

Ways To Get Involved in Your JET Community

SGL

As some of you may know, one of CLAIR's initiatives to improve the overall JET support is the appointment of **Self Support Group Leaders (SGL)**. SGLs are native speakers of languages other than English, who are available for consultation and counseling type calls from members of their language groups across Japan. The targeted languages are **Chinese, French, German, Korean, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish**. Two SGLs are available in each language. The October edition of CLAIR News had a list of names of SGLs who can be emailed if you are interested. This is to say that no matter what language you feel comfortable speaking in, there are people out there ready to listen if you so desire. For more information, feel free to contact your local PAs.

Lights, Camera, Action!

A new video project

is starting! We are hoping to take videos of a few different classes a year in order to post them on an Aomori JET website. This will give everyone the chance to have a few more cyber-space classroom visits and see the teaching techniques of your fellow Aomorians. If you are interested in helping edit the video footage or think your class would be perfect for a filming session, please contact marti_in_japan@yahoo.com

Community

The CC group is ready to begin a new year with all new CC members. If you are interested in helping out at Seminars, spending more time with the new JETs, and doing all the other Community Coordinator duties, please talk to your local CCs for more information. The first meeting with old and new will be taking place in March. We hope to see many of you there!! Feel free to contact your local CC or Marti for more details.

Coordinators

Outdoor Special Interest Group

OSIG **Powdertopia** will hit Hakkoda and Niseko in early Jan this year- accommodation on mountain for **6000yen** per night for OSIG members, **7000 for non-members**

(membership 1000yen) .

Please **immediately** contact Alex:

alexbarke1978@yahoo.com.au

if you are interested in participating!!!!

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Happy New Year 2009!

Good Morning Aomori!

JET PROGRAMME, AOMORI
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Photo by Marti Deyo

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**HAPPY
New Year!**

THIS IS THE YEAR

THIS IS THE YEAR TO FOLLOW YOUR DREAM;
TAKE A STEP TO MAKE IT COME TRUE.
THIS IS THE YEAR TO LEAVE TROUBLES BEHIND
AND FOCUS ON GOOD THINGS TO DO.
THIS IS THE YEAR YOU HAVE WAITED FOR -
A YEAR TO FEEL HAPPY AND FREE;
THIS IS THE YEAR TO LISTEN AND LEARN -
THE YEAR FOR YOU TO BE!
THIS IS THE YEAR YOU WILL FEEL YOURSELF SMILE
AND REMEMBER LIFE IS TO LIVE;
THIS IS THE YEAR YOU WILL SEE ALL AROUND
AND KNOW HOW IT FEELS TO GIVE.
THIS IS THE YEAR YOU WILL TOUCH SOMEONE'S HEART,
REACH OUT AND YOU WILL SEE -
THIS IS THE YEAR FOR DREAMS TO COME TRUE;
THIS IS THE YEAR TO BE!

JOAN ADAMS BURCHELL

Last Two Months at a Glance

Stephen Cravak, Aomori City ALT



As the cooling air of autumn invaded, team gaijin refused to surrender. Aomori JETs launched a counter attack complete with athletic competitions, cultural events, fundraisers, and social gatherings.

September saw the Aomori English Club host a **welcome barbeque** at Gappo Park in Aomori City. The scrumptious edibles continued with an **Australian BBQ** in the quaint

village in Rokunohe. But of course, Aomori wouldn't feel right without a flurry of festivals throughout the season. The **Takko Beef and Garlic festival**, the **Maple Town Festival** as well as **tuna in Shimokita** certainly kept the pallets busy.



October kicked off with a contingent of soldiers who made their way to the annual gaijin infested **soccer tournament** in the rolling summits of Nagano. Victory was had by the ladies, as the Ringo Stars kicked their way to 3rd place victory. October came to a close with a parade of smiles as children were treated to a Halloween extravaganza and the JET squad partied it up in an **eclectic assortment of costumes** in Hachinohe.

AJET and the PAs worked overtime to provide a feast of eye opening experiences with **Culture Day** and continued with the JTE and ALT collaborations at the stimulating **Mid-Year Conference**. Everest of Apples also turned it up a notch as they unleashed an innovative fundraising event. The **Namaste Art Show**, gave locals and JETs alike a chance to get classy and purchase some fabulous art for a good cause. The fundraising continued with the **annual Talent Show and Service Auction**. This year saw a robotic dance, a shamisen, salsa, thuggish poetry, and the victorious didgeri doos. While, Movember gave many an excuse not to shave while others put their pen where their mouth is and participated in the **Nanowrimo novel writing month**.

Most recently in early December many traveled south to Morioka where they put their countless hours of blood, sweat, and studying to the test as they tackled the **JLPT** but of course with a large helping of noodles at **Wanko Soba**. With the fury of winter quickly approaching, Aomori JETs will continue to fight back. Many will embrace the snow and hit the slopes with a vengeance while others will seek the warmth and comfort of home or a questionable establishment in a country far away. **Stay classy Blue Forest**.



TRAVEL

Article Continued, . . .

Thirdly, people the world over hear “Japan” and think of large buildings, bustling cities, high-tech electronics, and Akihabara maid-café’s. After traveling to 47 prefectures, I can tell you **this country has a lot of countryside**. Japan is about 95% mountains, valleys, rivers, rice fields, waterfalls, and cliffs. The Japan that people envision only makes up 5% of the country, if that. Lastly, people always ask me, “What prefecture was your favorite?” If there was one place I wanted to live in Japan more than anywhere else, it's the **island paradise of Chichijima**, of the Ogasawara Islands (Bonin Islands). It has **beaches** everywhere, **wonderful warm weather**, and **tropical nature**. The only connection with the outside world is a twice-a-week, **27-hour ferry ride**. And believe it or not, it's part of *Tokyo-too!* Bottom line: **domestic travel is possible**. Read the books and the blogs. See what others say, then set out to find what stirs your curiosity. Book your transportation, accommodations, and rental cars all ahead. Pack half the clothing you initially planned and double the money! The punctuality of trains is impeccable, but still be prepared for random problems. **Never be afraid to ask questions**. Tell people you live in Aomori and you've bought an hour's worth of conversation and sometimes even dinner!



Happy Birthday to the Following JETs

January	February	March
10 Grahame Geissler	1 Matthew Smith	9 Stephen Cravak
10 Tina Wang	2 Jessica Conklin	10 Brian Pouw
12 Luke Elliot	8 Joseph Colistro	28 Julie Austad
14 Michelle Nguyen	8 Tesia Smith	30 Takefumi Hirai
16 Ivan Sanchez	10 Seamus Couch	
17 Courtney Hearon	22 Christy Bahr	
20 JoAnn Cho		
22 David Crawford		
22 Erin Sandstrom		
23 Crystal Green		
28 Travis Emery		
29 Michael Smith		



JET Talk

Bryan Barber, Akita JET

47: The Magic Number

What must one do to create the sense that he has “**experienced**” all of a country? It depends on how you define the experiences. My background is in geography, so naturally for me the first way to measure “experiencing” a land was in a **spatial sense**. Everybody who comes to Japan wants to see the big and famed cities like Tokyo,¹ Osaka, and Kyoto. Everyone also wants to see the famed parts of the countryside in places like Hokkaido and Nagano. But between these *first-rate* tourist sights is where lies the “**real Japan.**” It’s in the places no one goes because they either have no interest, or they don’t know it exists. In order to assess my Japan experiences and ensure my familiarity with the country was superior, I would actually **visit, and sightsee** in some form, in each of **Japan’s 47 prefectures.**

Visiting and actually sightseeing in every prefecture was not simple and I don’t specifically recommend it. However, what I do recommend is **creating your own barometer** to gauge your experience, and using it to motivate you. Try visiting every professional baseball stadium, national park, or Hard Rock Café in Japan.

Upon arrival in Tokyo in August 2004 and being escorted to Akita, my travels in **Hokkaido and most of Tohoku were completed by car within my first few months** in Japan. Trips beyond required more intricate planning prior to departure. Some trips were done by **train** while others were done by **flight**, and almost all included a rental car somewhere in the mix. Many others included travel by **ferry**. One of my motivations for traveling to the “**unexplored**” **regions** is my fascination with island life. Often times, my trip destination was to a small island in a new prefecture.²



So, what conclusions have I come to after seeing every prefecture in Japan? Firstly, travel in Japan is expensive. That is a fact. If you drop ¥10,000 on a day’s worth of travel, feel fortunate. Secondly, that said, there are **packages and deals which exist and can really help the travel budget** if you take advantage of them. Compare flight and train times and prices. Find out if hotel packages exist with flights and trains, and compare them to booking separately. Take buses, not taxis. These are all ways to save, but when you travel remember you’ll probably never get another chance to come to this place, so don’t be



Upcoming Work/ Event Schedule

January: Notification of transfer request.

January 1st: New Year’s Day **Holiday**

January 7,8,9: Powdertopia Hakkoda, Aomori

January 10,11,12: Powdertopia Niseko, Hokkaido

January 12th: Coming of Age Day **Holiday**

January 30th—February 22nd: Lake Towada Winter Story Festival



Early February Aomori Winter Festival

February 5 - 11th: Yuki Matsuri in Sapporo - 60th Anniversary!!!

Second weekend in February: Hirosaki Snow Lantern Festival

February 11th: Foundation Day **Holiday**

February 14th—15th: Nango Snow Firefly Festival

February 17th—20th: Hachinohe Enburi Festival

First weekend in March:

Shimoda Swan Festival

Moya Hills Championship Aomori City

Third weekend in March: Noheji Matsuri

March 20th: Vernal Equinox **Holiday**

March 31st: Hakkoda Walk

Late March - Early May: Spring skiing on Mt. Hakkoda

<http://www.yjw2009.jp/eng/event/thk.html>



Helpful Teaching Tip

Keep updated with your students by creating a website uploading daily/ weekly activities and having your teachers pass out work from your website even when you are not there! Weekly quizzes and updates are a great way to keep in touch with your students even when you do not have class every day, or week. There are free and easy to use websites online such as

www.freewebs.com amongst many others found with a simple google search. Just another way to keep those connections building. *If anyone needs instructions on website building 101 (and are unsure of the directions on the website), there are plenty of computer whizzes in the ken, so start asking around. Otherwise feel free to email me for more details. marti_in_japan@yahoo.com



Spotlight: Akita Ken

Bryan Barber, Akita ALT



The two best prefectures in Japan both start with "A," and Aichi is not one of them. As you know, your blue forests of Aomori are fabulous, but so are the autumn fields of Akita. And the best part is that it takes just a short mountain drive to see what Akita has to offer! Now, I've been to Aomori many times. I've seen the City, the *-noheis*, Hach & Hiro, the peninsulas, 13-ko, and even Christ's grave. Aomori has a lot to offer. Akita won't let you down. We have the

legendary *namahage* monsters who roam the Oga Peninsula, Akita City's **Kanto Festival** every August, and nationally renowned beautiful women (why do you think I recontracted four times?) When you come to Akita, stop in **Odate** just across the border for **kiritampo**, the local food of fame. Then, continue on down the road to one of the prefectures many festivals and sights. Among many, by far the most popular festival among JETs is the **Takeuchi Festival** (2/15, Misato Town) where in a small town locals get drunk and beat the hell out of each other with bamboo sticks for the sake of tradition. For a less violent experience, cherry-blossom season in **Kakunodate** among the samurai houses is best. What JET event is worth the trip more than any other? Easy one. Aomori produces the most top-ranked sumo rikishi, but in Akita we have our own tournament! **The Akita International Sumo Basho** held in late June/early July every year. For the last four years, a JET has been crowned yokozuna, including Aomori's own Travis Emery who won the tournament this year. For more information about Akita, surf our JETs website at www.akitajet.com. We have created a wiki which will provide tons of more information for your trip down here.



Kumamoto- Shi: A Snippet Saleem Reshamuala, CIR Kumamoto



We have a volcano that spits sulfur. We have a festival on the side of that volcano where anyone can light a bale of hay on fire and spin it around their head on a rope. Sometimes, as people are doing this incendiary dance, the rope itself catches fire. The twine, twisting and burning, soon breaks. When this happens, a flaming bale of hay is launched into the darkness. In the darkness stand other fiery hay spinners, and beyond those spinners spectators. Beyond the spectators wait a fire squad and ambulance.

We once had a festival where horses were filled with alcohol and paraded through the street, but this was banned. Now they run sober, bucking and wild through the open-arcade. It's an annual thing, during which many people are filled with alcohol, and they too run wild in the street.

We are the second largest city in Kyushu, and at approximately the same elevation as Casablanca, Morocco. **Please visit!**

CIR Talk

Liang Yuan, Itayanagi, CIR



Hello! I am a CIR working at a small town called **Itayanagi** (which has a population of 16,000 people)

My job can be divided into 3 parts:

First, to do coordination between this area and the **sister city in China**. Every year, these two areas will send delegation (both civil delegations and official delegations) to each other alternately and I am the only one

who knows both the languages so you can understand this is my biggest job.

Secondly, I **write articles** monthly or quarterly for lots of local publications. I am also responsible for translation of many materials from China ranging from an agreement to a commercial plan.

Thirdly, I visit elementary schools to **introduce Chinese culture**, such as food, game, music, ect. I also have been the first one to open the opportunity of cultural exchange with the local high school and the local jyo-seibu (housewife club). Other duties also include things such as participating in the local Chinese club periodically as the professor's teaching assistant.

I also initiate or take part in **volunteer activities** such as a Chinese corner for kids and storybook-reading club for kids.

This is a small town, but they are making every effort to help me in my happiness and future, which makes me feel very touched. As the CIR of this town, I will surely keep on doing and keep on exploring whatever I can do for it.

Contact:

Midyear Seminar!



Interesting Japanese Traditions Zachary Bass, Aomori CIR

変

Another year, 2008, is just about out the door!

As with most countries in the world, this season in Japan is full of many interesting traditions and events. One of my favorites is **Kanji Day**. Kanji Day is held every year on **December 12th** – and it is on this day that the Japan Kanji Aptitude Testing Foundation announces the Kanji of the year chosen by public submissions. This year, the Kanji “**変**” (*hen* – meaning “change”) was selected, receiving 6,031 votes out of a total of 111,208 votes. It is said to represent the change in the political situation, particularly in Japan with **yet another change of Prime Minister**, and the election of **soon-to-be President Barack Obama** in the USA, whose campaign focused on the theme of “change.” The same Kanji can also indicate strange, morbid, perverse, and chaos, the later representing the economic turmoil that was a major theme of the past year.



Another tradition I like in Japan is on **January 7th, the seven herbs (nanakusa) day of Japan**. Like back in USA, people in Japan are prone to eat tons of rich good foods that you normally do not eat over the holidays. And typically, by the first week of January your stomach is begging for a break. On January 7th, or seven herbs days, a **rice porridge (nanakusa-gayu)** is made with the seven herbs of spring and then eaten by all to settle one's stomach after all the feasting and to pray for a healthy new year.

The seven herbs of spring are **seri** (Japanese parsley), **nazuna** (shepherd's purse), **gogyo** (cottonweed) **hakobera** (chick-weed) **hotokenoza** (henbit), **suzuna** (turnip) and **suzushiro** (baby daikon). Nowadays very few people eat these herbs on a regular basis, but a few days before January 7th supermarkets will have them bundled together in little trays. The easiest way to enjoy them is to cut them up into small bits and toss them into your rice cooker with rice and plenty of water and put it on the okayu or rice porridge setting. As with many other very traditional Japanese foods, it probably won't float everyone's boat, but the astringent taste is slightly refreshing though you may want to add salt or some flavoring to it.

So, if you are staying in Japan for the holidays, don't let being away from home get you down, get out and **try some of the many strange holiday traditions around you** (I promise you, there are a lot more than just herb porridge and Kanji). You can impress and probably make your Japanese friends feel inferior in their Japaneseness when you tell them that you had a “*neshogatsu*” – a Japanese New Year spent sleeping in the *kotatsu* and that you ate *nanakusa-gayu*.

Mele Kalikimaka me ka Hau'oli Makahiki Hou (Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!)

Winter in Aomori

Weldon Green, Hachinohe ALT



Ahh winter. Chestnuts roasting, sleigh bells ringing, and icicles freezing in your nose. 'Tis the season where everything is white, beautiful, and inconvenient or slushy, dirty, and . . . inconvenient. Of course growing up in Minnesota winter was my favorite season of the year. Given that our only two seasons are winter or July, not loving winter means you are doomed to go crazy. Yet, however much I treasured the winter in Minnesota, it doesn't approach the experience of winter in Aomori.

My first impression of winter in Aomori was as a crossroads of weather and bad traditions. We sit at the conflux of cold weather from the north and non-insulating techniques from the south. This is best combated by keeping your house at a nice toasty 30c. Other essentials are a **kotatsu, a heated carpet square, heated blankets for your bed, and storm windows** (a layer of plastic on the outside and bubble wrap on the inside). Once you conquer your dwelling place you have to venture outside and face mountains of snow and the Aomori specialty of compressing-it-into-a-layer-of-ice-to-walk-and-drive-on. Snow plows here are reserved for the “real” snow, three feet and above; anything below that seems to be looked on as an insult. Shoveling out front early and often will give you a nice clear island of non-slip from which to enjoy your local winter wonderland. The trick to having a clear driveway and stoop is to make sure that feet, tires, or sun don't get onto your snow before you can clear it. Once it hardens into ice your options are to leave it all winter, chip it away by hand, or keep it continuously cleared and let the sun slowly shrink it for you. Another bonus to shoveling is the exercise and neighborhood bonding. I had many fantastic conversations with my neighbors over the huff-huff of tossing snow.

After overcoming this first shock, winter in Aomori can be treated like winter anywhere in the North (or far South). It brings three traits that set it apart from the other seasons: snow, cold, and darkness. The most mentally insidious of the three being darkness. In Aomori this is amplified by the fact that the clocks are set in Tokyo and for the next four months it will be dark when you finish with work. **Staying social and having hobbies really helps.** Become a regular at a restaurant where you can get a steaming bowl of cheap ramen. Picking up hobbies such as guitar, shodo, knitting, or Japanese drama watching can shorten the long evenings when you cannot go out.

Snow is best combated by turning it into a sport. Winter sports are traditionally very expensive, but the proximity and the prices here make it very affordable, so take advantage. If you have never skied or snowboarded, head to a beginner slope nearby. You can rent skis, snowboards, boots and snow pants at most hills, just bring a coat and extra socks and you are set. It also helps to go with the right mixture of experienced sempai to give you tips starting out, and beginner friends to fall down a lot with.

The coldness is just cold. Our bodies adjust to it well, and **you will burn more calories** as a result so don't be afraid to eat more if you find yourself surprisingly hungry. It's only ever dangerous if you are exposed without protection for a long time. So keep a blanket (or two) in your trunk if you drive and don't go up Hak-koda without a buddy system for the end of the day. The best way to be cold and happy is to go to festivals. Every town has winter festivals, and usually spring festivals too which end up being held in “spring” (winter). Go to as many as possible, because you only have a few years to experience everything! Also there are always **bonfires and singing and sake, which go together great.**



Featuring our Third Year JETS!!!



Name: Karen Retter

Job Description: She is English Monster "EIMON"
If you were a Super-Hero, who/ what would you be?: My Dad, he's the bestest super hero..or maybe that's just mum making excuses for him wearing his underwear around the house.

Favorite Japanese person or saying: The voice on the train - まもなく終点青森へまいります。忘れ物、
 落し物ないでお気をつけください。

Comment of the Day: Real men live south of the Bombays, where Jafas don't roll.



Name: Chris Swanson

Job Description: Look busy.

If you were a Super-Hero, who/ what would you be?: Nama-tron (of the Houdai clan)

Favorite Japanese person or saying:
 しょうがない

Comment of the Day:

"My favorite sport is Traffic Field."



Name: Abidemi Bankole

Job Description: ALT, Yomogita

Comment of the Day:

All things are possible/Nothing is impossible...!



Name: Peter Fairley

Job Description: English Mascot

If you were a superhero, who/what would you be?: That was such a tough question that I asked Mariko and Sayaka Kikuchi (no relation) of class 2-3 about what they thought. They said "Anpanman".

Favorite Japanese Person or Saying: Masopasoaso, because of how the very mention of his name makes the kids laugh.

Comment of the Day: Yesterday I was surprised how the vast majority of students in grades 5 and 6 at Nagamine Elementary School voted "TRUE" in the True or False quiz statement "Peter is from another planet."



Name: JoAnn Cho

Job Description: ALT at command in the Blue-Forest City

If you were a Super-Hero, who/ what would you be?:

Michelangelo from Ninja Turtles, however, the ability to change things by the snap of fingers would be awesome too.

Favorite Japanese person or saying: Ms.

Machiko (super-genki P.E. teacher). Her famous quote, "Attack!"

Comment of the Day: Shall we dance?



Name: Kelly Rose

Job Description: ALT

If you were a Super-Hero, who would you be?:

Melanie Surry --she can do anything!

Favorite Japanese person or saying: daijoubu



Name: Amy Miller

Job Description: CIR and Shimokita ALTs' honorary Mom.

If you were a Super-Hero, who/ what would you be?:

I always thought it would be cool to fly.

Favorite Japanese person or saying:

七転八起 (ななころびやおき)

It's pretty much the same thing as "try, try, again."



Other Third Year JETS:

Rachel Johnson, Helen Masters, Justin Nesbit, Wade Binneboese, Mark Scott, Courtney Hearon, Yumiko Dark, Liudmila Meteleva, Aaron Asmann, Melissa Mclvor, Renato Nahibuan, Alaine Nozawa

