

Speech to Welcome Back Recent Participants of the JET Program

Minna-san konbanwa! Good evening everyone! Welcome back to the United States. I would also like to welcome JET Alumni Association members and JET supporters joining us at my residence this evening.



I. Your Challenges in Japan

Otsukaresama deshita!

Thank you very much for your service to the Japanese people as Assistant Language Teachers and Coordinators for International Relations. All of you have left your marks in your former workplaces. You may have had many challenges communicating with your coworkers or adapting to those surroundings, but you overcame your difficulties. Through this process you developed as internationally-minded and professional individuals.

That is a goal of the JET Program, and yet I personally believe that the most important thing is that you enjoyed yourself in Japan. If you made friends, perhaps boyfriends or girlfriends, if you traveled around the country, enjoyed Japanese

cuisine, participated in local festivals or if you came back addicted to green tea, your experience was a huge success!



II. March 11th

Among JET alumni, you have the unique situation of being the first returnees who experienced the three-part disaster on March 11th and saw firsthand how it affected Japan. You have your own observations of what Japan was and was not prepared for, and you saw how the Japanese people responded in your respective communities to the catastrophe. Many of you have helped through donations and volunteering. Thank you very much.



One result of this tragedy is that many Japanese have been reminded of just how invaluable human ties are. Since March 11th, sales of diamond engagement rings have been going up!

III. In Memory of Two JETs

Among the victims of the tsunami on March 11th were two JETs: Taylor Anderson and Monty Dickson. We made a tribute to them at this year's JET send-off reception in July, and I would like to tell you about what has happened since then. In addition to the Taylor Anderson Memorial Fund, Mr. Anderson traveled to Japan in September to donate copies of books that Taylor read as a child to one of her elementary schools in Ishinomaki. They were placed in shelves made by a Japanese woodworker who lost his three children in the tsunami, two of whom were Taylor's students.

Monty Dickson taught free English classes on the weekends in his community in Rikuzentakata. Now, the NPO Youth Empowerment Iwate is planning to launch a prefecture-wide initiative to provide volunteer tutors and study rooms for students affected by the disaster. This program may be used as a model for others like it around Tohoku.

Projects such as these are moving forward in part thanks to support from JETs both in and outside of Japan. At the US-Japan Council meeting in Washington DC in October, Hillary Clinton mentioned Taylor and Monty. She said:

“Their lives and their cause are part of the fabric of friendship that we now share. The Dicksons, the Andersons, and the entire extended family of JET alumni have been working to help the communities that both Monty and Taylor lived in and grew to love.”

IV. Your Next Challenge in the United States

Now, you are going to universities or taking up new jobs here in the United States. You are facing new challenges, but please keep this in mind: what you learned and experienced in Japan are not just a memory; they have added to your abilities and

professional value. As you may have already discovered, reverse culture shock here might be as difficult as culture shock was in Japan, but have confidence in yourselves. *Gambatte ne!*

You are not alone in your efforts, however. The Pacific Northwest is home to an active chapter of the JET Alumni Association, or as we call it, JETAA. I recommend you to join! Sandra will explain it to you in more detail.



As you make new lives for yourselves, remember your time in Japan, and treasure the friends you made during your time on JET.
Welcome back!