



EMBARGOED UNTIL OCT 21, 2011

JETAA USA Earthquake Relief Fund

In its 25-year history, more than 55,000 people from 60 countries have participated in the JET (Japan Exchange and Teaching) Program, developing strong ties with communities around Japan. Thanks to the years they spend in Japan, it is fair to say that JET participants come to view Japan as their second home, and most continue to maintain active connections with Japan after leaving the program. The most common way for JET alumni to stay connected is through the 50+ chapters of JET Alumni Association (JETAA) worldwide, which bring alumni together to share their experiences and to promote ties with Japan in their home countries.

Even JET alumni who did not have friends and family in the Tohoku region were deeply moved by the tragedy that unfolded there. In response, all 19 chapters of JETAA USA came together in March 2011 to launch the JETAA USA Earthquake Relief Fund to support educational needs of communities in the disaster zone. Since March 11, the fund has raised \$76,000 (5.8 million yen) from the U.S. JET alumni community.

Rikuzentakata and Ishinomaki have special significance for JET alumni since two of their colleagues lost their lives while teaching and living in these communities. Therefore, JETAA USA has decided to donate funds to programs in these two areas, with a primary focus on educational initiatives in Rikuzentakata. The aim is to improve the prospects of students who have been affected by the disaster, carry on the spirit of the JET Program and give back to the country that found its way into the hearts of JET alumni. Grants are being made for the following initiatives:

- **Hope for Tomorrow support for university applicants from Rikuzentakata (\$25,000)**- The costs of university entrance exams are a heavy burden for Japanese families and can be especially formidable for families affected by the disaster. Hope for Tomorrow, a new nonprofit organization, will defray exam fees and/ or associated travel and lodging costs in order to support Takata High School (located in Rikuzentakata) students applying to university. JETAA USA will financially support this program in Rikuzentakata.
- **Rikuzentakata tutoring project (\$20,000)** - Students in Rikuzentakata have been through traumatic experiences and lost considerable class time. The nonprofit organization Youth Empowerment Iwate, in cooperation with other groups, is launching a new initiative through which university students will provide extracurricular tutoring for middle school students while also using these sessions to lend a sympathetic ear to students who may feel intimidated discussing their concerns with older adults.
- **Rikuzentakata City education project (\$10,000)** - A special grant is being made to support JET-related activities and English teaching in the town.
- **Taylor Anderson Memorial Fund (\$5,000)**- The Taylor Anderson Fund is supporting a range of innovative programs in Ishinomaki, where JET Taylor Anderson taught and lived, including the exchange programs for local students and “reading corners” at elementary schools.
- **JETAA USA supporting JET participants (\$10,000)**- JET-run organizations and programs such as volunteerAKITA (which has been mobilizing JET participants to provide disaster aid since mid-March 2011) have responded to the disaster and recovery efforts. Individual grants are being made to help them sustain their disaster-related activities.



These funds were collectively raised by JETAA USA Chapters with a few examples below:

- JETAA Northern California, based in San Francisco, hosted a Japan Relief Fundraiser that included over 150 guests, donations and raffles as well as local news coverage.
- JETAA Minnesota hosted a Japan Benefit Party including a DJ, live music, and a silent auction at Moto-i, the first sake brewery restaurant of its kind outside of Japan.
- Two JETAA DC JET alums (met in Japan on JET) were married this past July and requested their guests to donate to the fund in lieu of wedding presents.
- JETAA-NY held a large benefit event and prize raffle attended by over 300 people. The event was covered by both US and Japanese TV stations and newspapers, with reports featuring JET alumni offering words of encouragement to the Japanese people.

It is worth noting that the JETAA USA Fund only represents a portion of the total JET alumni contribution to disaster response. **JETAA chapters across the United States have helped raise a total of \$313,000 (24,400,000 yen) for relief and recovery efforts.** Some JETAA chapters have raised money directly for Japanese organizations such as the Japanese Red Cross, Japan Platform and Peace Winds Japan while other chapters have teamed up with Japan-America Societies and other US-based organizations in their fund-raising efforts.

JET alumni have also contributed on an individual level. Some have returned to Japan to volunteer in the disaster zone, many have full-time positions at Japan-related organizations and contribute on a daily basis to supporting Japan, and still others have leveraged their current posts in American businesses, nonprofits, and government agencies to encourage their organizations to become engaged in Japan disaster relief.

About JETAA USA

Roughly half of all JET alumni worldwide are Americans, and they have founded 19 US-based chapters of the JET Alumni Association (JETAA). These chapters are all operated by dedicated volunteers who undertake a wide range of cultural, social, educational, and charitable activities to support the JET Program, build networks among its alumni, and promote stronger US-Japan ties.

To learn more about JETAA USA and its activities, or to donate to the JETAA USA Earthquake Relief Fund, please visit www.jetaausa.com.