES**

- **Onigiri Action**
- **Japanese Calligraphy Exhibition**
- **International Festival**
ONIGIRI ACTION

I have organized a total of three "Onigiri Action" events at Western Carolina University between October 5 and November 5, 2021. Onigiri Action is a philanthropic campaign that Table for Two (TFT) hosts each fall in honor of World Food Day (October 16). Table for Two strives to help feed the world’s children with the simple act of taking a photo. By posting photos of Onigiri (rice balls) on the campaign website and/or on social media with #OnigiriAction, you can help provide five school lunches per photo to underprivileged children around the world.

Table for Two is a non-profit organization, first established in Japan in 2007, that partners with corporations, restaurants, schools, and other food service providers to work globally to correct food inequities through a unique meal-sharing program.

ORIGAMI AND STAMPS
On October 5, we discussed world food problems through our own experiences and made origami Onigiri and Onigiri stamps with toilet paper cores.

JAPANESE CALLIGRAPHY
On November 3, each student wrote one character from "おにぎりアクション @ WCU 2021", and also drew a picture of Onigiri with a Fude brush. Many students experienced Japanese Calligraphy for the first time but still found that the activity was enjoyable.

CLAY MAGNETS
On November 4, we used clay to make Onigiri magnets and created small boxes out of origami. A few students struggled to make Onigiri shapes out of clay, but everyone was able to make them successfully.
On March 22, 2022, a reception was held at the Rotunda Gallery of the Jackson County Public Library, where my Japanese Calligraphy was showcased as an exhibition for the first time. My work was displayed in the Rotunda Gallery of the Jackson County Public Library from late March through the end of April. I started Japanese Calligraphy when I was six years old and earned an Instructor Certification (師範), the highest level of achievement recognized for a Japanese Calligraphy master at the age of 21, but I never thought I would have this opportunity in the United States. I am truly grateful to the Jackson County Arts Council for reaching out to me.

I tried to create Japanese Calligraphy pieces that could be enjoyed by people who do not understand Japanese, and completed 13 various works, including 般若心経 (Heart Sutra), ∞, and writing in a style similar to pictographs called 萬書体 (seal script). Although I faced many difficulties because of the environment not being the same as in Japan I'm proud that I managed to complete my work and hold the exhibition even with the lack of specific Japanese Calligraphy tools.

I was very pleased that a lot of students, faculty members, and friends went to see the exhibition. It is a great pleasure for me that more and more people in our community that I met at other events and workshops said, "Are you the one who wrote the calligraphy piece?"

I hope to hold more exhibitions in Gallery 130 at WCU and elsewhere in the near future.
INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL

On April 28, 2022, the 41st Annual International Festival was held at Western Carolina University. As part of the Japanese Program, I worked alongside Ohtani-sensei, a retired Japanese teacher and an excellent Japanese Calligrapher in our community, by giving a Japanese Calligraphy performance and running a booth for Japanese Calligraphy.

JAPANESE CALLIGRAPHY PERFORMANCE

Even with it being the first time I had done a Japanese Calligraphy performance on a large 3-meter by 4-meter piece of paper, I found the experience to be very pleasant. Ohtani-sensei and I wrote “未来を拓く輝く光になれ。” This reads “Mirai o hiraku kagayaku hikari ni nare,” which means “Be a shining light to build your future.”

After Ohtani-sensei’s wonderful speech, many people stamped their handprints with determination to continue shining their light with hopes of creating a future that they desired.

From the days leading up to the festival to the day of, my supervisor Ono-sensei and I created large Hanshi paper (Japanese Calligraphy paper) using multiple pieces of cardboard and long Hanshi papers. Even with the day proving to be challenging, it was a good memory because of being able to work alongside my supervisor.

"The future is not given but it’s something I have to build."
- Ohtani-sensei's Speech

JAPANESE CALLIGRAPHY WORKSHOP AND EXHIBITION

Throughout the day many students and faculty, whom I do not usually have the opportunity to meet, were able to visit our booth. Due to space and time constraints, we were not able to offer everyone who visited our booth a chance to try Japanese Calligraphy, but we were very pleased to see the number of people who enjoyed the Japanese Calligraphy workshop and exhibition.

I found that many students were interested in Japanese Calligraphy which motivated me to host more Japanese Calligraphy events/workshops at Western Carolina University.
FOR THE SECOND YEAR

I am looking to start a new student organization on campus with an eye toward sustainable activities. Over the next six months, I would like to support the organization so that 50% of the weekly Japanese cultural events, which I currently lead and organize entirely, can be student-led, and by next summer, I would like to create an environment in which students can take the initiative in organizing activities. I would also like to increase our off-campus activities and reach out to the broader community. Specifically, I plan to hold Onigiri Action, which was held only at Western Carolina University last year, at libraries and schools this year. I also plan to participate in the 9th Annual Knox Asian Festival in Knoxville, TN in August.

COMMENTS FROM SUPERVISORS

Wesley Milner, Ph.D.
Director of Office of Global Engagement (WCU Global)
Professor of International Studies
Western Carolina University

Hosting Nanaka Okamura as a JOI Coordinator has been so enriching on an individual and community level. In addition to her learning much about North Carolina and the US, she has educated all of us about Japanese customs, art, culture, food, etc. Notwithstanding her being the youngest coordinator in this cohort, Nanaka-san stepped into the role with great courage and tenacity. With just a bit of assistance and encouragement, she has become a fixture on campus and has been very effective in broadening her reach to far-flung counties, libraries, schools, and community organizations. Once she finally obtained a vehicle and became a licensed driver, she was off making connections far and wide. She has held almost 100 community events and reached approximately 2000 citizens of North Carolina. In addition to her Onigiri Action and calligraphy exhibition at the Jackson public library, Nanaka-san was a major contributor to our 41st Annual International Fest held on the campus of Western Carolina University. Personally, it has been a joy to get to know Nanaka-san and she has been so welcoming to our animals when she is at our home. We look very much forward to a productive and enjoyable second year!

Yumiko Ono, Ed. D.
Instructor of Japanese
Coordinator of Japanese Program
Western Carolina University

It has been my privilege to witness Nanaka-san's enthusiastic engagement with our community. I cannot thank her enough for her tireless effort and arrangements to contribute to students, and people inside and outside of Western Carolina University. As this report shows, results of her engagement are overwhelmingly amazing. She is very relatable for our students, who are not only those in our Japanese Program but also other disciplines such as Art and Design. Her calligraphy performance with Mr. Ohtani, beloved retired teacher of Japanese and calligrapher in our community, highlighted our belief for the future - 未来を拓く 輝く光になれ (Mirai o hiraku kagayaku hikarini nare: Be a shining light to build your future). Through her engagement with our community, she has been an amazing force to provide diversity and inclusion in such authentic ways, which I believe parts of the fundamental aspects to be shining light to build one's future. Again, I could not thank her enough. With amazing results from the first year and the second-year plans shown here, I look very much forward to seeing her becoming a shining light to build her own future after the JOI Program.
OVERVIEW
SUMMER 2022 - SUMMER 2023

My second year as JOI coordinator flew by, starting with the summer programs that took place at various libraries. At the end of August, I attended the 9th Annual Knox Asian Festival in Knoxville, Tennessee, where I was able to connect with Eastern Tennessee. In addition, when the fall semester began at the end of August, at Western Carolina University, I not only organized weekly Japanese cultural events, but I also began working towards starting a new student organization that focused on sustainable activities. In my off-campus activities, I focused on building broader and deeper relationships by reaching out to new communities while keeping the relationships I had built in the first year. As a result, I had opportunities to do outreach work not only in North Carolina, but also in Tennessee, Georgia, and South Carolina. By expanding my horizons outside of my own community in North Carolina, I was able to reach out to more people and more communities.

In this report, I would like to highlight my top three outreach activities during my second year: the 9th Annual Knox Asian Festival, the Japanglish Club, and the Sylva Japan Fest. For more information about my other activities, please visit my Instagram, Facebook, and website. All activities were made possible by the great support of my host institution, Western Carolina University, and the community.

# Top 3 Activities
- **9th Annual Knox Asian Festival**
- **Japanglish Club**
- **Sylva Japan Fest**

**TOTAL NUMBER OF PEOPLE REACHED OUT TO:** 5,646

**NUMBER OF ORGANIZATIONS AND SCHOOLS REACHED OUT TO:** 40

**NUMBER OF EVENTS AND WORKSHOPS HELD:** 160

**TOTAL MILEAGE:** 6,298
9TH ANNUAL
KNOX ASIAN FESTIVAL

On August 28, 2022, I attended the 9th Annual Knox Asian Festival in Knoxville, Tennessee with Ms. Maika Yamaoka, the JOI coordinator in Memphis, Tennessee. The history of the Knox Asian Festival begins in 2014 when the first festival was held in Krutch Park with the mission of bringing people together and putting aside political and religious differences. The festival was held after a two-year hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic and welcomed more than 60,000 visitors with over 100 tents and booths representing 13 different countries, offering delicious food, crafts, and cultural exhibits.

JAPANESE CALLIGRAPHY & KOTO PERFORMANCE AT AMPHITHEATER
Maika played a piece on the Koto called "Rokudan no Shirabe," a piece familiar to all Koto players, and I used a large brush to write the word "平和 (Heiwa, 'Peace')" on a large piece of cloth.

JOI BOOTH
People were able to experience Japanese culture by writing their names in Japanese using a Fude brush and Sumi ink, making Tanabata decorations with Origami, and writing their wishes for the Tanabata Festival.

BON ODORI & JAPANESE CALLIGRAPHY PERFORMANCE AT FESTIVAL LAWN STAGE
Everyone enjoyed a Bon Odori to the Japanese drums played by Matsuriza and the Shamisen played by Mahagi-sensei from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. We also had a Japanese Calligraphy performance in which the audience could participate in the creation of the artwork.
During the fall semester of 2022, I worked hard to start a new student organization at Western Carolina University that focused on sustainable activities. 20 students from both the Japanese Program and international students from Japan began working together to start the student organization. After discussing the name of the organization, and discussing the purpose, goals, and regulations for its members, we were able to begin our activities as "Japanglish Club" in the spring semester of 2023.

In the spring semester of 2023, the Japanglish Club held several events, including "Cosmetology 101," "Crossover Karaoke," "Japanese Calligraphy Workshop," "To Make the World Kinder," "Anime Night," and "Trivia Night - Jeopardy!" and "Cosplay 101," as well as a booth at Western Carolina University's International Festival and an active role at the first annual Sylva Japan Fest.

The number of participants in the meetings grew with every activity, and included not only students in the Japanese Program, but international students from Japan. In addition, many local students outside of the Japanese Program and other international students participated.

I hope that after the fall semester of 2023, the Japanglish Club will continue to flourish as a community where everyone can learn and grow together.

**PURPOSE**

I. To create a community where people can use their knowledge of Japanese and English together.
II. To learn more about Japan and the US. We will do cultural exchange, language exchange, and more.

**GOALS**

I. To create a community where Japanese exchange students and Japanese language learners can learn and grow together.
II. To promote conversation and acceptance across languages and cultures.
III. To activate the community to bridge the gap between cultures.

**MEMEBERS**

Japanglish Club is open to all students and faculty, and anyone interested in learning and respecting each other's culture and language can become a member.

@JAPANGLISHCLUB
1ST ANNUAL
SYLVA JAPAN FEST

On April 29, 2023, the first annual Sylva Japan Fest was held at Bridge Park in Sylva. More than 300 people from Franklin, Asheville, and Charlotte, as well as Sylva and Cullowhee, attended the festival. The Consulate General of Japan in Atlanta was also in attendance and the festival was a great success.

On stage, a cosplay contest, Cardboard Shamisen performances, and calligraphy performance attracted many people. The students who performed Shamisen had practiced hard before the festival, and performed two songs, “Sakura Sakura” and “Twinkle Twinkle Little Star.” In addition to the performances, the festival offered a number of games to entertain the crowd, including Tanabata Wishes, Origami, Paper Sumo Wrestling, Fishing, Memory Game, Chopsticks Challenge, Ring Toss, Gacha Gacha, Calligraphy, Japanese Snacks Lottery, and Stamp it To Win it (Collecting Stamps). We also sold merchandise, snacks, and beverages such as Origami accessories, buttons, stickers, postcards, and T-shirts, cotton candy, popcorn, chocolate marshmallows, brown rice tea, Calpico, and bottled water.
CONCLUSION OF JOI

I am very pleased to have spent the past two years as JOI Coordinator in the wonderful town of Western North Carolina. It was a pleasure to be able to increase awareness of Japan and at the same time strengthen community relations. My work as JOI coordinator began with weekly Japanese cultural events at Western Carolina University and then expanded to include surrounding libraries, K-12 educational institutions, and community colleges. I’m overjoyed that during my second year as a JOI Coordinator I could greater diversify my level of outreach in areas such as Tennessee, Georgia, and South Carolina. I have met 7,692 people over the past two years and had the pleasure of sharing Japan through my own perspective. Even in teaching others about Japan, I feel I also learned from those I was able to connect with. My experience as a JOI coordinator helped me to diversify my worldview and broaden my horizons, and I believe it had a similar impact on the people I engaged with. I hope what I have done as a JOI coordinator will remain in their hearts and minds forever.
Little did I know from the first meeting at coordinator orientation in Chicago in 2021 that the impacts of JOI and Nanaka Okamura would be so far reaching. We had great hopes and aspirations, but her performance has far exceeded those initial interactions.

While it has been a full two years, the time has passed very quickly for us and for the students and community who have benefitted so immensely. As indicated in her excellent summary of her time here, Nanaka-san has interacted with almost 8,000 students, faculty, staff, and community members. For those in the Japanese Studies or International Studies Programs at Western Carolina University, it may not have been the first introduction to Japanese culture, language, and customs. For others, however, it was a new window into an amazing and unforeseen world. Her reach extended well beyond the university and western North Carolina, but also into Tennessee, Georgia, and South Carolina.

This past year has built on the amazing successes of the first year as Nanaka-san has become a welcome fixture. Most recently, her calligraphy workshop and exhibition at the largest International Fest in 40 years on campus was an enormous success. Additionally, she and Ono-sensei crafted and organized the very first Japan Fest in our town of Sylva in April. I was lucky enough to participate in this well-attended event (over 300 people) and it was impressive in how she was able to organize and execute such a large and impactful event. I spoke with many attendees who knew nothing about Japan or East Asia and left with an appetite to learn much more and stay engaged with the university.

Indeed, hosting Nanaka-san as a JOI Coordinator has been so enriching on an individual and community level. Though I have spent time in Japan, being to interact with her and gain her unique perspective has been helpful for me as an administrator and a professor. Notwithstanding her youth (youngest coordinator in her cohort), she has grown immensely in her ability to shoulder adversity (e.g., buying a car, gaining insurance, seeking medical care, managing an auto accident, etc.) and mature as a very capable educator and ambassador. With the collaboration of Ono-sensei, it has been such a joy to see her impact grow across campus and across the region. Personally, it has been fun to get to know her even more this past year and to start making plans for her future beyond JOI.

It has been my privilege get to know Nanaka-san and cannot thank her enough for her tireless effort and arrangements to contribute to students, and people inside and outside of Western Carolina University. As this report shows, the results of her engagement will have lasting effects.
As one of Nanaka-san’s advisors, it has been my privilege to witness Nanaka-san's work as a JOI coordinator in Western Carolina University, its community, and beyond. She has touched so many lives here from kindergarten kids to elders. I am certain that those people who experienced Japan through her thoughtful and skillful sharing will keep the fond memories they had with her for a long time, and the memories in each of those people' hearts will keep enriching their lives in many ways. I am very much looking forward to talking to those people, in the future, about what they remember about Nanaka-san and how her engagement for our community changed their lives.

As for Nanaka-san herself, I now remember that she is the youngest among her cohort. I believe that she has grown quite a lot as a young adult through her work as a JOI coordinator these two years. While I know that she changed people's lives here, I sincerely hope that her experience for these two years has provided her with opportunities for change: Rich and insightful experiences including setbacks, challenges, and rewards to deepen her own learning.

I now need to repeat myself again as I wrote in those reports to submit to Laurasian Institution regularly: I don’t think I can thank her enough, but anyway I want to express my gratitude toward her: Thank you so much. It would be a great pleasure for me to see her continuing learning in a graduate school and her fruitful experience as a JOI coordinator would continue to contribute to positive relationships between U.S. and Japan. With what she has learned through her work for our community, may she have good luck with her future endeavors.