

MAEBASHI FOCUS

Coordinator for International Relations (CIR) Newsletter

Howdy y'all!

As of July 28th, I've officially entered my second year as a CIR on the JET Program. Honestly, with everything I've been able to do in just one year, it feels more like three! To celebrate, I'd like to look back at some of my favorite activities I've had the opportunity to take part in over the past year.

Starting chronologically, almost as soon as I arrived in Maebashi, I was asked to help with interpretation and translation for the Akagi Shirakaba-Onuma Marathon, as the city was hosting runners from our sister city, Birmingham, Alabama. What began as simply translating documents and emails eventually turned into a three-day assignment, during which we gave the runners a tour of Maebashi and accompanied them as they participated in the marathon.

This was my first time interpreting and hosting international guests as a representative of Maebashi. I got along with the runners really well, and we made a lot of great memories together. My favorite was when they invited me to run the marathon with them. Of course, I said yes! It was my first time participating in any kind of marathon, but I had an amazing time and received so much encouragement from everyone. Looking back, I think it was the perfect way to begin this job and set the tone for how I wanted to approach hosting events going forward.

Next isn't really an event, but it's something I wanted to mention. Around December, I started a new newsletter column called Cinema Review! I've been a huge film fan ever since I was young, and I've always dreamed of doing something related to cinema, whether that meant writing reviews or even working on films themselves. So when my proposal to review movies showing at Maebashi Cinema House was approved, I was ecstatic! It's been a blast discovering new films and sharing my thoughts with everyone, and I hope to continue improving the quality of my reviews in the future.

Fast-forward to February, when the Maebashi Tourism Department asked me to help with photography to promote ice fishing at Mt. Akagi. I never imagined I'd get the chance to try ice fishing, and it ended up being even more fun than I expected. My favorite memory was being the only one of the three staff members who actually managed to catch a fish! I also became good friends with the two staff members I spent the day fishing with.



Akagi Onuma-Shirakaba Marathon

Later that same month (Valentine's Day, to be exact), I was given the opportunity to MC an Italian cultural event. It was my first time serving as an MC, and although speaking in front of a crowd has never been one of my strengths, it turned out to be both a fun and rewarding experience. It also helped me become much more comfortable speaking in front of an audience, which came in handy later when I MCed the JOMovie Day event that I planned.



JOMovie Day

In March, I had the opportunity to accompany the Consul General of Japan in Alabama, Mark Jackson, and his wife, along with Andy Minisman, a descendant of the famous poet Samuel Ullman, during their visit to Maebashi. They came to attend a lecture by Youth Society Chairman Mr. Tago, and we also showed them around the city and enjoyed dinner together at Rinkokaku. I had a wonderful time getting to know our guests and was grateful for the chance to build new friendships.

Finally, the JOMovie Day event that I organized alongside my fellow JOMO JETs in May is probably the project I'm most proud of from my first year as a CIR. I don't think I've ever poured so much time and effort into a single project before. That said, I definitely couldn't have pulled it off without the support and advice of the other JOMO JET members, who helped me every step of the way. Seeing the event turn out to be such a success made all the hard work worthwhile, and I hope it becomes a long-running JOMO JET tradition.

These are just a handful of the many experiences I've been fortunate enough to have during my first year as a CIR. As I'm writing this, it's honestly still hard to believe that only one year has passed. I'm excited to see what my second year has in store, and I look forward to sharing many more experiences with all of you in future newsletters!



Ice Fishing