

**Report on the Invitation Programme for JET Alumni  
to Disaster Stricken Areas in Tohoku**

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## **Introduction**

### *The JET Programme*

What is known as the “JET Programme” is formally “The Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme.” Under this thoroughly unique program, local governments appoint non-Japanese youth as officials, with multifaceted beneficial effects able to be expected through their activities, including improvements in foreign language education, the internationalization of local areas, the enhancement of exchanges and mutual understanding with other countries, and the cultivation of people who are knowledgeable about and feel an affinity for Japan.

In 2011, the JET Programme celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> year since its inception, with a total of over 55,000 youth from 60 countries coming to Japan through this program to date to give instruction in foreign languages, sports, and other areas at elementary schools, junior and senior high schools, and other institutions throughout Japan. They are at the same time engaged in international exchange activities conducted by the local authorities. The JET Programme has yielded such good results that it is now said to be one of the largest-scale programs for people-to-people exchanges anywhere in the world.

### *Network of JET alumni*

A large number of non-Japanese youth who have participated in the JET Programme have, within schools and administrative institutions in locations all around the country, experienced Japan through activities that are deeply associated with the local regions and local residents. Upon returning to their home countries, after assuming various occupations such as civil servants, diplomats, teachers, workers in the private sector, journalists, and so on, as individuals they take on the role of bridges promoting friendly relations between Japan and their home countries as people who are knowledgeable about and have an affinity for Japan.

Since 1989, former JET Programme participants in each participating country have voluntarily created an organization (the JET Alumni Association, “JETAA”) that undertakes grass roots-level activities with the objective of promoting friendly relations with Japan. JETAA currently has 51 regional Chapters in 14 countries and comprises a large-scale international network of people who are knowledgeable about and have an affinity for Japan with some 23,000 members in total.

Through its Embassies and Consulates-General in various locations, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has built close relations with each regional Chapter and provides support for activities planned and implemented by JETAA, including those to introduce Japan, educational and public relations activities, and efforts to promote Japanese language learning. The JETAA for its part also cooperates actively in the recruitment, screening, and orientation of JET participants conducted by Japanese overseas establishments.

#### *Assistance by former JET Programme participants towards the reconstruction of Japan*

After the Great East Japan Earthquake that struck on March 11, 2011, JET alumni in each country felt a somber worry and sadness at the damage Japan had suffered, and many entered the disaster zone as volunteers in an individual capacity.

In addition, JETAA Chapters in locations all around the world conducted drives to collect monetary donations and held charity events, with for example the U.S. JETAA Chapters collecting relief funds reaching US\$313,000 in total. Moreover, the JETAA International Meeting, JETAA's global organization, met in Japan in October, taking up the themes of "contributions to Japan's reconstruction" and "improving the JET Programme." After the meeting in Tokyo finished, the committee members engaged in volunteer work in the city of Rikuzentakada.

#### *Efforts undertaken by JET alumni to counter reputational damage*

After the Great East Japan Earthquake and the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station, harmful rumors were spreading overseas that Japan was a dangerous place to be, and the number of overseas visitors to the local communities within the disaster-stricken areas and elsewhere plummeted. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been taking a variety of countermeasures to mitigate such reputational damage. Yet while a spectrum of means to counter reputational damage do exist, among these the disbursing of communication by non-Japanese themselves at a grass-roots level has the prospect to yield highly beneficial results.

Former JET Programme participants comprise an extremely suitable group for going to the disaster areas as reconstruction is underway and sending out

messages on the state of affairs there, insofar as they enjoy a deep understanding of and strong feelings of affinity for Japan, they are able to engage in activities independently, including due to their Japanese capabilities, without burdening those in the disaster-stricken areas, they are able to compare objectively their former workplaces before and after the earthquake, and they have a high degree of competence in communicating through social media. This program was implemented by inviting JET alumni to Japan for short periods as one type of operation related to the dispatching of information overseas and the development of assistance with regard to selling trips to visit Japan by local tour companies and others, with such operations to be implemented in an urgent manner by the Japan Tourism Agency in order to overcome as quickly as possible the adverse effects that had arisen in travel demand to visit Japan due to the Great East Japan Earthquake.

## **1. Aims and objectives of the program**

This program has as its principal objective countermeasures to reputational damage in which JET alumni who have experience working in the local communities that suffered damage in the Great East Japan Earthquake are invited to visit Japan, at which time they visit their former workplaces, interact with their former colleagues, students, and others, observe the local tourist spots as well as Tokyo and other locations, experience for themselves both the state of Japan as it works towards reconstruction after the earthquake disaster and the safety of traveling and staying in Japan, and send out information about their experiences and impressions while staying in Japan in a variety of formats, including contributing articles to newspapers in their local areas, appearing on TV and radio, giving speeches, and utilizing web pages, Twitter, blogs, and You Tube so as to improve the image held overseas of the disaster area and of Japan.

Also, while a large number of current JET Programme participants stayed on in Japan and continued their work even after the earthquake, some resigned mid-contract to return to their home country, and some cases arose in which people who were planning to take up employment on the Programme and were scheduled to come to Japan in August 2011 withdrew their applications when they were unable to convince family members or others who were convinced that Japan was unsafe. This program can also be considered effective from the perspective of redressing such situations while securing applicants to the JET Programme into the future.

This program will also contribute to fostering a reconfirmation of the significance of the JET Programme as a form of international exchange that has continued for 25 years as former JET Programme participants convey their feelings regarding Japan to relevant persons within the local governments in the disaster area and to local residents, while also contributing to a heightening of the program participants' own feelings of familiar kinship towards Japan.

## **2. Overview of the program**

(1) Conditions of participation, number of participants, implementation period, etc.

Twenty former JET Programme participants meeting the following conditions will be invited to spend roughly one week each between August 1 and October 16, at the timing requested by each participant, in local communities that suffered damage in the Great East Japan Earthquake and in

neighboring tourist locations.

#### Conditions of participation

1. No limitations based on age or gender
2. Must have had two or more years of experience as an Assistant Language Teacher (ALT), a Coordinator for International Relations (CIR), or a Sports Exchange Advisor (SEA) in local governments in the disaster-affected areas of Iwate Prefecture, Miyagi Prefecture, Fukushima Prefecture or the City of Sendai and be a JET alumni whose home country is a country targeted under the “Visit Japan” program implemented by the Japan Tourism Agency.
3. Must directly contact the school and/or local government where one was assigned as a JET participant and be able to engage in activities with them
4. Must be possible for the contracting organization for which the participant worked as a JET to accept the participant (conduct exchange activities during the participant’s period of stay in Japan)
5. Must be able to travel unescorted from one’s arrival in Japan to departure
6. Must disburse information about one’s experiences during this stay in Japan, impressions as a foreign visitor, and so on through articles submitted to mass media publications, blogging, websites, Facebook, etc.
7. Must consent to interviews by Japanese and foreign media during one’s time in Japan, should such occasions be arranged
8. In requesting from the local government confirmation of willingness to accept the applicant, must make the greatest possible effort not to inconvenience the local authorities that are extremely busy with recovery and other matters
9. As cooperation from the local government is limited to visiting the former work place(s) and explanations from relevant persons, must not request any other arrangements to be made and instead make all arrangements by oneself
10. Must not request the local government to arrange accommodation or transportation
11. Must consult thoroughly with the accepting local government when creating a schedule for the visit

#### (2) Basic schedule for the stay

Participants will stay in Tokyo one night after arrival or before departure

for observing the situation there. They will stay three or four nights in the area in which they formerly worked and interact with their former colleagues, students, and so on as well as observe the state of reconstruction in the disaster area. They will stay in a nearby tourist area for one night.

(3) Selection method

Through the JETAA, Japan's Embassies in the 11 countries having former JET Programme participants meeting the conditions in section (1) 2. above, its 26 Consulates-general, and its Consular offices recruited applicants fulfilling the conditions of participation, and each Embassy, Consulate-General or Consular office recommended candidates by assigning candidates a priority ranking. On the basis of these recommendations, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs selected 20 participants out of 61 applicants through consultations with the Japan Tourism Agency, considering comprehensively such factors as the balance among participants' home countries, the balance among local authorities to be visited, whether or not requests were made from the accepting local governments, the priority ranking assigned to the candidates by the overseas establishment, and the candidates' abilities in disbursing information.



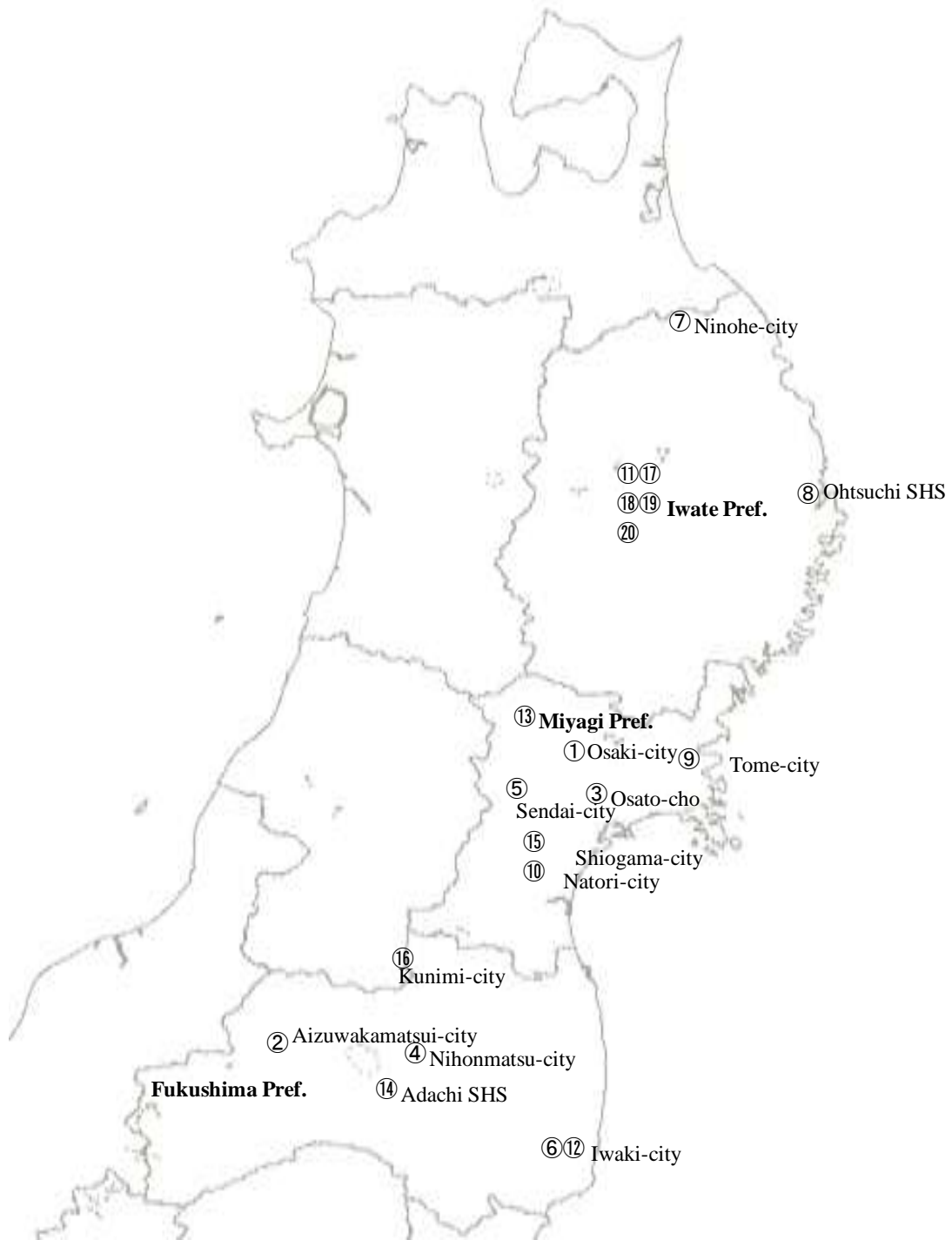
### 3. Program participants

(Hereinafter, all references to the participants will use the numbers from ① to ⑳ appearing before their names.)

<i>Participant</i>	<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Home country &amp; recommending Embassies or Consulates-General</i>	<i>Accepting organization</i>	<i>Period of stay in Japan</i>
① Blodgett, Michael	English Instructor	M	U.S. (Portland)	Osaki, Miyagi	7/05 – 7/07
② Gravender, Kristofer	School teacher	M	U.S. (Chicago)	Aizuwakamatsu-city, Fukushima	8/02 – 8/06
③ Julian, Robert	Graduate student	M	U.S. (Washington, D.C.)	Osato-cho, Miyagi	8/08 – 8/10
④ Cameron, Amy	ESL teacher	F	U.S. (Boston)	Nihonmatsu-city, Fukushima	7/98 – 7/00
⑤ Shiomi, Audrey	Freelance writer	F	U.S. (Los Angeles)	Sendai-city	7/99 – 7/01
⑥ Foley, James	Freelance writer	M	U.S. (San Francisco)	Iwaki-city, Fukushima	7/07 – 7/10
⑦ Erickson, Benjamin	Director of an educational institution	M	U.S. (Seattle)	Ninohe-city, Iwate	8/06 – 8/08
⑧ Mockridge, Alan	Company Director	M	U.S. (San Francisco)	Iwate Prefectural Ohtsuchi Senior High School	7/92 – 7/97
⑨ Pang, Jacquelyn	Employed at Walt Disney Company	F	U.S. (New York)	Tome-city, Miyagi	7/03 – 7/07
⑩ Cooney, William	High school teacher	M	Australia (Brisbane)	Natori-city, Miyagi	7/05 – 7/08
⑪ Van Etten, Sharon	Bank employee	F	Australia (Sydney)	Iwate Prefecture	7/01 – 7/04
⑫ Bresler, Heidi	Client manager	F	Australia (Melbourne)	Iwaki-city, Fukushima	8/03 – 7/08
⑬ Wood, Lynette	Assistant Secretary, Dept. of Foreign Affairs and Trade	F	Australia (Canberra)	Miyagi Prefecture	7/89 – 7/92
⑭ Stirling Brent	Writer	M	Canada (Ottawa)	Fukushima Prefectural Adachi Senior High School	7/06 – 7/10
⑮ Gardecky, Tanya	High school teacher	F	Canada (Toronto)	Shiogama-city, Miyagi	8/09 – 8/10
⑯ Hardy, James	Journalist	M	U.K.	Kunimi-city, Fukushima	7/01 – 7/03
⑰ Wu Guangyu	Company employee	F	China	Iwate Prefecture	4/08 – 4/10
⑱ Song Yanting	Company employee	F	China	Iwate Prefecture	4/05 – 4/07
⑲ Li Weiqun	University instructor	F	China	Iwate Prefecture	4/03 – 4/05
⑳ Bu Xiaoyan	Bank employee	F	China	Iwate Prefecture	4/01 – 4/03

- (1) Number of participants broken down by home country  
U.S.: 9; Australia: 4; China: 4; Canada: 2; U.K.: 1
  
- (2) Number of participants broken down by place visited  
Iwate: 7; Miyagi: 6; Fukushima: 6; Sendai-City: 1

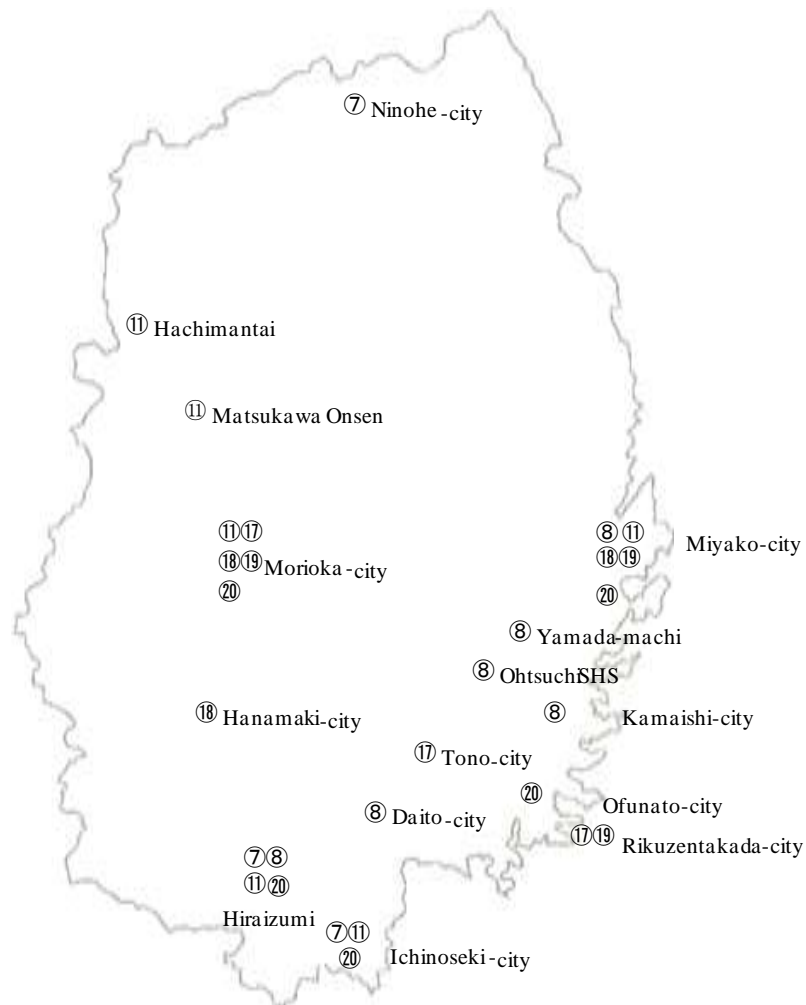
#### 4. Locations accepting participants(former work places)



Note: The circled numbers indicating places visited correspond to the number s indicating participants

## 5. Places visited by each participant

# IWATE Prefecture



Note: The circled numbers indicating places visited correspond to the number indicating participants .

Participant	Dates of visit	Places Visited					
⑦ Erickson Benjamin	9/19-9/26	Ninohe-city	Hiraizumi	Ichinoseki-city			
⑧ Mockridge Alan	9/20-9/27	Ohtsuchi Senior High School	Kamaishi-city	Yamada-machi	Miyako-city	Daito-city	Hiraizumi
⑪ Van Etten Sharon	8/28-9/3	Morioka-city	Matsukawa Onsen	Hachimantai	Hiraizumi	Ichinoseki-city	Miyako-city
⑰ Wu Guangyu	9/6-9/12	Morioka-city	Rikuzentakada-city	Tono-city			
⑱ Song Yanting	9/6-9/12	Morioka-city	Hanamaki-city	Miyako-city			
⑲ Li Weiqun	9/6-9/12	Morioka-city	Rikuzentakada-city	Miyako-city			
⑳ Bu Xiaoyan	9/6-9/12	Morioka-city	Ofunato-city	Ichinoseki-city	Miyako-city	Hiraizumi	

# MIYAGI Prefecture



Note: The circled numbers indicating places visited correspond to the number indicating participants

Participant	Dates of visit	Places Visited				
① Blodgett Michael	8/4-8/10	Osaki-city	Naruko Onsen	Iwadeyama Junior High School	Sendai-city	Ishinomaki-city
③ Julian Robert	8/15-8/21	Osato-cho	Ishinomaki-city	Matushima	Sendai-city	
⑤ Shiomi Audrey	9/21-9/28	Sendai-city	Matushima			
⑨ Pang Jacquelyn	9/21-9/28	Tome-city	Toyosato	Ishinomaki-city	Matushima	Shiogama-city
⑩ Cooney William	8/22-8/29	Natori-city	Akiho Onsen	Yuriage Junior High School	Midori Junior High School	Masuda Junior High School
⑬ Wood Lynette	10/11-10/16	Sendai-city	Ishinomaki-city			
⑮ Gardecky Tanya	8/22-8/28	Shiogama-city	Matushima	Ishinomaki-city		

# FUKUSHIMA Prefecture



Note: The circled numbers indicating places visited correspond to the number indicating participants .

Participant	Dates of visit	Places Visited					
② Gravender Kristofer	8/7-8/14	Aizuwakamatsu-city					
④ Cameron Amy	8/28-9/4	Aizuwakamatsu city	Nihonmatsu city	Dake Onsen			
⑥ Foley James	9/13-9/19	Iwaki-city					
⑫ Brester Heidi	9/19-9/26	Iwaki-city	Onahama	Yotsukura	Goshikinuma	Inawashiroko	Okeuri Elementary School
⑭ Stirling Brent	9/22-9/29	Adachi Senior High school	Koriyama-city	Aizuwakamatsu-city	Nihonmatsu-city	Fukushima-city	Souma-city
⑯ Hardy James	8/1-8/8	Kunimi-city	Koriyama-city	Urabandai			

## **6. Messages sent out by program participants**

### Participant ① (Portland; English Instructor)

Uploaded to You Tube a video titled, “Return to Tohoku—The Road to Recovery.” In addition to depicting the reopening of a sushi restaurant in the city of Ishinomaki, Miyagi Prefecture and his interchanges with students of Iwadeyama Junior High School, he posted 76 photographs of Tohoku on his web page. He stated that the people of Tohoku are now working to overcome the damage and he recommended visiting Tohoku.

### Participant ② (Chicago; School teacher)

Uploaded numerous articles, photographs, and videos of Aizuwakamatsu-city, Fukushima to Facebook and You Tube. On You Tube, he called on people to visit Aizuwakamatsu, stating that it is safe. In addition to submitting an article on his impressions upon visiting Aizuwakamatsu to a local Japan-related publication dated October 21, he uploaded onto Facebook a record of his personal experiences in the city.

### Participant ③ (Washington, D.C.; graduate student)

Uploaded to his blog 46 photographs as well as several articles, focused mainly on the current state of Matsushima in Miyagi Prefecture, one of the three most scenic spots of Japan. He explained among other things that even after the earthquake, the town of Matsushima is safe with tourists gradually returning, and that reconstruction is progressing steadily. He also gave speeches at Hampden-Sydney College and the University of Richmond, both in Virginia.

### Participant ④ (Boston; ESL teacher)

In addition to giving speeches at numerous senior high schools and junior colleges on the state of reconstruction in Fukushima Prefecture’s disaster area, she uploaded to her blog and to a web page her impressions upon visiting Japan. She also conducted a charity event.

### Participant ⑤ (Los Angeles; freelance writer)

Using a blog, Facebook, and the electronic version of her local newspaper, she wrote about her realization that the state of reconstruction and daily life in the disaster-stricken areas of the City of Sendai in Miyagi Prefecture had been returning to normal and that she had come to brush off the worry she had felt before making the trip. She spoke of her experiences with participants in masters’ courses at UCLA and made a

presentation to the Hiroshima Kenjinkai (Hiroshima prefecture association) youth auxiliary meeting.

Participant ⑥ (San Francisco; freelance writer)

Posted to his blog photographs and writings spanning 124 pages about the disaster situation, the fishing industry, the voices of the people he interacted with, and the current situation in the port of Kamaishi, the town of Ohtsuchi, the city of Miyako, and the city of Rikuzentakada, all in Iwate Prefecture, as he experienced it during his visit to Japan.

Participant ⑦ (Seattle; director of an educational institution)

Using his web page, Twitter, and Facebook, he sent out information on the current state of affairs in the city of Ninohe, Iwate Prefecture. He also created a web page introducing the Invitation Programme for JET Alumni to Disaster Stricken Areas in Tohoku. His related article appeared in *The North American Post* and he also made a presentation on the current situation in the Tohoku region at a Japanese Symposium hosted by the Consulate-General.

Participant ⑧ (San Francisco; company Director)

In addition to appearing on local television regarding his experiences and impressions in Iwate Prefecture and regarding the JET Programme and other topics, he uploaded his writings to his web page.

Participant ⑨ (New York; employed at Walt Disney Company)

Uploaded onto a web site photographs of the town of Matsushima, the city of Shiogama, the town of Toyosato, and the city of Kesenuma, all places in Miyagi Prefecture she had visited, as well as her impressions of these towns and cities.

Participant ⑩ (Brisbane; high school teacher)

In addition to using Facebook to send out information on what he had experienced upon visiting the city of Natori in Miyagi Prefecture, upon returning home he overviewed the current state of Japan domestically and the impressions he had received during his recent visit to 450 students enrolled in Japanese language classes and 150 teachers and staff, focused primarily on the school where he teaches. He also introduced his recent visit in a newsletter distributed to students' approximately 2,000 parents and guardians and briefed roughly 30 Japanese language teachers about



his visit during a meeting of The Modern Language Teachers' Association of Queensland. He provided information concerning Japan and responded to questions to bring peace of mind to teachers who still harbor some concerns about participants in a school excursion to Japan planned for next year.

Participant ⑪ (Sydney; bank employee)

Brought together representatives of the mass media, state legislators, and relevant persons in the state government at the official residence of the Consul-General and held a post-return debriefing session on her visit to Iwate Prefecture. She also introduced on her blog the state of damage from the earthquake and tsunamis as well as scenes of people strongly determined to move forward towards reconstruction, along with data and photographs. Stating how wonderful a place Tohoku is and explaining that it is safe, she also encouraged people to visit there.

Participant ⑫ (Melbourne; client manager)

An article entitled “Gambappe, Iwaki!” was run in a local paper serving the Japanese community, interviewing her before she visited Japan, stating that she would be visiting the city of Iwaki in Fukushima through the Invitation Programme for JET Alumni to Disaster Stricken Areas in Tohoku and that she had sent donations to the City of Iwaki Disaster Countermeasures Headquarters.

After visiting Iwaki, she spoke at the Tasmania ABC radio station for 30 minutes on the aspects of Japanese people working towards reconstruction and their ability to persevere and urged people to visit Japan and see the country for themselves. She also uploaded to her web page 20 pages of diary-type writings and 30 photographs about what she experienced during her one week visiting Iwaki and contributed to the Iwaki International Association’s October “World Eye” association bulletin, the JETAA web site, and the web page of the Consulate-General of Japan, Melbourne.

Participant ⑬ (Australia; Assistant Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade)

Actively contributed reviews of Sendai, Matsushima, Tokyo hotels, and tourist sites to the “TripAdvisor” Internet site under the name “WoodyCanberra.” She submitted a piece titled “Opportunity for

Tohoku” to the October 23 *Japan Times* Internet version, stating that upon visiting Miyagi Prefecture again for the first time in twenty years she was overwhelmed at the extent of the damage, but at the same time impressed by the resilience and positive attitude of the local people. She expressed her wish that the disaster area undertake reconstruction in a vigorous way, using as a springboard the attention of the international community brought through this earthquake disaster.

Participant ⑭ (Canada; writer)

Before the visit to Japan, *The Ottawa Citizen* carried an article saying that he would participate in the Invitation Programme for JET Alumni to Disaster Stricken Areas in Tohoku. He also appeared on local CBC radio, where he explained that a great number of people in the disaster-stricken area were working together to achieve reconstruction.

After visiting Fukushima Prefecture, he was interviewed by the local television channel for the Japanese community, national public radio, and local paper *The Ottawa Citizen* and also uploaded to his blog photographs depicting the state of the disaster in the city of Soma and reported on the current situation.

Participant ⑮ (Toronto; high school teacher)

Visited the city of Shiogama, Miyagi Prefecture; upon returning home, convened a debriefing session to which she invited persons involved with local TV, newspapers, and radio, with this reporting session being widely covered in the media. In addition, she conveyed her experiences in visiting Shiogama in a diary-like fashion by blogging about her own experiences during her visit and participated in interviews with the mass media during her stay.

Participant ⑯ (U.K.; journalist)

In addition to uploading to Facebook 18 photographs depicting the manner of reconstruction in the city of Kunimi, Fukushima Prefecture, he conveyed that Kunimi had not been affected by the tsunami and no one in Kunimi had perished in the disaster, and that while the town had suffered damage in the quake, reconstruction was underway.

Participant ⑰ (China; company employee)

Visited the city of Rikuzentakada and the Hanamaki hot spring area in

Iwate Prefecture and conveyed her experiences there through her blog; introduced the disaster area of Rikuzentakada and a festival held in the city of Hanamaki through 13 photographs.

Participant ⑱ (China; company employee)

Visited Iwate Prefecture and uploaded onto her blog the Iwate cuisine she recommends as well as a record of her personal experiences visiting Chusonji temple, Moutsuji temple, the city of Hanamaki, and other such places, together with photographs.

Participant ⑲ (China; university instructor)

Uploaded onto her blog scenes celebrating the registration of Hiraizumi in the city of Morioka, Iwate Prefecture as a world heritage site, scenes of volunteers from Europe and the U.S. engaging in cleanup activities near the Ofunato City Hall, and more.

Participant ⑳ (China; bank employee)

Uploaded onto her blog photographs showing a vibrant Iwate, including the blue Iwate sky, the Yaesu Entrance to Tokyo Station, the slogan “*Gambaro*, Iwate!” (“Keep fighting, Iwate!”), a thousand *origami* cranes on the first floor of the Iwate Prefectural Office, and the Hanamaki Aki Matsuri (the autumn festival held in the city of Hanamaki).

**7. Type and number of messages sent out and reactions and comments to these messages**

(1) Type and number of messages sent out (current as of January 2012; some messages have been counted under more than one category)

- a. You Tube.....2
- b. Web pages.....23
- c. Facebook.....5
- d. Twitter.....2
- e. Blogs.....12
- f. TV/radio appearances.....6
- g. Speeches, symposia, debriefing sessions, etc. ....more than 10
- h. Submissions of newspaper or newsletter articles.....7

(2) Reactions and comments to participants' messages (total figures)

- a. You Tube  
Number of viewers: 2,526 (positive comments: 311; negative comments: 0)
- b. Web pages  
Number of comments: 6 (positive comments: 3; negative comments: 0; other comments: 3)
- c. Facebook  
Number of "Likes": 73
- d. Twitter  
Number of tweets: 81; number of followers: 22
- e. Blogs  
Number of comments: 34 (positive comments: 13; negative comments: 5; other comments: 16)

(3) Reactions and comments to participants' messages

Participant ① (Portland; English Instructor; visited Miyagi Prefecture; You Tube)

- (i) This is a great video. I submitted my application to the JET program for the 2012 year. I will visit the area if I'm accepted. I'll still be planning to visit Japan. Visiting the area is the best economic relief of all.
- (ii) A beautiful and touching video. Thank you so much for this. After seeing so much about the destruction, it is wonderful to see such a video report on the rebuilding.

Participant ③ (Washington, D.C.; graduate student; visited Miyagi Prefecture; web page)

So glad to see Matsushima is fine!.

Participant ⑤ (Los Angeles; freelance writer; visited the city of Sendai; web page)

Great article. I lived in the L.A. area, but I have lived in the city of Sendai for many, many years now. What this article describes is exactly the situation here. If I say I have no fear of the “radiation” that people are convinced is going to kill me, people will assume it is some form of denial of science. But the evidence gathered by thousands of scientists in this region shows that there are some bad areas, but those areas are few and not large. There is one zone of about 5 x 10 miles, but other areas are unlikely to ever kill anyone.

Participant ⑥ (San Francisco; freelance writer; visited Fukushima Prefecture; blog)

- (i) Lovely article—makes me want to go there.
- (ii) Thank you for your wonderful article about Japan. It is nice to have some real information from someone who knows Fukushima and has visited the area since the tsunami. I was in Osaka, Japan this summer for seven weeks with my family and can fully recommend a visit to Japan.
- (iii) You have to be kidding me, right? The propaganda mill is working overtime promoting Fukushima on Japan Today. Have people no morals at all? No concern for people's safety and future wellbeing? Just money, money, money, and propagating the fallacy that Fukushima is safe to visit and buy produce from, despite the estimate of the amount of radiation being released is now two times what it started out as.
- (iv) Paid ads. Interesting. I wish the region would recover soon anyway. *Gambaro*, Tohoku.
- (v) It's not a paid ad, it's just one man's experience. It's nice to see positive articles sometimes, too.
- (vi) The writer of this article shows a massive amount of ignorance of the dangers of radioactive contamination. What is the purpose of this article?

Participant ⑦ (Seattle; director of an educational institution; visited Iwate Prefecture; web page)

Your tragic descriptions moved me so much more than TV news videos.

Endo's story defines what is truly heroic. This should be published.

Participant ⑫ (Melbourne; client manager; visited Fukushima Prefecture; radio appearances)

I heard this on the radio. It was wonderful.

She is an "ambassador" for her local area of Tasmania.

Participant ⑮ (Toronto; high school teacher; visited Miyagi Prefecture web page)

- (i) The people of Japan are strong, unified and hard workers as demonstrated by the earthquake aftermath. However, Japan as a nation faces many challenges, which were evident before the crisis. Japan, like the United States, has a broken political system and a lack of new thinking. It's really an issue of whether the nation wants to culturally remain in the 20th century or move to the 21st century. Where Japan led in the late 20th century, it isn't necessarily the champion anymore. Japanese automobile and consumer electronics companies have seen a decline. These companies have faced stiff competition from South Korean, Chinese and Taiwanese manufacturers. It's getting to a point where a Hyundai is as good as a Toyota and a Samsung is as good as a Sony. Furthermore, the aging population crisis is terrible in Japan. Japan's current immigration policies aren't doing it much good. Japan needs more immigrants.
- (ii) I'm pretty sure that Japan gained the world's sympathy from the earthquake. Now regarding Japan's illegal slaughter of endangered whales and dolphins, that's another story entirely...
- (iii) I was a JET in Japan for 3 years and it was fantastic! The people are absolutely lovely, and the country can be really beautiful, especially outside of the mega-cities of Tokyo and Osaka. Moreover, Japan is easily the safest place I've ever visited. Canadian cities are 100 times more dangerous.

#### **8. Participants' impressions (as conveyed to Japan's overseas establishment)**

Participant ③ (Washington, D.C.; graduate student; visited Miyagi Prefecture)

*Through participating in this program, I became able to understand more*

*deeply the situation of Japan as it currently pursues the reconstruction process from the Great East Japan Earthquake. In addition, in the future I will make use of this experience of having visited Japan and I intend to take advantage of various opportunities to promote the current situation in which Japan is recovering from the earthquake.*

Participant ④ (Boston; ESL teacher; visited Fukushima Prefecture)

*By actually visiting the Tohoku region, I was able to experience for myself the reconstruction of the disaster area and I felt very strongly the importance of sending out information on the state of reconstruction. In the future, I would like to take every opportunity to appeal to people regarding the safety of living in Japan.*

Participant ⑥ (San Francisco; freelance writer; visited Fukushima Prefecture)

*This “homecoming” led me to reconfirm the enormous impact that my experiences on the JET Programme and my connections to Japan have had on my life. I would like to extend once again my appreciation to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.*

Participant ⑦ (Seattle; director of an educational institution; visited Iwate)

*By actually visiting the Tohoku region, I could observe and experience from up close the most recent state of reconstruction of the disaster area. In the future, I would like to take advantage of all possible opportunities to convey to others the state of reconstruction of the disaster area while also continuing to send out information concerning the wonderful traditions and culture of the Tohoku region, which cannot be said to have been acknowledged sufficiently.*

Participant ⑧ (San Francisco:company director; visited Iwate Prefecture)

*By actually visiting the Tohoku district I was able to feel directly the state of reconstruction of the disaster area and the fact that daily life is returning to usual, enabling me to shake off the apprehension I had felt before I made the trip, and I am now able to send that message out. What’s more, I am closely involved with the Asian and Japanese communities and civil society who travel to Japan on a regular basis, and, making use of this visit, I would like to appeal to people planning to visit Japan about my realization of the safety of living in Japan.*

Participant ⑬ (Australia; Assistant Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade; visited Miyagi Prefecture)

*I was able to participate in an extremely useful program. The horrendous damage suffered by the city of Ishinomaki was beyond what I had seen in*

*the newspapers or on TV. I came to know painfully well the feelings of people who had suffered damage, including people I had known. At the same time, while the city of Sendai had met with considerable damage in its maritime area, it is pursuing reconstruction superbly, notably in its commercial activities in the central portion of the city. That said, during a visit to Matsushima, I also witnessed the destruction of the infrastructure as we were en route there, as well as the sight of there being no tourists at all because of the reputational damage. I intend to actively communicate these reflections and more in the local media and through other means so as to enhance the disaster area and be able to contribute to its reconstruction.*

**Participant ⑭** (Canada; writer; visited Fukushima Prefecture)

*I am very happy at having been able to visit Fukushima, my former work place, once more. During this visit, I was fortunate in having the opportunity to visit the noted tourist spots of Kitakata, Tsuruga-jo Castle, and Enzou-ji temple, birthplace of the “Aka-beko” red cow. At the tourist sites and within the cities of Fukushima and Koriyama, there are some buildings that had been damaged previously, but I was able to confirm that there are not many differences compared with before the earthquake and that things are about to return to normal.*

**Participant ⑰** (China; company employee; visited Iwate Prefecture)

*Although I had thought that I understood the situation of the disaster area from having seen TV and newspaper coverage in China, actually seeing the devastation of the disaster sites such as Rikuzentakata, Ofunato, and others, I experienced a tremendous shock at the changes in the places that I had visited in the past. While recovery for these places was still a thing of the future, I believe that the tireless efforts of the local area will enable its reconstruction without fail.*

**Participant ⑱** (China; company employee; visited Iwate Prefecture)

*Even within this same Iwate Prefecture, there are many vibrant places. I would like to continue in the future to use various means to disburse information in China about vibrant Iwate.*

**Participant ⑲** (China; university instructor; visited Iwate Prefecture)

*Through this visit to Japan I met my former colleagues, other people related to my time there, and my friends, enabling us to strengthen our kizuna bonds of friendship. I consider Iwate Prefecture like my second hometown. In the future I intend to continue to carry out my mission as a*



*former JET Programme participant both as a bridge for Japan-China friendship and as a goodwill ambassador for Iwate Prefecture.*

**Participant ⑳** (China; bank employee; visited Iwate Prefecture)

*I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Japan Tourism Agency for granting me this opportunity to visit Iwate Prefecture.*

## **9. Comments from the local authorities that accepted participants**

This program won a certain degree of praise from local authorities in the disaster-stricken area, as reflected in the following comments that were received from the local authorities that had accepted the JET alumni. Moreover, insofar as one of the conditions for participation was two years or more of JET Programme experience, the participants were highly capable in Japanese and had no communication issues at the locations they visited, and were thereby able to visit the disaster region without causing inconvenience to the extremely busy local authorities that had accepted them.

- (1) Board of Education, City of Iwaki, Fukushima Prefecture

*This project is a good idea.*

- (2) School Education Section, City of Nihonmatsu, Fukushima Prefecture

*The JET alumna was engaged in activities in an extremely proactive manner. The participant returned to our city after the passage of more than a decade and after returning home to the U.S. sent out information regarding the current state of her former workplace, which we appreciate. In our city's case, a retired colleague of hers on the JET Programme went around with her, which was very helpful. If the environment to accept people can be arranged, we would like for you to continue this program.*

- (3) School Education Section, Board of Education, City of Aizuwakamatsu, Fukushima Prefecture

*The people connected to the JET participant's work here were delighted at being able to meet the JET alumnus again after such a long time. The participant was a person with an extensive network of acquaintances, a great deal of energy, and is highly capable in sharing information. Additionally, selection of the participant was very well-considered, and*

*one can say that an impeccable person was dispatched to us who arranged his own schedule without imposing whatsoever upon the host side. Upon returning home, he used You Tube to send out the message that the city of Aizuwakamatsu is safe, which we find very helpful. Aizuwakamatsu suffered only limited damage from the earthquake, and the number of foreign tourists has also been increasing.*

(4) International Affairs Division, Miyagi Prefecture

*The schedule of the participant was delayed by a week immediately before her scheduled arrival because of some unfortunate family circumstances, requiring a fair amount of time to arrange the schedule once more. However, she not only visited Matsushima and saw that it was safe, but also stopped in to visit nearby high school. Because the participant was proficient in Japanese and also familiar with the local area, we as the host side could work through the program smoothly without any need to provide interpretation. While the number of non-Japanese tourists to Matsushima has rebounded compared to the period immediately after the quake, it still has quite some way to go before it returns to the pre-quake level. Measures to address reputational damage remain necessary, as we would like tourists to come from overseas. We are grateful for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for having conducted this program.*

(5) International Relations and City Marketing Section, City of Sendai, Miyagi Prefecture

*We appreciate the JET alumna sending out the message that the disaster area is safe through her blog, newspaper articles, and other efforts. We very much look forward to tourists returning after they see the information she has sent out.*

(6) School Education Section, City of Shiogama, Miyagi Prefecture

*The children were overjoyed at the JET alumna returning to the school where she used to work. As the participant had worked in Shiogama before, she was familiar with the area and required very little care from the host side. We would by all means like for her to come again. The participant who visited here blogged about her visit upon returning home and we appreciate her increasing Shiogama's name recognition.*

- (7) NPO, Culture and Relations Division, Department of Policy and Regional Affairs, Iwate Prefecture

*Upon hearing about this program, we thought that we as the host side would have to take care of various things despite being extremely busy due to our post-quake responses. However the JET alumna made appointments by herself and caused us no inconveniences at all. Also, the JET alumna who visited through this program was not merely fully proficient in Japanese but also very pro-Japan, and we appreciate the diplomatic office abroad selecting a participant who really loves Iwate. This former JET Program participant who visited Iwate and her former colleagues also enjoyed excellent exchanges with lively conversations of times gone by, and these former colleagues were delighted to have met her again after such a long time. The JET alumna wrote about Iwate Prefecture in her blog and elsewhere after returning home and we consider this to have been useful as a way to counter reputational damage. Visitors to Iwate have still not returned to their pre-quake levels, so we would like to see this program continue if possible.*

- (8) School Planning Section, Board of Education, City of Ninohe, Iwate Prefecture

*This program was a very welcome one indeed. Not only did the former JET Programme participant succeed in interacting with his former students, but he also brought with him from the U.S. a thousand origami cranes and messages of encouragement, by which we knew that other countries are supporting the people affected by the disaster. The participant sent out information on his web page and elsewhere regarding the culture of the city of Ninohe and regarding Kunohe Castle and he also provided advice concerning how to interact with participants from overseas. The participant was proficient in Japanese and arranged his schedule by himself using Japanese and we appreciate the fact that no burdens were placed upon the host side.*

## **Concluding remarks**

- Upon returning home, the participants in this program disbursed information in their home countries through various means, including newspaper articles, public speaking engagements, television and radio appearances, Twitter, web pages, blogs, and You Tube videos. In addition, the program received a certain degree of praise from relevant persons within the local authorities in the disaster-stricken area, including appreciation for the disbursement of information on the safety of the disaster area achieved through the blogs, newspaper articles and other communications undertaken by program participants and for the raising of the local area's name recognition through these communications. This praise also included the delight of the children when the participant visited schools in which he or she had been employed in the past, and the fact that the participants were familiar with the local area and did not require particular care on the part of the accepting organization. From these points, the assessment can be made that the objective of this program in countering reputational damage by providing information at the grass-roots level has been achieved to a certain degree.
- In conducting this program, top priority was placed on not inconveniencing the extremely busy accepting local authorities during participants' visits to the disaster areas. The conditions for participation established in selecting the participants of having two or more years of living and working experience in Japan, competency in Japanese, and other such qualifications resulted in the activities in the local areas proceeding smoothly.
- While all 61 applicants met the application criteria and demonstrated great passion, it was necessary to restrict the number of participants to 20, and it is unfortunate that it was not possible to respond to the enthusiasm of many of the applicants. At the same time, all of the participants, who had been selected on the basis of the recommendations of the various diplomatic offices overseas giving balance to their home countries, places to visit, current occupation, and so on, understood well the purpose of this program and proactively engaged in activities by independently creating schedules that were deeply associated with the local areas, on the basis of

their previous experiences as JET Programme participants. They moreover sent out information on the actual state of the disaster area and Japan each from his or her own different perspective and thus overall this program succeeded in disbursing various kinds of content.

- Despite the short duration of the application period and stringent conditions, the fact that 61 people applied indicates that a large number of former JET Programme participants in various locations around the world have become pro-Japan, providing a realization of the fruits of the JET Programme spanning the past 25 years. In addition, the recruitment of participants was conducted through the JETAA regional Chapters, and thus it was confirmed once more that in being able to obtain active cooperation from each of the JETAA regional chapters, JETAA is an instrumental cooperator in implementing Japan's diplomatic policies and measures.
- Feedback and expressions of gratitude voiced to the overseas diplomatic offices by the participating JET alumni upon returning home include that through this "homecoming" to Japan they reconfirmed their connections with Japan, that they wish to continue to contribute to friendly relations with Japan, and that they appreciated that they had been given this opportunity. Thus the program also achieved a certain degree of positive results in having raised the sense of affinity towards Japan among the program participants themselves.
- Within Japan, articles and materials regarding the conducting of this program were released to both the domestic and international media, and each time one of the JET alumni participants visited Japan, the participant's contact information and so on was distributed to the domestic and international media. Despite that, public relations were not able to be conducted sufficiently through the domestic and international media, with *The Wall Street Journal* being the only major media outlet to report on this program (cf. <http://blogs.wsj.com/japanrealtime/2011/09/01/JET-calls-in/favors-in-tohoku/tab/print/>) Moreover, within the reporting of experiences within the disaster area, there also appeared now and then coverage of situations in which restoration was not moving forward, such as mountains of debris or depictions of towns not functioning.

- While there are difficulties in confirming in quantitative terms the positive results of this program, such as in increases in the number of visitors to the disaster area from overseas, one can regard the program as having had a certain degree of results, insofar as a variety of information was disbursed and the program has been positively evaluated by the accepting local authorities and the participants. We would like to verify further the reactions and effects of the information sent out by the former JET Programme participants in the future and examine the implementation of similar kinds of programs.

**Related materials, etc.**

**1. Facebook and other links for the participants in this program**

<i>Name</i>	<i>Links</i>
① Blodgett, Michael	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nwHSR45wUaQ">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nwHSR45wUaQ</a> <a href="http://www.japanprobe.com/">http://www.japanprobe.com/</a> <a href="http://triblocal.com/batavia/">http://triblocal.com/batavia/</a> <a href="http://ireport.cnn.com/docs/DOC-668620?ref=feeds%2Foncn">http://ireport.cnn.com/docs/DOC-668620?ref=feeds%2Foncn</a> <a href="http://triblocal.com/batavia/community/stories/2011/09/former-batavia-resident-visits-tohoku-japan-the-road-to-recovery/">http://triblocal.com/batavia/community/stories/2011/09/former-batavia-resident-visits-tohoku-japan-the-road-to-recovery/</a> <a href="http://realvoicesrealjapan.com/2011/09/return-to-tohoku-the-road-to-recovery/">http://realvoicesrealjapan.com/2011/09/return-to-tohoku-the-road-to-recovery/</a>
② Gravender, Kristofer	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/use/allforaizu">http://www.youtube.com/use/allforaizu</a> <a href="http://www.facebook.com/groups/260749957285274/">http://www.facebook.com/groups/260749957285274/</a>
③ Julian, Robert	<a href="http://wesleysensei.wordpress.com/">http://wesleysensei.wordpress.com/</a>
④ Cameron, Amy	<a href="http://returntofukushima.tumblr.com/">http://returntofukushima.tumblr.com/</a> <a href="http://www.neJETaa.com/index.php?option=com_content&amp;view=article&amp;id=298:japanese-government-sponsors-local-womans-visit-to-disaster-stricken-region-in-japan&amp;catid=1:latest-news">http://www.neJETaa.com/index.php?option=com_content&amp;view=article&amp;id=298:japanese-government-sponsors-local-womans-visit-to-disaster-stricken-region-in-japan&amp;catid=1:latest-news</a>
⑤ Shiomi, Audrey	<a href="http://rafu.com/news/?s=audrey+shiomi">http://rafu.com/news/?s=audrey+shiomi</a> <a href="http://rafu.com/news/2011/09/matsushima/">http://rafu.com/news/2011/09/matsushima/</a> <a href="http://rafu.com/news/2011/09/letters-from-sendai/">http://rafu.com/news/2011/09/letters-from-sendai/</a> <a href="http://rafu.com/news/2011/09/ganbarou-nihon/">http://rafu.com/news/2011/09/ganbarou-nihon/</a> <a href="http://rafu.com/news/2011/09/to-be-afraid-or-not-to-be-afraid/">http://rafu.com/news/2011/09/to-be-afraid-or-not-to-be-afraid/</a> <a href="http://rafu.com/news/2011/09/signs-signs-everywhere/">http://rafu.com/news/2011/09/signs-signs-everywhere/</a> <a href="http://rafu.com/news/2011/09/letters-to-sendai/">http://rafu.com/news/2011/09/letters-to-sendai/</a> <a href="http://rafu.com/news/2011/09/omiyage-101/">http://rafu.com/news/2011/09/omiyage-101/</a> <a href="http://rafu.com/news/2011/09/tohoku-travelogue-shiomi/">http://rafu.com/news/2011/09/tohoku-travelogue-shiomi/</a>
⑤ Foley, James	<a href="http://twitter.com/#!/jamesafoley">http://twitter.com/#!/jamesafoley</a> <a href="http://www.japantoday.com/category/travel/view/traveling-to-the-edge-why-tourism-in-fukushima-makes-more-sense-than-ever">http://www.japantoday.com/category/travel/view/traveling-to-the-edge-why-tourism-in-fukushima-makes-more-sense-than-ever</a> <a href="http://www.independenttraveler.com/blog/?p=3218">http://www.independenttraveler.com/blog/?p=3218</a>

⑦ Erickson, Benjamin	<a href="http://www.tohokuben.com">http://www.tohokuben.com</a> <a href="http://twitter.com/#nambuben">http://twitter.com/#nambuben</a> <a href="http://www.facebook.com/tohokuben">http://www.facebook.com/tohokuben</a> <a href="http://www.JETausa.com/tohoku-recovery/JET-alums-return-to-tohoku/">http://www.JETausa.com/tohoku-recovery/JET-alums-return-to-tohoku/</a>
⑧ Mockridge, Alan	<a href="http://alanmockridge.com/">http://alanmockridge.com/</a> <a href="http://facebook.com/#!/pages/Back-to-Iwate/215737075151151">http://facebook.com/#!/pages/Back-to-Iwate/215737075151151</a>
⑨ Pang, Jacquelyn	<a href="http://www.JETausa.com/tohoku-recovery/JET-alums-return-to-tohoku/jacquelyn-pang/">http://www.JETausa.com/tohoku-recovery/JET-alums-return-to-tohoku/jacquelyn-pang/</a>
⑩ Cooney, William	<a href="http://www.facebook.com/billcooney">http://www.facebook.com/billcooney</a>
⑪ Van Etten, Sharon	<a href="http://revisitingiwate.blogspot.com/">http://revisitingiwate.blogspot.com/</a>
⑫ Bresler, Heidi	<a href="http://nichigopress.jp/nichigo_news/shinsai/27622/">http://nichigopress.jp/nichigo_news/shinsai/27622/</a> <a href="http://melbourne.JETalumni.org/?portfolio=hobart-JET-revisits-japan">http://melbourne.JETalumni.org/?portfolio=hobart-JET-revisits-japan</a>
⑬ Wood, Lynette	<a href="http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/rc20111023a7.html">http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/rc20111023a7.html</a>
⑭ Stirling, Brent	<a href="http://foryourbrentertainment.wordpress.com/">http://foryourbrentertainment.wordpress.com/</a>
⑮ Gardecky, Tanya	<a href="http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/story/2011/09/09/japan-teachers-JET-return-quake.html">http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/story/2011/09/09/japan-teachers-JET-return-quake.html</a> <a href="http://blogs.wsj.com/japanrealtime/2011/09/01/JET-calls-in-favors-in-tohoku/tab/print/">http://blogs.wsj.com/japanrealtime/2011/09/01/JET-calls-in-favors-in-tohoku/tab/print/</a> <a href="http://www.toronto.ca.emb-japan.go.jp/english/news/infocul-news/gardecky/gardecky.html">http://www.toronto.ca.emb-japan.go.jp/english/news/infocul-news/gardecky/gardecky.html</a> <a href="http://www.travelblog.org/Asia/Japan/Miyagi/Shiogama/blog-636942.html">http://www.travelblog.org/Asia/Japan/Miyagi/Shiogama/blog-636942.html</a>
⑯ Hardy, James	<a href="http://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.10150744528345198.719315.850585197">http://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.10150744528345198.719315.850585197</a>
⑰ Wu Guangyu	<a href="http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_542ff8b30100y92a.html">http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_542ff8b30100y92a.html</a> <a href="http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_542ff8b30100y9uq.html">http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_542ff8b30100y9uq.html</a>
⑱ Song Yanting	<a href="http://t.qq.com/panda119syt">http://t.qq.com/panda119syt</a>
⑲ Li Weiqun	<a href="http://blog.sina.com.cn/u/1219739884">http://blog.sina.com.cn/u/1219739884</a>
21 Bu Xiaoyan	<a href="http://weibo.com/2403696210">http://weibo.com/2403696210</a>