The Spartanburg International Festival is one of the biggest events in Spartanburg. Approximately 10,000 people gather and learn about more than 70 countries.

The Spartanburg International Festival was one of the busiest events in my JOI period. I prepared for it for almost 9 months. Since Japan booth has never been represented in this big festival, I needed to find people to participate 3 booths, Country parade and Japanese performances. Thanks to all the people who helped the booths and performances, it was a large success!

The Japan booth had information about Japan, Japanese crafts on display, a banner for Tohoku, and Origami Corner.

We demonstrated our techniques on the main stage.

Nihon Goshin Aikido Academy of Spartanburg kindly agreed to perform. They performed demonstrations all day and talked with the audience.

We demonstrated 3 bon dances, and I gave a lecture of “Tankobushi” to our audience. They joined in and enjoyed dancing with us!

Supervisor’s comment: The International Festival was one of our initial goals for the JOI program as a great way to reach the larger community. However, Manami far exceeded my expectations by representing Japan in all areas of the festival (country booths, the parade, dance and sport performances) as well as having 3 different booths. She coordinated both funding and volunteers, reaching a great number of people.

Shodan Aikidoka’s comment: The Aikido Academy has participated in community events before, but the 2012 International Festival was, by far, our most successful. Manami-san was instrumental in organizing our booth, our students, and introducing Aikido to the people of Upstate South Carolina. A highlight of the demonstration was when she threw me, even though she was wearing yukata.
二. Japan Interim Trip: Experiencing Japan

Date: January 3rd – 29th, 2013

Trip term: January 9th- 24th, 2013  2 weeks in Japan

Place: Tokyo-Nagoya-Kyoto-Hiroshima-Tokyo

Budget per person: $4,340 (was $5,540)

Content beyond sightseeing:

In SC: Survival Japanese, Japanese customs class
In Tokyo: Homestay, Buddhism lecture, Bank visit, Elementary School visit, Japanese-style boat dinner
In Nagoya: Pottery making
In Kyoto: Maiko/Kimono experience
In Hiroshima: Peace lecture at Peace Park

Dr. Jim Neibours Comment: I can say without reservation that Manami’s work on our trip to Japan was excellent. She worked tirelessly to develop an itinerary that was as thoughtful and considerate as it was stimulating, eye-opening and rewarding. She taught us basic Japanese language, etiquette and protocol in an engaging and cheerful manner. I understand that sometimes travel plans fall short of expectations, or itineraries can be too ambitious. But Manami’s plans worked beautifully. Every event, every meal, all of the transportation — everything worked perfectly. Manami helped organize the perfect introduction to Japan for me and our students — an introduction that makes me want to return to Japan, and to work with Manami again, as soon as possible.

Students’ Comments: I am amazed that, despite going to so many places, using multiple methods of transportation, on such a busy schedule, that we hardly encountered any complications or setbacks. The smoothness of the trip showed that Manami did extensive research and meticulous planning.

We were only gone for two weeks, but I felt a change happen in those weeks. I became more confident.

I don’t know how we would have been able to do half of the things we did without Manami. She was so helpful translating for us and teaching us on the fly what to do and what not to do, so we would appear less like idiots. I am so thankful to have had this opportunity.

The purpose of the trip is for students to see Japan and learn more about Japanese culture and people first hand, not just stereotypes of Japan. Before departure, I gave lectures on survival Japanese language and custom/etiquette.

My biggest challenge was making a smooth schedule for the whole trip since I was the main who organizer, a guide and interpreter. I did not want students to just sightsee, but to experience Japan which tourists are unable to reach. Travelling is not only learning about other people and culture but also sharing one’s own culture with the host culture. I am grateful my students respected Japanese customs and helped Japanese people learn more about America.

Over all, they became a Japan Outreach Coordinator and they will be through their life! I really appreciate all the people who supported this trip and Arigato my students!
三. Japan World Heritage Site Photo Exhibition

Date: February 8th – March 29th, 2013
Place: The Sandor Tezler Library Gallery, Wofford College
The number of audience: Estimated at 24,300
Sponsored by The Sandor Tezler Library, Wofford College
Japan Foundation
Advertisement: Posters, 2,000 Announcement cards
Websites at Wofford, Upstate International

The Opening Reception on February 8th
Beautiful Japanese ladies welcomed guests
Minasama, Arigato gozaimasu!

A board member of Japan America Society in South Carolina joined the Reception

Japan World Heritage Photo Exhibition was one of my favorite and successful events. A large number of people from the community were introduced to beautiful sites from Japan.

This event was noticed by people from across the Upstate community and beyond. It was chosen as one of the highlight cultural events on Upstate International Month, and the Shamisen recital event at the Exhibition was featured in the local Newspaper. A Consulate General of Japan visited the exhibition from Atlanta.

I am grateful to Dean of the library and Director of Cultural Events, Oakley Coburn, for his tremendous support and his love for art and culture. Without him, none of the events would have succeeded in the way they did. Thank you very much!

Shamisen recital on March 21st
Audience enjoyed Mr. Satake’s wonderful music surrounded by beautiful Japan World Heritage Site Photos. Extraordinary time.

Comments from Mr. Oakley Coburn, Dean of the library and Director of Cultural Events:
Thank you for all you did to make this such a successful exhibition. Wofford has benefitted tremendously by your being here and I am among those who will be very sorry to see you go.
From Fall 2011-Spring 2011

The number of schools I have visited:
14 schools and 41 classes
(9 Elementary, 2 Middle, 1 High schools)
1 Home school group for 2 classes
2 Pre-schools for 3 classes

Tea Ceremony and Origami
At West View Elementary School

Details: 90 minutes lessons

- Greetings in Japanese
- How to greet each other (起立・礼)
- General information about Japan
- 5 minutes DVD “Yokoso Japan”
  (It contains Historical and modern sights in Japan and Japanese traditional music)
- Learn what tea ceremony is, the history, tools and etiquette
- Taste powdered-green tea and Japanese sweets
- Learn St. Valentine’s Day in Japan and “Origami”

Dr. Morris comment:
“The presentation from Manami was one of the best things we have ever had for our gifted and talented students. They had the opportunity to experience the culture of customs of Japan without ever leaving the walls of the school. It was extremely informative and entertaining for them. Feedback from them was very positive and filled with praise for her. This opportunity was comparable to a virtual field trip to Japan. What a great learning for us all!”
Coordinator’s comment:

Luckily, I have had many school visit requests from the beginning thanks to my supervisor and other people’s support. Every school visit always gives me surprises. Some students couldn’t believe that I was born and grew up in a different country and speak a different language. I am pleased to have this wonderful opportunity to have people learn more about Japan and to have cultural exchange with them. I hope many students would feel much closer to Japan!

Supervisor’s comment: We have had a wonderful experience working with Manami at Wofford College. She has shared Japanese culture with many students beginning with our first year students giving background for their summer reading book, Memoirs of a Geisha, to remembering the devastation of the earthquake through a large banner, to teaching students how to make sushi under the instruction of a professional chef. Her enthusiasm and creativity have been wonderful in reaching a diverse group at Wofford and in the community.

Japan boothes for International day and Cherry Blossoms Festival
二． Aikido Interim at Wofford College

From January 5th – February 1st
- 17 Wofford students participate
- 2 hours Aikido practice 4 days a week
- Study about Samurai, Japanese martial arts and culture

What is “Interim”?  
Wofford College has “Interim” students experience things other than their studies for about a month in January. Professors offer their specialty to the students and bring them not only domestic but also overseas trips often.  
Aikido Interim has been run by Dr. Jim Neighbors for a few years in Spartanburg and it has been always very popular course.

Coordinator’s comment:
Kindly, Dr. Neighbors welcomed me to his Aikido Interim last January. I participated as one of “Aikido-ka” with students every morning to see what “Interim” is about. He gave me opportunities as a guest speaker to present about Samurai, “Ki”, Bushi-do, Shintoism, Japanese culture and customs during study classes. Before my presentations, I researched about especially “Bushi-do” and discovered that we still have “Samurai spirit” without noticing in our life. It was intriguing for the students, but for me as Japanese as well. On the last day of our training, students received their certificate in Japanese way (a lot of bowing) and they tasted Japanese rice bolls “Onigiri” and rice cake “Mochi” I made. Through the Interim, I believe the students learned about many aspects of Japan. From this ご縁“go en”, experiencing and observing an actual Interim course, lead me to co-sponsor a Japan trip for next Interim with Dr. Neighbors. I will try to bring students not only to sightseeing places, but also local areas such as schools and Japanese homes to smell, taste, see, hear and feel deeper Japan. Hopefully they will bring back their Japanese experiences to share with others return to campus. I had never practiced Aikido before the interim. Aikido is a fascinating martial arts and I am still in love with it. I am just a beginner Aikido-ka. However, I would like to keep practicing and I hope I can be more helpful for the dojo and people.

Dr. Neighbors, Sensei, Arigato gozaimasu for all of your kindness and support!
Dr. Jim Neighbors’ comment:

Manami Matsuoka improved Wofford College’s Aikido Interim tremendously. She participated enthusiastically and with great skill during training and gave three excellent presentations on topics relevant to Aikido and the history and culture of Japanese martial arts. Students were impressed by Manami’s presentations and reported enjoying them very much – many said Manami’s presentations were the highlight of the educational component of the course. I was gratified and deepened by Manami’s participation. I wish she would be able to help me teach the course every year!

Sensei John Wyndham’s comment:

I have been honored to have train in Nihon Goshin Aikido for 27 years. I enjoy passing on my limited knowledge to young and willing minds. I have also greatly enjoyed meeting and teaching Manami Matsuoka, my first Japanese student. She has been an excellent student and has guided me in the proper pronunciation of the Japanese terms and language.
三．Sushi Night Event at Wofford College

Manami Matsuoka Wofford College in Spartanburg, SC

Event Details:
- Japanese guest chef’s talk about Japanese knives
- Presentation about “Sushi”
- Rolled Sushi demonstration
- Learn how to make Hand rolled with Japanese volunteers
- “いただきます, Itadakimasu”
- “ごちそうさま, Gochiso sama”

Background: If you ask people in the world “What is Japanese food?” most of them would answer “Sushi”. Sushi is no longer a Japanese word. I had thought that people from the west wouldn’t like “Sushi” because of raw fish and seaweed. However, it is a very popular food in America. There is no way to remember how many times people asked me about Sushi since I came here. Many people love it but most of them have never made it by themselves or they think American-style sushi is Sushi in Japan. I wanted to host an event to talk about Sushi in Japan and America and to give more background on Japanese-style sushi.

Dr. Jim Neighbors’ comment:
I was thrilled to be invited to Manami Matsuoka’s Sushi Night at Wofford College. I love sushi, but I had never learned to roll my own before and was excited to give it a try. The evening was a wonderful success! I enjoyed meeting the sushi chef and seeing his knife demonstration, and I thoroughly enjoyed rolling my own sushi and eating it. All of the ingredients were fresh and delicious and there was a tremendous amount of food. Everyone ate until they couldn’t any more – my only disappointment was that I became too full to continue! Manami gave an interesting presentation on the culture and typical use of sushi in Japan, which helped us to understand the different kinds of sushi we learned to roll. People spent the evening eating together and there was lots of laughing – a great time was enjoyed by all.
Coordinator’s comment: I felt that this would be successful even before the event itself because it is obvious that many students love Sushi. Even though I had a limited number of spaces, they filled immediately and many students were put on a waiting list after initial promotions were shared. The main concern was how I can arrange fresh fish because grocery stores here differ from ones in Japan. It is hard to get Sushi grade fish that can be served raw. Mr. Daisuke Tanaka, a Japanese chef, and Japanese restaurants’, Miyako and Irashai, kindly agreed to support the event. It was great being able to learn professional and home-style sushi and enjoy fresh Sushi at the same time. Without their support, the event wouldn’t have been so successful. The event generated many more requests to have Sushi events and Japanese cooking. I will try to create as many events, not limited to Japanese food or on-campus, as possible to see happy smiles.