

MAEBASHI FOCUS

Coordinator for International Relations (CIR) Newsletter

New JETs



Since around the middle of May, 12 current and former JET participants, including me, have formed the 2026 Gunma Orientation Committee and worked tirelessly together to organize this year's event. Gunma Orientation is a two-day program designed to teach and guide new JET participants about subjects such as life here in Gunma, working as an ALT, overcoming cultural and social barriers, learning Japanese, driving and transportation, and more. It also gives them a chance to experience various traditional Japanese arts, such as tea ceremony and Maebashi's own Danbē Odori!

Starting from 9 a.m., the first day consisted mainly of lectures covering important topics such as money management and driving. I was tasked with presenting a lecture called "Fun in Gunma." As the name suggests, Fun in Gunma covered many of the activities and tourist destinations that Gunma has to offer. However, the special thing about this presentation was that, after many talks and negotiations, we were able to have Gunma-chan meet the new JETs! Outside of Fun in Gunma, I also gave a presentation about being a CIR to the new CIR assigned to Kencho. I shared many of my own experiences and tried my best to pass on what I've learned over the past year.

On top of my presentations, I was also suddenly dubbed the "Official Photographer" of the Orientation. As a result, I spent much of the event running around taking pictures of everyone in between my other duties!

Once 5 p.m. rolled around and we had finished all the lectures, we led the new JETs to a restaurant near the station for our Welcome Dinner. Finding a restaurant near the station that could accommodate more than 60 people was a challenge, but we managed to pull it off and had a great time! Many of these new JETs had never been to Japan before, so getting to teach them about Japanese customs and drinking culture was a blast. Once we finished eating, we headed to a nearby karaoke bar, where we sang songs until around 1:30 a.m.!

The morning of Day Two was pretty rough. I probably got around four hours of sleep (one hour less than I'd gotten the previous night). Somehow, though, I managed to make it to the station early in the morning and lead the JETs back to Kencho for another presentation-packed day.

Howdy y'all!

On August 13th and 14th, after months of planning and hard work, I, along with everyone on the JET Program 2026 Gunma Orientation Committee, successfully held this year's Gunma Orientation for the new JET Program participants who will be working as ALTs and CIRs throughout Gunma Prefecture! Planning and completing everything in time was time-consuming and quite stressful, but it all paid off in the end, as this year's Orientation went off without a hitch!



Gunma-chan and I

I personally led two main courses on this day. The first was a beginner-oriented presentation on learning Japanese, while the second was a cultural experience class featuring Maebashi's Danbē Odori. The Japanese-learning course honestly took around two months of work due to all the revisions and reworking, but the effort paid off. I received a lot of praise from the new JETs, many of whom said they found the presentation helpful and informative. The Danbē Odori class was also a surprise hit! We had many JETs say that they wanted to start attending Danbē Odori practice when it begins again in preparation for the Maebashi Festival.

Overall, these two days were the result of everyone's hard work. It feels somewhat strange, and perhaps even nostalgic, to think that I was sitting in the same seats and listening to the same lectures as these new JETs just one year ago. I truly hope all of these Gunma newcomers have been properly oriented and that they find their new life in Gunma just as fun and exciting as I have!

Here's to a great year in Gunma for all the new JETs!



Group Photo with Gunma-chan