Annual Top Three Events

-School visit (Japan in a Suitcase program & Bon Odori project) –

I visited 6 schools and had 28 classes of the Japan in a Suitcase program and 3 classes of the Bon Odori project in MN. The Japan in a Suitcase is a program that Japan America Society of Minnesota has been providing to K-12 schools, clubs, community groups and other nonprofits for offering cultural presentations, language instruction, and hands-on activities for several years.

I had this program for K-12 schools this year. The schools are Groveland Elementary school (4th grades), Hillcrest Community School in Bloomington (K-5 grades), French Immersion Magnet School in St. Paul (5th grade), Jordan Middle School in Jordan (5th and 6th grades), Anwatin Middle School in St. Paul (5th and 6th grades) and Watershed High School in Minneapolis. The total participants are 655.

I put many Japanese materials into a big suitcase to show students. Every student is so excited to see what I will pick up from the suitcase. I brought many Japanese pictures, Japanese elementary school textbooks, Japanese flip-flops, Japanese fans, Japanese toys (Kendama, Daruma Otoshi), Origami and Japanese story telling books (kamishibai). For primary school students focused on Japanese animal songs, Kamishibai, Origami, Kendama, Daruma Otoshi, Japanese food, Japanese cities and culture. One teacher said to me that students had fun learning different animal voices in Japanese and now the class is using “buu buu” for expressing pigs voice in exchange “Oink Oink”.

4th to 6th grades are interested in Japanese pronunciation, grammar and how to write their name in Japanese. All students worked hard to write their name in Katakana and pronounce it in Japanese sound.

I begin every Japan in a Suitcase program with the question, “Do you know something about Japan?”. Sometimes I receive unique answers like “Cream cheese in Wantan”, “Chicken soup” or “Sponge Bob”. But some students who have siblings who like Japanese anime and manga, know quite a lot about Japanese sub-culture. I was surprised to find out how much they know about new Japanese manga, anime and Japanese musicians (even Indies bands) much more than me! I was so impressed that they are inspired by Japanese subculture.

Also I had The Bon Odori project at Groveland Elementary School and Hillcrest Community School. The total participants are 661.

The Bon Odori Project is also an opportunity for K-12 schools in Minnesota to bring their students an interactive cultural experience. Students can learn and participate in a Bon Odori (Japanese Summer Dance). I coordinated 3 performers to have this event. They
are Taiko Drum performers, singers and dancers. I think this is a great opportunity for students to enjoy the real Taiko drum sounds, listen to Japanese traditional Bon Odori songs and watch Japanese Bon dancers. And what is most exciting is that they try to dance together. This program is a valuable experience for students coming into touch with the spirit of Japan.

*Supervisor’s Comment:*
I am very pleased with Kanna who was able to have these Japan in a Suitcase presentations for students in the K-12 schools. Kanna took the initiative to contact the schools. She planned the program content and made it a fun, learning experience for students.

For the Bon Odori Project, Kanna was very effective in serving as the Coordinator with the three artistic groups. Kanna served as an excellent representative for JASM in contacting the artistic groups and the participating schools.

**Annual Top Three Events**
-JASM Social Media Network-

Japan America Society of Minnesota has 2 main Social Media Network services. The one is Facebook and the other is Twitter. I worked to create the new account of JASM on these pages and now Facebook and Twitter are used to sending information of JASM Events, other events related to Japan and volunteer opportunities at JASM events, and at events of other organizations related to JASM.

These social network services are the way to reach new audiences. And it is not only beneficial for JASM to promote the Japan America Society of Minnesota to the community, but also useful for many people who are looking for some ways to connect to Japan in Minnesota and working to expand networking between Japanese and Minnesotans.

JASM has monthly newsletter called Tushin and we are putting information on it, too. But Facebook and Twitter are useful when there is an urgent advertising request from JASM members.

Now JASM Facebook fun page has 220 people who “like” this page and 148 followers of JASM Twitter. These numbers are increasing everyday.
The 9th JOI coordinator
Japan America Society of Minnesota
Kanna Sato

*Supervisor’s Comment:*

Kanna has been a terrific help to the Social Media Network initiative of JASM. Kanna’s personal interest and skills in using social Media tools have been a very positive development for JASM. Through Social Media, Kanna is doing outreach to a new younger audience for JASM.

**Annual Top Three Events**

-Japanese Speaking Club -

Japan America Society of Minnesota has a program called Japanese Speaking Club. JASM is organizing the time and place for people to be able together and practice Japanese language with peers.

I started to join this club from October 2010 as one way of the outreach to Minnesotans. I first expected to have a lot of people gathering but we had a few people.

So I introduced about this club to Americans who are coming to JASM Event and invited to come. Also, I went to Japanese student events at University of Minnesota and encourage them to join this club. Still there is not enough Japanese coming but now we have 15 to 20 contemporary members show up every Saturday afternoon. Also, we have the Japanese Speaking Group page on Facebook and the total number of register, as a member is 66.

Most of the members are Americans who are interested in Japanese culture, sub-culture, art, music, and trips in Japan and want to learn Japanese language. This group consists of younger people but it doesn’t mean that we have a lot of students. There are some people who were living in Japan through the JET program. We have members who want to apply to the JET program so this club is also a meeting place of JET alumni.

At this club, everyone introduces themselves in Japanese, talk about their experiences in Japan, exchange Japanese music CDs and comics, share language study resources and exchanging information about Events in Minnesota.

This club is also having outside parties. We had Hanami Picnic, Karaoke party, and went to Festival in Twin cities together. And I organized to create the Japanese Cooking Class for people who want to learn Japanese cooking. I asked JASM member who is a nutritionist for help and she can teach them the basics of cooking and how to cook Japanese food. We are still small group but I would like to make it much bigger and
be able to give this opportunity to many Minnesotans.

*Supervisor’s Comment:*

Kanna joined the Japanese Speaking Club on her own initiative and has truly energized this group of Japan enthusiasts. Her outgoing personality and her desire to engage people in learning more about Japan have created a growing audience for JASM. Our hope is that audience will join JASM and help JASM to grow with a new young membership base.

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