K–12 School Visits

Dates: Fall 2010 – Summer 2011

Audience: K-12 <Elementary school (7), Middle school (3), High school (3), Home school (1)>

Description: My JOI coordinator activities helped to establish a deeper understanding about Japan at each of these sites. Since I came to Iowa, visiting as many as K-12 Classes as possible has been a main focus for my JOI activities. I have visited 14 schools and 50 classes. My approach has been to talk about both the similarities and differences between Japan and the U.S.A because it is easier for children to understand a different culture when they compare it with their own culture. Additionally, every visit included some hands-on activities such as origami, bookmark-making, etc., because I believe that if you create something, it will be a much more memorable experience. I hope that my school programs will give students an incentive to pursue an active interest in knowing about Japan, and that one day in the future they will remember my visit and become interested in learning Japanese or in visiting Japan.

Coordinator Comments: My most exciting and thrilling challenge was visiting Spencer, Iowa, a very small town which is 5 hours away by car from my base in Iowa City. When I received a request from a teacher in Spencer, I wasn’t sure if I really wanted to travel so far away.

But after I found out that they arranged a homestay for me, raised funds to cover my mileage and expenses, and scheduled me to visit both the high school and middle school, I became excited about the adventure. Visiting Spencer brought me a lot of joy because of the students’ and towns peoples’ excited reactions to getting to know someone from Japan, and learning about the culture. I would like to continue visiting small towns in Iowa because the residents don’t have much chance to communicate with people from other countries, and the kids are very excited to see a Japanese person, and to hear about life in Japan a from native Japanese person.

Supervisor Comments: Yume further developed her teaching skills for her visit to Spencer. This was truly a “grassroots opportunity,” to spend three days in a rural environment teaching about Japan and spreading goodwill. Since she was required to present at several different schools, ranging from elementary school to high school, she designed diverse and interesting programs for each, including a new high school presentation in which she taught the students a popular Japanese fairy tale, The Bamboo Cutter, and had them learn the beginning in Japanese. Her visit was so successful with student and adult audiences that she was immediately asked to return again next year!

High school teacher Comments: We had a great time and learned so much. You were wonderful in this job and we greatly appreciate your willingness to venture to Dewey-land and Spencer High. (Jan)
Art Teachers’ Workshop
(Iowa City Community School District In-Service)

Date: Feb 21st, 2011
Audience: Iowa City Community School District Art Teachers
Description: Iowa City Community School District art teachers have one or two annual in-service days for curriculum development. I was invited by the Art Coordinator to design a workshop for sharing Japanese crafts and art. While origami is well known by teachers here, I introduced more Japanese craft activities that teachers can adapt for their classrooms.

Activities: • Origami folding (Japanese popular anime character “Pikachu”) • Letter-size paper folding (Heart) • Kirigami (Paper folding and cutting) • Calligraphy with brush-pen • Calendar, greeting cards, bookmarks • Evil mask (Setsubun, or Bean-throwing day) • Girl’s day doll origami (Girl’s day) • Samurai hat folding with newspaper (Children’s day) • Furoshiki • Kyara-ben (Character Bento)

Coordinator comments: I enjoyed sharing all the art activities that I’ve done from my childhood, especially introducing annual celebrations and how those activities could be a part of learning Japanese culture. The art teachers expressed gratitude about all that they had learned during this workshop. Kyara-ben making was a challenge because it is not an art but also culinary art but I am glad that I could share this culture that is so popular now in Japan.

Supervisor comments: This was a very special collaboration between the JOI program and Iowa City art teachers, one that had never existed before. After I made the initial contact for Yume with the Iowa City art coordinator, we had a number of meetings in which every detail of this three-hour workshop was planned out. The purpose of the workshop was not only to gather new methods of instruction, but to inspire the art teachers by having them experience new, international art forms, even those aesthetics that related to how they would eat their lunch on that day! Yume and the art coordinator both prepared food for the teachers to create their own bento box designs. This workshop was a great success!

Art coordinator comments: I want to thank you for the fantastic presentation you did for the art teachers. We all LOVED it. All of the activities were engaging and relevant to our art students. Thanks again for such a wonderful presentation! (Lisa)
Communication with Adults and Seniors (Iowa City Senior Center, Oaknoll Retirement Community, Cottage Grove Place, Newton Park Centre, Rotary Club)

Dates: Fall 2010 – Summer 2011

Audience: Adults and Seniors

Description: Since Japan has become an “aging society”, it is a wonderful chance to share some common aspects of Japanese culture with adults and seniors in the United States. Many American senior citizens have been in Japan on military missions or through business. They are always looking for an opportunity to share their experiences. I believe they are interested in knowing how the Japanese achieve their longevity.

Coordinator Comments: It is always fun to meet adults and seniors in Iowa because they are always welcoming me as a person who comes from 5000 miles away. I give a different Japanese culture class at the Iowa City Senior Center every quarter. They have told me that my class is the first one to fill up! I’ve done a traditional Japanese Furoshiki class, Japanese greeting-card-making class, and a kimono class. I will collaborate with their Garden Club during the summer to do a Kado or Japanese flower arrangement class, as well as a sushi rolling class. I am also on the Planning Committee for the U.N. Day of the Older Person on October 5th in the fall. Communicating with seniors is significant because they have a lot of connections to Japan. I learn a great deal from stories they have told me about Japan and the United States that I didn’t know before. I usually stay for a while after the class over and enjoy having conversations with them.

Participant comments: I learned how to fold cloth to make containers for a variety of objects, and I learned how to fold paper to make decorative origami designs for a greeting card. Your instructions were clear, positive, and very helpful. You also taught us about Japanese customs and culture, and that helped make the workshops extremely enjoyable and informative. (Nora)

You have a warm, fun personality that made for a comfortable learning experience. Had fun writing my name in Japanese and mastering some origami crafts. (Judy)

Supervisor Comments: Yume has been very successful working with seniors. She is a good listener, patient, and excellent at helping them work with crafts that require manual dexterity. Everyone at the Senior Center loves her, and wants to help her gather supplies and prepare for her next class. I have rarely seen a more happy, contented class of students than hers! Her work here has been much appreciated, and has given those retired servicemen a chance to share some of their experiences in Japan with her, which has contributed in a meaningful grassroots exchange about Japanese and American culture and international understanding and friendship.
EDUCATIONAL JAPANESE OUTREACH ACTIVITIES THROUGHOUT THE STATE OF IOWA  August 2010 –July 2012

15 counties, 25 cities, and more than 100 visits to Iowa K-12 schools, libraries, senior centers, and communities: I have just concluded two years of service in the state of Iowa. In comparison with more urban areas, rural Iowa students have few opportunities to learn about Japan. This fact allowed me to have a much more thrilling and enjoyable experience.

My most memorable outreach visits were those to rural area schools in Iowa. Last February, I visited a classroom at Van Allen Elementary school in Chariton, Iowa. It looked like a typical Iowa classroom but, as soon as I looked around the classroom, I realized that there was no other ethnicity except Caucasian. So, of course, I was the only person of color in the classroom. For some of the students, I was the first Asian they had ever seen. The teacher told me that, unfortunately, they don’t have much chance to learn about global awareness. Seeing their excited eyes really motivated me. I was so fortunate to be in Iowa to meet Iowa students.

SUPERVISOR COMMENTS (JOAN KJAER):

Yume has been an inspiration to hundreds, probably thousands, of students, faculty, and community members all across the state of Iowa whom she has personally touched. Her knowledge, enthusiasm, and genuine joy in sharing her culture has brought great credit to the University of Iowa’s International Programs and left an indelible mark on Iowans of all ages and backgrounds. The JOI program could not have found a better representative than Yume Hidaka.

TEACHER COMMENTS (ALISA MEGGITT):

THANK YOU again for your very generous investment in my students. Thank you for the most wonderful day of SUSHI and Japan Fun. The kids just fell in LOVE with Japan today.

Map of the places I’ve made presentations in Iowa:
JAPAN OUTREACH IN UNIVERSITY OF IOWA COMMUNITY

My Sushi Workshop won the University of Iowa program award for the “Best Educational Program of the Year” (February 8, 2012):

I’ve spent 30% of my time in JOI activities for the University of Iowa community. The most successful event I organized was the Sushi Workshop for university students living in the residence halls. It was awarded the Best Educational Program of the Year for 2012. In addition to the sushi-rolling activities, I also included a Japanese traveling art exhibit. I borrowed from the General Consulate of Japan at Chicago a collection of drawings by a group of Japanese school children whose lives had been impacted by the devastating earthquake and tsunami in Japan last year. I directed students’ attention to the artwork hanging on the walls and I explained the prolonged suffering in Japan and how much the Japanese appreciated the help from around the world. On the tables were card-making materials for students to create their own messages to send to these children, letting them know that, though a year had passed, the world was still thinking of them.

I was a guest on the University of Iowa WorldCanvass program on Japan, where I introduced the Japanese children’s artwork. WorldCanvass is a live and recorded program on Iowa Public Radio and cable television stations. The program is also available as a podcast.

So-ran Bushi was performed at Asian Night at the Iowa City Public Library, by the Japanese Students and Scholars Club April 27th, 2012

The University of Iowa Japanese community is very small compared to other international communities. When I arrived here, there were almost no activities that Japanese students were involved in. I took over the organization of the University of Iowa Japanese Students and Scholars Club in order to provide more communication between Japanese members and also to provide Japanese cultural outreach for the University of Iowa community. We hosted several Japanese cultural events such as Karaoke & Onigiri Night and Japanese film screenings. In addition, we established a So-ran Bushi performing troupe that included members of other nationalities.

DORMITORY COORDINATOR COMMENTS:

This was a completely affordable way to not only entertain but also educate residents on a slice of Japanese culture and increase awareness of those still being affected by the earthquake and tsunami. We believe this sushi event will continue to be an annual festivity benefiting residents and beyond.
Iowa-Yamanashi Sister States 50th Anniversary
August 11 – 14, 2011

Last year was the 50th Anniversary of the Iowa-Yamanashi Sister States Organization in Des Moines, Iowa’s capitol city. We hosted a delegation from Yamanashi that included the governor and a youth delegation that celebrated a 50-year-old relationship. I served as the guide and interpreter for a group of more than 20 high school students from Yamanashi.

Sakura (Cherry Blossom) Centennial in Iowa
May 12, 2012

It has been one hundred years since the first cherry blossom tree was given to the United States from Japan as a symbol of friendship. As part of celebrating this anniversary, Des Moines was chosen as one of the cities to be given young cherry blossom trees. On May 12, 2012, I was appointed as a member of the Centennial Committee. We worked for six months to organize the programs, and hosted centennial events at the State Capitol grounds where the Yamanashi temple bell is located. Attending the ceremony were the governor of Iowa, the Japanese delegation, and other important guests in the area of US-Japan relations. I mainly worked as their interpreter during their stay.

It was great to work with Iowa-Yamanashi Sister States and through the programs. I met so many wonderful people who put an immense amount of effort into US-Japan relations. That became a very special and wonderful part of my memory of Iowa.

COMMENTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF IOWA SISTER STATES (CAROL GRANT)

During her time in Iowa, Yume became a volunteer member of the Iowa Sister States (ISS) Yamanashi Committee. As such she was instrumental in two important exchanges that occurred during her tenure in Iowa. Her experience with students and bilingual capabilities made her a tremendous asset for ISS. In all of her involvement, Yume’s contributions are extensive and professional. She is a pleasure to work with.

SUPERVISOR COMMENTS:

Yume’s boundless energy and exceptional work ethic propelled her into countless activities across the state, many of them high-profile, where she was able to assist local and governmental groups in celebrating Iowa’s connections with Japan. This reflected well not only on Yume and the JOI program, but on the University of Iowa and International Programs.