Kimono Demonstration at Folk Art Center in Asheville, NC
For 145 attendees, February 2009

Background: Ikebana International gave me a great opportunity to exhibit the beautiful culture of Japan at the Folk Art Center in Asheville. The Center is in the mountainous area along the Blue Ridge Parkway. Ikebana International provides people who like to do Ikebana (Japanese flower arrangement) the chance to exchange ideas and knowledge across schools. There are more than 3,000 Ikebana schools in Japan, but Japanese almost never share school traditions and techniques. In the US, there are far fewer Ikebana schools, yet Americans want to share information and skills from other schools. They are all good friends through Ikebana. I am very happy to help Ikebana fans in Western North Carolina regardless of the different schools. Ikebana International meetings are always open to the public. In winter, we can’t get flowers from gardens, so we exhibit other aspects of Japanese culture for people in this area.

Program: In June 2008, the Western Carolina Ikebana International chapter vice president requested a Kimono demonstration since they had never observed the process. I showed each step: Juban, Kimono and Obi. The audience was surprised at the number of layers. A friend was kind enough to model; she was happy as her grandmother is Japanese. I also did a tea ceremony, so the project became bigger.

Coordinator Comment: This event grew because the Ikebana International president asked the Asheville Citizen-Times newspaper to interview me before the event; they featured my previous JOI programs and this event. The event succeeded thanks to this article. To make an event successful, I learned preparation and information are most important. After registering with the Ikebana International organization, 145 people came to the event. I believe I contributed to this local organization.

Supervisor Comment: This event was advertised in the local newspaper. It is absolutely necessary for such an event to be exposed in any media available to let the community know that there is a great learning opportunity. Emiko did a great job working with the Japanese culture advocates in the area to advertise the event.
Background: Nancy Bryant, an elementary school teacher in Supply, NC, contacted my US supervisor in July. I had no idea where Supply was: I found it was about 400 miles (640km) from Cullowhee. Supply is outside the Western Carolina area I was assigned to, so I asked my Japanese supervisor. He said I could refuse, but I really wanted to visit a different area in North Carolina, so I asked the teacher to find more than 3 K-12 schools so I could do more programs on the same trip. She immediately replied that was her intention. There was no reason to refuse the request anymore. We set a February date.

Program: I left by car for Supply early on February 25. As I drove, the vista changed from mountains to flat land. I could see the sunset on the horizon. I hadn’t seen that for a long time. When I visited the middle school, I found almost no Asians, so I started with general information about Japan and Japanese culture 6 times the first day at elementary schools and the middle school. On the 2nd day I discussed kimono 4 times. Students were surprised by my Furisode kimono is only for single women. They also enjoyed the photos that I had taken in Japan. They asked a lot of questions. It was difficult to answer every question because of the limited time.

Coordinator Comment: It was a big challenge for me to drive seven hours and speak to six hundred in two days but I was satisfied. I believed if I prepared well I would be able to do something difficult. I needed to challenge something new my second year in JOI program.

Supervisor Comment: This was by far the most impressive work Emiko did in her 2 years. Not only did she drive all the way to the other side of the state, but she also talked to 600 students on this trip. This indicates her devotion to introduce Japanese culture whenever, wherever there is an opportunity. Needless to say, this trip cost Emiko a great amount of time and effort to prepare, but Emiko could use this opportunity to bring a little Japan to students in coastal North Carolina.
Tea Ceremony with Warren Wilson College Students
16 participants
October 13 2008 (Introduction to tea ceremony)
December 8 2008 (Tea demonstration using student ceramics)

Background: Since I came to Western North Carolina, I saw many tea bowls at museums, craft shows or open studio events in this area. My eyes were always searching for suitable tea bowl but they were hard to find. They were all beautiful but fit decorations in the western style house -- they were usually too big to handle or too rough for bamboo whisks. When the Warren Wilson professor, who is one of my Ikebana friends, met at the August Ikebana meeting, she requested a tea ceremony but didn’t know how to proceed. For Warren Wilson, I suggested focusing on ceramic students. I did a tea ceremony demonstration twice for the same Warren Wilson students, although the theme was different each time.

Program: For the first demonstration in October, I introduced the history of tea and tea tools. I showed how to use them. The catalogue of tea tools I brought with me from Japan helped them make tea bowls and other tea tools between the first demonstration and the second. They carefully looked at my protocols and tea tools during the tea ceremony. Warren Wilson students are very talented. At the second demonstration in December they all brought their beautiful tea bowls and containers for tea confectioneries. I was surprised they understood the use of tea tools and beauty of the tea tools in terms of Wabi and Sabi. I made green tea for everybody with their tea bowls.

Coordinator Comments: I was really happy to have an opportunity to explain tea tools to ceramic students before they made them. We have a lot of pottery studios around this the area. I would like to try to do this demonstration again sometime in the future for other potters.

Supervisor Comments: The presentation was actually suggested by Emiko herself to the professor she worked with at Warren Wilson. How Emiko approached the professor for this presentation leads me to believe how dedicated and involved she has been, is, and will be to go out of her way to teach about Japanese culture. I should also mention this presentation allowed students to deepen their knowledge about tea ceremony and ceramics/pottery. I think the presentation was very appropriate for the professor as well as students.
Background: “SHOGA” is my favorite presentation. It is a great subject to introduce Japanese culture to 7th graders. On January 9, I visited The Balfour School in Hendersonville. The school is a vocational school filled with very talented students. Hendersonville is located near the border of North and South Carolina, 1.5 hours by car from Cullowhee. I received a request for two classes from an art teacher who became interested through the brochures about Japan Outreach available at Western Carolina University we distributed at the art conference in Wilmington NC in November. Initially his lesson plan was not definite, so I proposed “Shoga” by sending a photo attachment via email. He liked my plan. The photo helped him visualize what I would like to do with his students. After we agreed, I asked him to send me his students’ first names. I translated their names into Katakana and created practice papers for the classes. I asked the teacher to provide copies of the practice papers and old newspapers. I bought Sumi ink, brushes, plastic plates instead of SUZURI, and rice paper.

Program: After I introduced myself and presented Japan geographically, I used my name to introduce Kanji, Hiragana and Katakana. I instructed the proper use of each character, indicated each character’s role, and explained why their American names should be written in Katakana. Before the actual writing part of the program, I taught them how to position themselves in their chairs. I instructed them on details such as not putting their elbows on the desk and breathing deeply before they began writing much like breathing preparations for meditation.

Coordinator’s Comments: After practicing writing their names and drawing bamboo, the students completed their work with rice paper. I provided a sheet of rice paper to each student and let them create “SHOGA” on it. I was very impressed with their work. They made great use of negative space in their works. I realized they already had certain images of Japanese art in their minds and carefully considered this in their creations. That was a very pleasant surprise for me.
Japanese New Year (日本のお正月を紹介): 2008

The presentation of this Japanese seasonal event is a very good opportunity to introduce Japanese culture and lifestyle. I received a request to present Japanese New Years five days in advance from the Curriculum Specialist for Diversity for Elementary and Middle Grades Education at Western Carolina University. I accepted the request and quickly prepared my lesson plan. On 14th January I visited three classes at Cullowhee Valley elementary school: Kindergarten, 2nd and 3rd grades.

Though I was initially concerned if I could maintain the concentration of such young students for 50 minutes, I found they were able to concentrate on my presentation for its entire length. In the classes of younger students, I discovered that it is important to change the topics or tasks every ten minutes to maintain their attention. Keeping that in mind, I designed the presentation as follows:

A. **How Japanese celebrate New Years day**: Photos of foods, how to play, KIMONO etc.
B. **Origami making**: We folded a dog, a cat and a tulip. We drew faces on the cat and dog. Then they glued the Origami on the color paper I provided that also had other images of Japanese New Year drawn on it.
C. **OYUHGI**: I taught the song 大きな栗の木の下で
D. **Wearing a KIMONO**: The students had the experience of wearing Yukata.

**Coordinator Comments**: I created a common theme for the K, 2nd and 3rd grade presentations but altered the content and speed to compensate for their age and learning standards. Folding Origami cats and dogs was not easy for Kindergarteners. I needed the teachers’ and their assistants’ help but I found that those kinds of Origami were suitable for 1st grade and up. I presented Oyuhgi for the first time in my presentations; it was amazingly successful. I sang the song first, presented the choreography to show what it was like, and let them mimic my movements. We practiced several times increasing the speed each time. Finally, I asked them to make pairs and face each other. They initially were shy when mimicking moves individually but they seemed to enjoy it more with a partner.
International Week at Western Carolina University

Background: This Western Carolina University (WCU) event is a showcase of foods and culture from all over the world. The campus event is not only for the students but also for the public and potential students. There are even elementary school students who visit to sample the delicious foods from different cultures and to learn about the countries from which the cuisine originated. I made a reservation to act as a representative of International Programs and Services (IPS) at the Japanese tent International Week. Students from the Japanese classes as well as their professor and my supervisor, Mr. Masafumi Takeda, helped me. Since this event was supported by IPS, I helped set up the booth with other staff members the morning of the event.

The Event: During the event, we provided green tea with little Japanese snacks. When serving the tea, I demonstrated how to make tea with a brief Japanese tea ceremony. We also provided bookmarks customized with the visitor’s name written in Katakana. They were very popular. WCU Japanese language students wrote the names in Katakana at the booth. They were given the opportunity to practice transcribing the Katakana from the American names as visitors observed. That was an additional benefit to all who participated.

Coordinator Comments: We all worked well together and created a successful event. This was a significant event for me to feel that I was a truly a respected and welcome member of this IPS office.