

General Activities Report

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INTRODUCTION

In addition to reporting on some of the activities of local AJET chapters and AJET Special Interest Groups, the General Activities Report will discuss ongoing National AJET projects, introduce new initiatives, and outline the future goals of National AJET. We encourage questions and comments on the general direction of National AJET or specific AJET activities from CLAIR and the ministries, especially any suggestions to improve our services to JETs or to better promote the JET Programme at large.

AJET AROUND JAPAN

The AJET Awards

Every year, National AJET likes to recognise some of the outstanding contributions prefectural AJET chapters and individual AJET members have made to their local communities. Congratulations to the 2010 AJET Award winners:

AJET Chapter Award: *Nara AJET* for consistently hosting a variety of events, well-attended by both JETs and Japanese friends, and supporting charities, including running a scholarship for Nara students studying abroad.

Best Charity Event Award: *Nagano AJET Thanksgiving Talent Auction* for raising 18,000 yen for the World Food Program / *Kumamoto AJET Charity Dinner* for their event featuring a Haitian speaker and raising 213,000 yen for Quisqueya International Organization for Freedom & Development Haiti.

Best Sports Event: *Hyogo's Tajima Ultimate Frisbee Tournament* for creating a fun atmosphere for both playing frisbee and international exchange.

Best Online Resource Award: *Hiroshima AJET's Wide Island View* for excellent coverage of issues relevant to JET participants, including articles about Japanese culture, travel recommendations, and Japanese language study.
(<http://wideislandview.com>)

Best Publication Award: *Nagasaki's The Nagazasshi*, an informative and visually appealing writer's digest, available online and in hard-copy for free at various locations around Nagasaki.

Best Inter-Prefectural Event / Project: *Nara & Mie Masquerade Ball / Block Mixer* for getting over 100 JETs around Kansai and Japanese friends together to celebrate Mardi Gras and raise over 62,600 yen for Partner's In Health's Haiti earthquake relief efforts.

Special Interest Group (SIG) Award: *Smile Kids Japan* for its dedication to expanding orphanage visits to all prefectures in Japan.

Internationalization Award: *Shimane Student Exchange Program* for funding four scholarships to students who will study abroad and for funding and publishing a magazine of student articles in English.

AJET Service Award: *Lauren Wetherington, Dawn Adams, Jonathon Ealey, Jooree Ahn, Byrony Dunlop, Jen Park, Adam Tsai, Natalee Oslen, Jesse Welty, Tonya Kneff, Rebecca Carrington, Ryan Bedford, Samantha Scupp, Kevin Mitchell, Daniel Patterson, Justin Elavathil, Andrew Heffernan, Pooja Dadhania, Carol Holland, and Mark Griffiths* for their outstanding contributions to AJET and the JET Programme.

Prefectural Highlights

AJET Chapters around Japan host a variety of cultural, social, charitable and educational events every year. This is a small sample of events that AJET Chapters have hosted so far this year:

HAJET Musical (Hokkaido)

On April 3rd, 10th and 17th, HAJET held their annual musical. The event raised 27,000 yen for the Hokkaido English Challenge. JETs performed a light-hearted take on the traditional *Aladdin* story. The show was mostly presented in English, but with Japanese songs, dialogue and narration so everyone could enjoy it.

Sea the Summit: The Ultimate Fuji Climb (Shizuoka)

Shizukoka JETs Linton Rathgen and Joe Pournovin organised a Mt. Fuji Climb that began from the seashore, raising 10,000 yen. The proceeds were given to Oxfam Japan IVG. The event was featured in the Japan Times: <http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/n20100805f1.html>

The T.R.A.M. (Toyama)

Toyama AJET have set up a website entitled The T.R.A.M. The website advertises JET and community activities in the area to make it easier for both JETs and the local community to get involved. There is a monthly newsletter and anyone can contribute to the site. <http://toyama.press.ajet.net/tram/category/october-2010/>

Host Family Programme (Fukui)

This year has the highest participation of JETs and Japanese families for Fukui's highly successful host family programme, matching up incoming JETs with host families from their areas. Three large events are organized throughout the year for the host family participants. Most JETs spend one evening/day a week with their host families.

Haiti Relief (Kochi)

Two events were organised by local Kochi JETs to raise money for the people of Haiti. The first was "Open Mic, Open Hearts." Approximately 50 people attended, raising 131,400 yen. The second event, 'From Kochi, to Haiti' was a musical event and Bazaar that was attended by over 1,000 people and raised 596,686 yen.

Beach Clean Up (Tokushima)

Since May 2010, JETs and the local community have been working together to help clean beaches off the coast of Shimada Island, Naruto. A single JET started this project by cleaning the beaches in her spare time. Via word of mouth, the media and Internet, there are now between 30 and 60 people attending each organized clean up.

Block 9 Hiroshima Carp Baseball Game

On June 5th, over 90 JETs from Hiroshima, Yamaguchi, Shimane, Okayama, Ehime and Tottori went to Hiroshima for a Hiroshima Carp baseball game. For many in the group this was their first experience watching Japanese baseball, and for some it was their first time watching a live baseball game! Everyone who attended had a great time.

Kanoya International Day (Kagoshima)

On October 17th, the Kanoya International Exchange Association held an International Day. Nathan Bastin, a local JET CIR was the chief organizer. JETs presented games, cuisine, music, folk costumes and more from their home countries. During the day there were many cross-cultural workshops, a world restaurant, international fashion show, and a world concert.

Special Interest Group Updates

Special Interest Groups give JETs nationwide a chance to connect with other JETs who share a common interest, hobby, or identity. SIGs use email listservs, newsletters, events and workshops. Unfortunately, due to the turnover rate of JETs, many SIGs are left leaderless and inactive each year. AJET has been actively searching for new leaders for inactive SIGs since Tokyo Orientation and has been successful at revitalizing the SIG programme.

We now have five previously inactive SIGs with new proactive leaders:

- Anime and Manga
- Anthropology
- Buddhism and other Japanese Religions
- Chicano and Latino
- Vegetarianism

Many of the new SIGs are hoping to draw in the Japanese community as well as JETs.

We also have two completely new SIGs. The Writers' SIG hopes to bring Japanese writers and JETs together for discussion, critiques and even a possible retreat to exchange ideas and learn from each other. This SIG has a very experienced leader with a background in editing and creative writing.

The second new SIG is Muslims in Japan. This is the first time that AJET has had a specific SIG for the Muslim population. The Muslim SIG founder hopes that by forming this SIG, he will be able to educate and inform JETs and the Japanese community about the Islamic tradition and the experience of Muslims in Japan.

Smile Kids Japan was recently featured in the Japan Times (<http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/fl20100925a1.html>). They have recently expanded to four more prefectures and hope to be in half of Japan's prefectures by the end of the year.

JET Effect Featured Projects

JET Effect will be working closely over the winter with Jordan Patrick, a second year ALT from Tomiyama, Aichi Prefecture who has been working on a music project since his JET appointment. Jordan Patrick wanted to find some way to use his spare time in the summer to plan a community project. Jordan has put together a CD named after his town that will be released in December/January. AJET is supporting Jordan through publicity. *JET Effect* will feature Jordan's story in December to tie in with the release of the CD, including a video of Jordan performing his song. AJET is also in talks about possibly offering financial sponsorship for the project.



NATIONAL AJET PROJECTS

National AJET Council

National AJET recently filled our remaining vacant council positions through an application process and council vote. Our new Block 3 Representative is Denise Schlickbernd from Saitama, and our new Block 4 Representative is Erica Nakanishi-Stanis from Chiba.

AJET Peer Support Group

Peer Support Group (PSG) is a listening and referral service offering support for all JET Programme participants, 365/6 days a year, from 20:00 until 07:00.

PSG is managed by the National Coordinator (NC), Ms. Emily Collins, and the Volunteer Coordinator (VC), Mr. Kieran Murphy, who maintains the scheduling and coordination of the service’s current 22 volunteers.

Call Volume Statistics

	2009	2010
April	--	10
May	--	7
June	2	2
July	9	7
August	19	29
September	9	12
TOTAL CALLS FOR 6 MONTH PERIOD	--	67

PSG typically receives more calls during the summer months, as this is when the majority of JET participants arrive in Japan and require support. However in August 2010 PSG received significantly more calls than in August 2009. Though PSG cannot be certain as to why this happened it may be because PSG was promoted to a greater degree over the past year, specifically at Tokyo Orientation. Further the PSG NC has been spending more time corresponding with JET PAs since summer 2009, both at PA conferences and via email, so perhaps this word of mouth approach has lead to more JETs across Japan hearing about the PSG service.

PSG is being used steadily and frequently throughout the night, and regardless of the reason for the service’s increased usage PSG is providing a valued service for the JET community, and maintaining its commitment to providing reliable and professional support for JET Programme participants.

PSG - CLAIR - PA relations

As part of continued relations between the PSG service and Prefectural Advisers (PAs), it has been customary in previous years for CLAIR to invite the PSG National Coordinator and Volunteer Coordinator to attend the biannual PA Conference in Tokyo. For this PSG is extremely grateful.

However in October 2010, CLAIR further extended its invitation to all PSG members. This resulted in the attendance of 14 of the 22 PSG members at the conference (1 NC, 1 VC, 2 PSG members who are also PAs, and 10 other members). Not only was the conference

enjoyed by all as a learning experience, but the conference also gave those of us involved in the service the chance to meet face to face. This was an opportunity PSG would otherwise not have. Some comments received by the NC from PSG volunteers regarding the conference include:

“This proved to be an excellent review of our certain parts of our PSG training.”
(Session: **Ethics, Referral, Confidentiality.**)

“All in all a memorable, informative experience.” (Session: **Demo Role Plays.**)

“We (...) had the chance to discuss issues relating to PSG (and it was) great to be able to meet everyone face to face. I hope that next year all the PSG volunteers can attend.” (Session: **PSG Meeting.**)

“The opportunity to attend a conference entirely devoted to the JET Programme support network has been invaluable. I learnt a lot, I solidified my previous PSG training, and the sense of community within PSG has definitely improved as a result. Thank you CLAIR!” (**October 2010 PA Conference**, summary.)

After the conference all PSG members wrote reviews of the sessions they had attended. This document, further edited by the NC, was then distributed to all PSG members; allowing those who did not attend the chance to see what took place, providing a useful training tool for everyone.

PSG is extremely grateful to CLAIR for this opportunity, and we look forward to future collaborations of this nature. By fostering the deepened sense of community which one-to-one training has provided us, PSG will certainly be better able to maintain, and improve upon, the high level of service to which it is committed.

Budget

PSG continues to work within a steady budget. For the 2009/10 year PSGs' total expenditure was 95,714 yen. Compared to the 2008/9 total of 108,330 yen, PSG reduced its costs by 12,616 yen.

AJET Online

2010 has been a big year for AJET's online presence. Not only has the main AJET website been re-created from the ground up, but we also added a new website called AJET Press.

AJET Press is a website that is a gateway and distribution node for stories and articles from prefectural AJET & JET online magazines. Its purpose is to share information and stories with other JETs outside of a particular prefecture or city that an online magazine might represent. This brings articles and stories from within a prefecture to a much bigger audience. It's our hope that the site will be a “go-to source” for JET participants looking to find information about Japan, living in Japan and what JETs are up to around the country.

The AJET Profile Center and Tatami Timeshare have received a graphical update to make them more visually pleasing during use and look more integrated with the main website.

The AJET National Council Forums hasn't moved to the JET Programme Forums because the National Council uses a chat program integrated into the forums to discuss things live. This has been a tool for AJET National Council for years and is something we want to keep.

The AJET webmaster would also like to offer any help to CLAIR in reducing the influx of spam and even creating a new forum "theme" to give the CLAIR forums a more unique look. This would require administration rights to the forum and it has been discussed that a non-disclosure agreement would have to be signed due to the PA forum that exists within the CLAIR forums.

Tokyo Orientation

AJET continues to have a strong presence at Tokyo Orientation, offering free Skype calls to new AJET members, coordinating workshops, selling various team-teaching resources and providing general support. New JETs in particular appreciate the free Skype calls to tell family that they have arrived in Japan safely.

Many JETs pointed out that it would be easy for new JET participants to register for National AJET from home and that that might relieve a little of the crowding in the AJET Centre. This year, we could look into asking Prefectural AJET groups, TOAs or JETAA presenters at pre-departure orientations to suggest registering online before leaving for Tokyo.

In addition, some JETs would have liked more advance notice about our teaching resource offerings at orientation. Some JETAA groups already inform new JETs about *Planet Eigo*, *Foxy Phonics*, *The Kanji Survival Guide*, and other AJET publications at pre-departure orientations. We can look into expanding that to other consulates.

AJET introduced a new workshop this year based on the Spring 2010 AJET report, "Making the Most of Your Time on JET." This report examined some of the difficulties JETs have faced when trying to start new projects during otherwise underutilized working hours, and suggested ways to overcome these difficulties. This new workshop was generally well-received. However, based on the responses from CLAIR's Tokyo Orientation survey, some JET participants thought that it could focus more on *how* to initiate new activities than on *what* other JETs have done, that it could be more distinct from information at other workshops or the AJET Information Fair, and that the name/description could better represent what was actually covered at the workshop. Using this insight, we hope to improve this workshop to help give new JETs realistic expectations of some of the difficulties they may have, give them some strategies for coping with them, and encourage them to go beyond their basic job description to increase their own job satisfaction and promote grassroots internationalization.

We would like to continue to improve our workshop content in the future. If, as determined by the Orientations Overlap Report, we can help fill a needed gap in Tokyo Orientation, we could consider adjusting our workshops as needed.

AJET Publications

National AJET produces two publications to aid JETs in their work as ALTs. *Planet Eigo* is a collection of learning theory, games and activities while *Foxy Phonics* provides a structured series of worksheets to help students study Phonics. Both *Planet Eigo* and *Foxy Phonics*,



along with a number of Hokkaido and Fukushima AJET publications, were on sale at Tokyo Orientation. Compared to last year, sales figures improved for all publications, with the exception of Hokkaido AJET's *Japan on a Full Stomach*, which sold out.

Total revenue from Tokyo Orientation was 1,754,895 yen. 463 copies of *Planet Eigo* (324 copies of the first edition and 139 pre-orders of the second edition) and 272 copies of *Foxy Phonics* were sold. With the exception of the previously mentioned *Japan on a Full Stomach*, Hokkaido and Fukushima AJET publications sales were up an average of 70 percent in comparison to the previous year. National AJET sales were up an average of 17 percent in comparison to the previous year.

The last copies of the first edition of *Planet Eigo* were sold at the orientations, so pre-orders for the second edition were also taken. JETs who pre-ordered the new edition of *Planet Eigo* were contacted by email after orientation to confirm shipping details. Due to members of the volunteer editing team unfortunately pulling out at the last minute, the release of the new edition of *Planet Eigo* became behind schedule. JETs who pre-ordered the book were kept up to date by email about progress and were provided websites and a non-printable, online version of the first edition of *Planet Eigo* until they could receive a print copy of the second edition.

JETs, Be Ambitious

During the Spring 2010 discussion of "Making the Most of Your Time on JET," we discussed how we not only need to educate JETs about making opportunities for themselves at work, but also to promote the value of JET projects outside of the classroom or city hall to the Contracting Organizations and the Japanese community. Grassroots Internationalization is an important part of the JET Programme and we hope that sharing successful school or community projects will make JET supervisors more willing to support new JET Projects.

To help with this effort, AJET would like to propose a new website that would have the best of JET articles translated for Japanese Teachers of English, Boards of Education and other people in Japan to read about what ALTs are doing in the community and to better explain what the JET Programme does for the community. Similar to *JET Effect*, it will contain most if not all of the articles, and it will be a website that is completely Japanese (with English as a secondary language) with no other content. This will make it easier to navigate for, say, a student's mother. The name will echo a familiar English phrase most Japanese people are familiar with, "JETs, be ambitious!" The website will have an easy link, such as, <http://jba.ajet.net>.

Life After JET

AJET would like to introduce a new monthly column focusing on the transition from JET Programme Participant to a career post-JET. We will feature former JET participants and share their experience finding a job after JET and their advice for current JETs. Hopefully, this will help JETs be better prepared for post-JET life and make the most of their experience here as JETs. Sharing information between JETs is one of the most valuable services that AJET provides, and we hope that "Life After JET" will be a useful resource.

CLAIR-Ministries-AJET Service Awards

In addition to our regular AJET awards, we would like to propose adding a new set of awards, one co-sponsored by each ministry and CLAIR. We will collect nominations and begin the

screening process, but CLAIR and the ministries could select the winner for their respective categories:

- Outstanding Service to their Contracting Organization - CLAIR
- Outstanding Service to their School and Teachers - MEXT
- Outstanding Community Involvement - MOFA
- Outstanding Service to New JETs - MIC

We believe co-sponsoring these awards with the ministries and CLAIR will increase their value to JET participants, and will reward JETs who go above and beyond.

NATIONAL AJET GOALS

More Regular AJET Self-Evaluation Surveys

The most recent National AJET Self-Evaluation survey (Winter 2009) garnered some very thoughtful responses. One clear theme was that many JETs want more information about places to travel, events around Japan, the transition from JET to a job after JET, and workplace tips and tricks. These results have informed many new projects in the past year. To give JETs more information about what is happening around Japan, we have added a Block Highlight to our monthly e-Bulletin and launched a new website, AJET Press. “Life After JET” will outline the transition to another job after JET. We are still looking for ways to better use the results of the “Making the Most of Your Time on JET” report to give JETs more information on workplace tips, in addition to *JET Effect*.

We will continue to improve on these points, and we also plan to institute more regular self-evaluation surveys to keep up with what JETs want out of AJET. Including a survey every year with the Spring General Activities Report, starting with the next report in Spring 2011, would help us set goals for the new AJET council year to keep our services relevant to current JET needs.

Higher Quality AJET Reports

We feel that our meetings with CLAIR and the ministries are one of National AJET’s most important activities and we would like to make our future meetings even more productive.

We recently set standard survey practices to make our surveys more consistent and more effective. Next, we need to commit to getting over 345 responses for each report in order to have statistically significant results based on the current JET population. A higher survey response rate is crucial to further improving our reports.

We have been making a concerted effort to fulfill our promises at Opinion Exchanges and to better publicize the results of our meetings through our e-Bulletin, website, Facebook and network of Block Representatives. We would like to continue to make our activities more transparent and easily accessible to all JETs.

In addition, we are looking for ways to modify the current General Activities Report formula to make it a more productive part of Opinion Exchanges. As is, it tends to repeat mostly the same information every six months. We would like start using the GA Report as a tool for AJET to reflect on new difficulties and achievements in the past six months and to solidify our goals for future, instead of as a vehicle to report on what AJET prefectures have been doing and a summary of current, and unchanged, AJET projects. As we review the current

process for producing the GA Report, we would like to take into account what CLAIR and the ministries feel is important as well.

AJET and JET Programme Publicity

We would like to contribute to the PR campaign to preserve the JET Programme. We will work on building JETs, Be Ambitious into an easy-to-navigate resource and continue to look for ways to contribute to this effort.

As stated in this year's Workplace Integration Report, many JETs worry about the perceived uncertain future of the JET Programme as it relates to their own job stability and the possibility of their position being eliminated. If JETs feel their hard work will be rewarded with re-appointment opportunities, they have a stronger motivation to excel on the JET Programme. It is, therefore, not only our goal to show the Japanese public that JET, as a government funded programme, offers unique advantages to private ALTs or CIRs, but also to help channel JET concerns over job security into more positive outlets as opposed to frustration.

National AJET and Education

This area has received relatively little attention in recent years and we would like to improve upon that in the coming years. We recently signed a new contract to further cement our relationship with JALT. Hopefully, we can use this as a springboard to offer more education-related opportunities for JETs.

QUESTIONS

Tokyo Orientation:

1. Do CLAIR, MEXT, MIC or MOFA have any comments about the AJET presence at Tokyo Orientation? Do you have any suggestions for improvements for next year?
2. We would like to change the AJET Workshop topics listed for prospective Tokyo Orientation Assistants to outline to include our new workshop, Making the Most of your Time on JET. Is this possible? If there are any further workshop changes, when do we need to finalize them to be included on this year's application?

New Projects:

1. Would CLAIR and the ministries be willing to co-sponsor new JET awards? Do you have any comments about this new awards programme? How can we make it work?
2. Do you have any comments on our proposal for the JETs, Be Ambitious website? What would make it easiest for people to access this information? And what information do you think is most important to highlight?

Other:

1. What are the most valuable sections of the General Activities Report? What sections are the least valuable? Is there any important information that you think is missing? Do you think one GA Report per year would be enough to sufficiently cover these topics?
2. Do you have any other questions or comments about any other AJET activities?