

Report of the Student Exchange Program 2008



Destinations: Hot Springs, Arkansas
& Houston, Texas, USA
Period: January 7 through 16, 2008

Sponsored by Hanamaki International Exchange Association,
City of Hanamaki & Hanamaki City Board of Education

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Impressions on the Exchange Program

Noriaki MIURA, Hanamaki JHS 2nd Grader

I participated in the exchange program on behalf of Hanamaki Junior High School for ten days from January 7 to January 16. I have three reasons to take part in this program. The first reason is to improve my English skills through this program because I am not good at English so much. The second reason is to know cultural and habitual differences between America and Japan. The third reason is to foster my forwardness and cooperation as I stay at a host family and live with the family. That's why I decided to join the exchange program.

Once the program started, I was at a loss because American English pronunciation was different from my school English pronunciation. But I was very impressed that people understood my poor pronunciation. I also learned that Americans were sweet because they dared to listen to me somehow. During the stay with the host family, I had many chances to exercise my English skills, but I was not able to do so unlike my English classes, and was helped by Kosuke with many matters. Honestly speaking, I felt miserable. But it was good for me to know what was lacking in me.

I had an image in my mind that Americans were somewhat stern, but the image changed by 180 degrees into that they were generous and very kind, and I came to think that I want to be like American heartily.

American culture was very different from Japanese one, and totally distinct culture from Japanese one was established; Americans enter their homes with shoes on, use knives and folks at meals take only a shower and go to church on Sundays. It seemed a similar thing in Japan was to take a nap after meals.

At Hot Springs Middle School, I was surprised to see every classroom has computers surely. I was also amazed to see students eating in class and putting on accessories at school. It was astonishing they didn't have club activities and they moved to different classrooms in class. How much I was surprised at things at school! On the second day at Hot Springs Middle School, students held a party and gave me a cake put a word "Welcome". I felt delicious and glad together. I attended the school for two days and made a lot of friends. I enjoyed this two-day stay at the middle school.

At the last night of the home stay, a party was held by Hanamaki City, and the boy students including me sang "Thank you" of the SMAP, famous group in Japan. Many participants gave handclaps to the song. When the song was over, my host mother Sabrina praised me for my good voice. It was really a good time. I felt very tough and sad on the last day because I lived with them as if I were their real family member. During several days with the host family, I was able to make numberless good memories with them.

After I left the host family, I went shopping, departed for the airport, got aboard, arrived at a hotel in Houston, and headed for Japan on the following day. The return flight was very long and heavy. When I arrived at Shin Hanamaki Station, Father, Mother, Grandfather, Grandmother and teachers came to greet me though it was late at night. I was very happy.

As I finished this exchange program, I think I fulfilled the subject to nurture my forwardness and cooperation naturally through the program. On the other hand, I came to see new subjects. I will overcome these subjects in my daily life.

The ten-day stay in America was as precious as dozens of years' stay there. I will do my best to connect what I got in this program to the future. I am grateful for this wonderful experience to Principal, teachers, Mr. Sato, Mr. Takahashi, city officials, staff of the International Association that took care of me.



Impressions on the Exchange Program

Yui TAKAGI, Hanamaki JHS 2nd Grader

I participated in the student exchange program from January 7 to January 16. For the first two days, I did sightseeing and left for Hot Springs to meet my host family later. I got to be relieved that people to have me were kind and hospitable to me though I was a little nervous at first. My host family was very sweet and they talked to me slowly and many times when I was not able to catch what they told. When I was not able to understand their sayings or what I should say, I communicated with them using my electric dictionary. Meals were easy to eat because I was able to take the amount I wanted to have and every dish was so delicious. I thought they liked my souvenirs and enjoyed folding papers with them so much. For two days in my home stay program, I attended Hot Springs Middle School that is a sister school of Hanamaki Junior High School. At school I toured the school building, attended classes and did a presentation about life in Japan. The school building was much larger than Japanese ones. There were some classes that we don't have in Japan and there are many differences between American school and Japanese one such as chewing gum in class and wearing casual clothes not but uniform.

On the next day morning, I planted trees with students. I was happy that I was able to be useful for preserving environment because one of the themes for the exchange program is to learn about environment problems. It was my first time to plant trees and I hope the trees will grow up steadily. I was taken to the Hot Springs Mountain Tower where I saw all over Hot Spring, enjoyed going to museums and bowling. I cooked curry rice for my host family. I was happy and satisfied that everybody enjoyed the curry rice.

At last the day to leave my host family came over. I had a little time to see a high

school building and parted from Clara of my host family there. She said to me “I will e-mail you soon.”, and I was happy to hear that. My host mother drove me to the place to gather. I said, “I would like to return to Hot Springs.”, and she answered, “You are always welcome and you can return here anytime.” I was very moved and nearly cried.

When I had to return to Japan, I was sorry to leave America and wanted to see my host family again.

The most impressive thing I felt in this exchange program is importance of forwardness, happiness to meet people and goodness to express my own thoughts.

I have a feeling that I learned what was important but simple because I spent days in a different situation. I am really grateful to all the people that gave me such a wonderful chance. Thank you so much. I will use what I learned and experienced in this program in my life and connect it to my future life.



Impressions on the Exchange Program

Yu KASHIWADA, Hanamaki Kita JHS 2nd Grader

“Pit-a-pat, pit-a-pat, pit-a-pat...”I felt my heart was beating faster than usual as soon as I took off from Narita Airport. “Can you speak English...?” A Mexican passenger next to me talked to me in English. I replied to him somehow with pounding hearts and was successful to communicate with him. It was only twenty to thirty-minute conversation but I felt something like fulfillment and came to be confident. At the same time, I had been nervous for the next ten or so hours until I got to Houston Airport because he might talk to me again. Thanks to this small chance, I got a little confident, so talked to cashiers at a hamburger shop and souvenir shop spontaneously. As I talked to them again and again, I was happy that I was able to understand what they told. “Wow! I can communicate with them unexpectedly. Shall I try once again?” Around this time, it seemed Suguru from Seinan JHS I stayed with at the same family got confident as well and he and I thought we became reliable buddies.

Greg’s family where I was staying was four people and they lived in a gorgeous house from a Japanese perspective. The family was very friendly and took me fishing and church on the weekend. I had a very good time. Due to the five-day home stay, I got to be able to communicate with them in English fairly. When the final day at the family came, I wanted to be there rather than returning to Japan. After I came home, I exchanged e-mails with them and I am satisfied with my English communication skill that I earned in the program. I am grateful to all the people that gave me such a precious chance. Above all, I would like

to express my gratitude to Greg's family.



After the Exchange Program

Reona TAKAHASHI, Hanamaki Kita JHS 2nd Grader

“Do enjoy the program.” Everybody around me talked to me like that. At that time, I felt something different from being nervous came up to my mind. It was my second time to stay home abroad in my life. But I stayed at my English conversation teacher's in the previous home stay program with some more students, so I had few chances to speak in English at that time. In that regard, I think this second experience was very precious.

First of all I met my host family. I was relieved to hear I would stay at the family with a high school student when I was in Japan but I felt I got nervous in real when I saw them. At the same time, native English was totally different from CDs I used in class in Japan. But the host family was very sweet and amusing to me, so I got along with them very soon. Next day, Ty drove me and Miyuki to Lakeside High School with Miyuki Ito. I was so surprised to hear students can get car licenses at the age of sixteen. I always listened to music in the car. I sometimes hear familiar song. And when I entered the Lakeside High School building..., it was like a different dimension. Miyuki and I felt as if we had been animals in a zoo. Every sound from all the directions was English. Some students sometimes said “Konnnchiwa” in Japanese. I thought I was in college campus rather than in high school campus. There were not only students chewing gum in class but also teachers doing the same thing in an American way and a science teacher suddenly told us to go out (the teacher ripped something harder like a gummed tape with mouse. The teacher was a woman.) I felt the atmosphere was very free and enjoyable. In the evening I saw a basketball game. Ty belonged to something like a brass band and I heard he was in charge of tuba part. In the basketball game, it seemed the band had to perform. At that time, Ty played an instrument called sousaphone not tuba. I was impressed by the sousaphone to see for the first time. And finally when the band was about to start performing, I was very excited as thinking what the

home of brass band was like. I was stunned as soon as I listened to it. It was very good. I was not able to hide my astonishment because the band was blowing high tones easily as dancing and their tones were very good.

I also enjoyed spending a time with the Gildner Family very much. I played a game called Rock Band with Ty, his friend John and Miyuki almost every day and I played billiards with them and watched movies in the evening. I also went to Starbucks to have Green tea Ty recommended and climbed a mountain to see a night view from the top. Every memory is unforgettable and the best.

Finally, what I learned in the exchange program is people can communicate with each other even if they don't understand each language. It is because I had a very good time in America that is very different from Japan. (Why can't I communicate with Japanese though I can communicate with Americans I have language barriers with?) A question came to my mind. At the same time I think the language enables people to communicate and vice versa.



Experiences on the Exchange Program

Hidenobu TAKAHASHI, Nanjo JHS 2nd Grader

First of all I thought America was not so different from Japan. There were conifer forests in American and the color of the sky was also the same as in Japan. Of course both of the countries are located in similar latitudes as well as on the common earth, so it is natural the sceneries are alike. But I had been thinking that America was very far from Japan and everything there must have been totally different. Therefore, I was a little disappointed at the fact that America had similar sceneries with Japan.

But it was for a little while for me to think so because I found no Japanese at the airport when I arrived there. And then, I heard continued English announcements, English signs and etc. At that time, I was filled with big concern whether I would be able to communicate with my host family as speaking proper English to them.

Until the second day in America, I spent almost every time with the students. Of course the main language in my mind was Japanese. I only spoke in English when I told a clerk at a shop "Thank you" and I was spending a comfortable time at the hotel and shops because the Japanese language was still with me.

Finally on the third day in America, I was very nervous that I was about to meet with my host family for the first time in the welcome reception. When I met and introduced myself to them, I was flustered as clearly as I recognized and was able to tell them only my name.

After the party, while I was surrounded by the English language as not knowing where I stood, my host family drove me their home. During the drive, I talked them about my family, my video games and so on as I tried to tell them about anything with my full English skill. When I think back, I came to talk to native speakers of English at that time. After all, Immigrant officer “Song” was unreadable and intimidating.... When I left the host family, I didn’t cry on the surface but did in my mind. After parting them, I did last shopping at Hot Springs Mall as deciding to return to Hot Springs again soon. Thanks to this exchange program, I had many experiences like I improved my English skill and came to know there are not so many differences between America and Japan. I am grateful to all the people who helped me with this exchange program.



Impressions on the Exchange Program

Akimi Ito, Najo JHS 2nd Grader

I learned many things and had plenty of experiences in this exchange program. What is the most impressive is to stay at my host family’s home. During the home stay program, I found cultural differences between America and Japan and experienced what I was not able to do in Japan.

First up, it was to go to school in America. It was only two-day period to attend the school but was very enjoyable. And I found something like differences between American school and Japanese one; at American school, it was allowed for students to eat something in class, there were lockers in a hallway, students move to different classrooms, and there was a cafeteria to have lunch together. Among them, what was the most surprising to me was all the buildings from a kindergarten to a high school were located in the same campus. It was

also a good experience for me to see students filming a documentary film.

The amount of meals in America was large but the meals were so delicious so I got accustomed to them easily. Bread my host mother baked and crisped bacons were the best!

Besides, the host family took me bowling and let me ride on a horse named Sugar. I also went to a high school basketball game. My host family did many good things to me so that I could enjoy the stay. On the last day, Lauren said to me "Nice to meet you". I hear the sentence "Nice to meet you" has another meaning "I am happy to meet you", so I was very glad to have her told that way. Thanks to this exchange program, I have had the best experience in my life. It was because of supports from my family, teachers and other people. Thank you so much.



Impressions on the Exchange Program

Kosuke TAMURA, Yuguchi JHS 2nd Grader

I had precious experiences in this exchange program. My host family was very kind to me and always took care of me and Noriaki so much. They selected easy words for us to understand what they said. I was grateful for their thoughtfulness. I talked them about Japan, my school and friends of mine using unaccustomed English. I was nervous that I didn't know if I was able to communicate with the host family but I was able to do that with my electric dictionary. Thanks to the home stay program, I made many good memories. I

went to church for the first time, visited a museum together, enjoyed bowling, toured the Mountain Tower and did shopping.... I had countless good memories. Among the good memories, what is the most impressive is to attend the middle school with Simon for two days. The middle school is something like a school combined an elementary school and junior high school. I felt cultural differences with Japan because students go to school in casual clothes, learn using personal computers and screens and spend school days very freely. But I thought I had to imitate their positive attitude in class and position to tackle with anything seriously. I was nervous when I did a presentation at middle school. When I showed the way to yell in my school, I was relieved to see everybody react lively. On the last day at school, students in Simon's class held a farewell party for me and everybody had cookies written "Welcome" on. The next day, I planted trees together to tackle environmental problems. I hoped this tree would be helpful to resolve environmental problems somewhat.

When I had my host mother put down her autograph on the previous day before I left the host family, I felt so good and happy to participate in the exchange program because the host mother said to me, "You are the member of the family, Kosuke." I was impressed that Simon told me to return to Hot Springs again on the last day.

Thanks to the exchange program, I learned how important it is to see people, to communicate with them. I will do my best to use this experience from now. Finally, I am grateful to all the people who were involved in the exchange program. Thank you very much.



Encounter

Miki CHIBA, Yuguchi JHS 2nd Grader

I thought the ten-day trip to America looked so long because I felt uneasy at first. But it was very full of many good things so time flew like an arrow. What is the most impressive during the ten-day stay in America is to stay at the host family's home for the first time. At the family's home I was uneasy whether I was able to communicate with them speaking my poor English but they were eager to listen to me. At school, I had expressions that every student looked so free lived happily. I was glad that everybody learned my name and talked me very frankly. Besides the host family, everyone I met with was very sweet and kind to me. I would like to imitate American way to express their feelings honestly. I planted trees with the exchange students and host families to offset carbon dioxide for the first time in the exchange program. It was good for us to do something with the host family. I was very sad on the last day that the host family were kind to me as if I had been one of the family members. Thanks to the host family program, I learned communication is very important even if there exists a language barrier. Even if there are differences in cultures and languages, I felt I was able to communicate with them using feelings. I had many experiences that I was not able to do in my everyday life. I will use what I learned in the program from now on. Finally, thank you very much for giving me such a precious time.



Impressions on the Exchange Program

Nobuyuki WANO, Yumoto JHS 2nd Grader

I received kinds of encouraging messages from many people. On the departure day it took a half day to arrive in Houston. It was very humid and warm at night in spite of winter. I was looking forward to visiting Space Center Houston and learned a lot about how active people are to research space and saw space rockets there. As I saw rockets closely firsthand, I thought how big it was. Besides, I saw and touched the famous moon rock. After that, I went to Hot Springs and the time to meet with my host family finally came. My host family greeted me with their best smile and I came to get along with them though I was nervous before meeting them. One of things I learned in the home stay program is how important it is to communicate with each other. Since my mother tongue was different from theirs, it

was hard for me to express myself but I was able to communicate with my host family due to my gestures and their effort to understand me. On weekdays, I went to Jessieville Middle School with my host family. The atmosphere was free and students wore plain clothes at school. And teachers didn't scold even if a student was late or slept in class. I felt it strange but thought it was because American teachers cherished each student's personality. I also admit American children were positive to anything. I thought I should imitate their way. On holidays, my host family took me to church and hiking mountains and also held a home party for me. So I was satisfied with American life. I am very grateful to my warm host family that took care of me because I had really good time with them. Finally, a theme of this exchange program was "environment", so it was useful and unforgettable for me to plant trees with the students. Thanks to this experience, I came to be interested in environmental problems. It was the best trip ever. I am grateful to all the people who were involved in the exchange program and instructed me.



Impressions on the Exchange Program

Rikako JOMORI, Yumoto JHS 2nd Grader

I had valuable experiences in this exchange program. I also found environmental and cultural differences between America and Japan, so the stay in America was continued surprise, discovery and impression.

In the third evening of the exchange program, the home stay program started and I met with my host family at last. It was a nervous time but the Payne Family greeted me with the most wonderful smile and they blew away my nervous feeling at once. I sometimes

didn't catch what the host family said but they spoke to me slowly with gestures. So I understood almost what they wanted to say. During the home stay program, I went to Fountain Lake High School, church and shopping. I also took part in a tree planting to offset carbon dioxide and tackled environmental problems. In the last evening with the host family, I participated in a barbecue party. I had handmade hamburgers and hotdogs. After the meal, the family and I wrote down "Friendship" in Japanese together. At last, the day to part my host family came. It was very tough for me to leave my host family.

Besides the home stay program, I learned advanced technology and American culture in Space Center Houston and the President Clinton Library.

Thanks to this exchange program, I felt "warm hospitality" beyond races and languages. I will never forget these happy memories. I learned many things as seeing a few American cities starting from Little Rock. I am sure this experience in the exchange program will be a great treasure for me. And I will use this experience for my course and the future.

Finally I am grateful to all the people and my host family who supported me.



Memories in America

Ryosuke SATO, Yasawa JHS 2nd Grader

I left for America on January 7. It was my first time to go abroad, so I was very nervous. The flight was about 11-hour long. As I was killing boredom, an airplane meal came out. It was also the first time to have an in-flight food. Rice was very dry. I only ate desert. At night I felt though that I was not able to sleep though everybody was.

After such 11-hour flight, I arrived at Houston Airport. I was exhausted at that time. After I finished immigration procedure, I got on a reserved bus. What I was surprised at

first was traffic lanes were reverse to Japanese ones. I felt somewhat out of place with the lanes but the feeling was fading away gradually. I had more things to surprise me.

The students and I went to the famous NASA Space Center. I got on a cart there and toured inside. I saw many things I was not able to see in Japan. What was the most impressive was to touch a moon rock. I went to a nature museum and returned to the hotel to sleep. But I was excited about thinking of where to go next day so I was not able to sleep.

The following day I flew from Houston to Little Rock. I got on a bus to tour the city and moved to Hot Springs at last. When I got to the party place, there were many host families. My host family consisted of nine people. But older children were independent from the family so there were four people in real. They greeted me very warmly. I had pizza with them and went home. The house was very large. I went to bed early because it was late when I got home. Next day I went to school early in the morning. The school building was so large and I felt it free. I attended classes together. I didn't think there were club activities after school. After I got home, I went to a nearby part. It was a large park. I enjoyed basketball there. And then, I returned home and played American games. It was hard to understand how to play. Such happy days went on. At night my host family took me bowling and basketball games. The time to return to Japan came very quickly. My host family gave me many presents when I left Hot Springs. I was so glad but very lonely. I got on an airplane and went back to Houston. I stayed at a hotel in Houston and finally the day to fly from America came next day. When I took a seat in the airplane, I wondered if I had to return home. In the airplane, I was not able to do nothing but missing my host family and almost wept. I finally came back to Japan. I still recall memories in America. I will use this experience from now on.



Impressions on the Exchange Program

Ryoka SATO, Yasawa JHS 2nd Grader

I learned many things while I participated in the exchange program. The home stay program was the most unforgettable among the plenty experiences. I was nervous until I met with my host family because I was wondering if they would be able to understand what I say and I would be able to understand what they say. I was so nervous on the first day that I was not able to have conversations with the host family. But they were kind to talk to me slowly with gestures so I managed to communicate with them using my English skill though I could not do wholly.

I also went to Hot Springs Middle School. I had many surprising things at school. First, I was surprised to see the large school building and secondly, to know the school rule was not severe. I made many friends only for the two days at school. Students gave “Good morning” greetings in Japanese whenever they recognized me as Japanese. And I taught them Japanese words so I got friends at once. I felt the American school strange for me but it was very enjoyable. On the last day I spent all day long with my host family. I ate out and enjoyed bowling with my host family.

In the evening I watched movies with them and got a present. When I slept, I thought I would be lonely the following day because I had to leave them. In the next morning, I felt very lonely when I parted my host family. But they told me my English improved much and I was happy to hear that. The 5-day home stay was very happy. I felt irritated with my poor English skill though I wanted to express myself more through the home stay program. From now on, I try to express myself more through hard work. And I want to be involved in international exchange programs more. Thanks to this precious experience, I had the best memories in Hot Springs, came to be fond of English more and got confidence. I owe this experience to many people. I will use this experience in the future and tell about it to as many people as possible without forgetting the gratitude. Thank you very much for such a valuable experience.





Report of the Exchange Program

Shotaro ABE, Miyanome JHS 2nd Grader

I visited Houston, Texas, Little Rock, Arkansas and Hot Springs, Arkansas in the United States of America in the exchange program. The first place to visit was Houston. I learned about sightseeing spots here mainly because it was a big city. For instance, I saw instructive things such as the reverse of a Space Shuttle that was not able to be seen here in Japan. Besides, I toured a nature museum in Houston. Next, I went to Little Roc, Arkansas. This city had something to with former President Clinton so there were facilities related to him. Besides, the city had the State Capitol of Arkansas and was the center of the state. Here I visited the Clinton Library. There were documents about Mr. Clinton in the library. I had never been to such a place so I was moved to be there honestly speaking. I visited the former State Capitol later. I felt long history of the city there too. Next, I headed for Hot Springs, my destination. My host family greeted me there. I stayed at the Cooper Family's home. They were very kind to me and I enjoyed my stay for six days. I attended some classes at Lakeside High School. After all, the atmosphere was very different from Japan. I wonder if it was because of differences in life style. By the way, the theme of the exchange program was "environment" so I planted trees with the students to offset carbon dioxide. I hope I contributed to the earth somewhat. Besides, the city was famous for its hot spring spas so I saw a historical bathhouse. I heard there were only some bathhouses now so I hope the number of bathhouses will resume gradually. Finally, everyday was very fresh for me because I stayed abroad. I had a really good experience. I want to visit Hot Springs again in the future.





Through the Exchange Program

Mizuki TOMITE, Miyanome JHS 2nd Grader

I went to America as a member of the exchange students. Everything I saw was very fresh and surprising to me. First of all, it was English. Native speakers of English spoke to me fast and their English was different from our English in class so I was very nervous that I was wondering if I was able to communicate with my host family.

And finally, the day to meet with my host family came. My heart was beating so fast at that time. The first impression to my host family was “very sweet”. But I was not able to catch what they said as I expected. As I was impatient with the situation, my host mother translated with her dictionary. On the day, I handed my souvenirs to my host family and asked the following day’s schedule. My host family was really kind.

For the first two days, I went to school in the city. I was surprised to see there were many classes in America compared to Japan. And I found each class very interesting. I thought a big difference between America and Japan was every student express themselves positively. Students were so kind that I made many friends there. I hoped schools in Japan would become like American ones.

I took part in a tree planting activity on a holiday because “environment” was a theme of the exchange program. Now that global warming is a big issue, I felt again it was very important to participate in such an activity positively.

I felt as if I were spending time with my real family while I was with my host family. They were eager to catch what I said with gestures. I was very sad when I had to leave them.

Through the exchange program, I learned many things. Because there were many differences in languages, lifestyle and religions, I felt a little difficult to stay in America. But I am sure this experience will be helpful without failure. Thank you very much for giving me such a precious experience.



Memories in the Exchange Program

Suguru TERABAYASHI, Seinan JHS 2nd Grader

I discovered new things and had precious experiences in the exchange program. Among them, what was the most impressive was to meet with my host family for the first time. It was because my host family also took care of my older brother two years ago. At the moment to talk to them about the fact, they were very surprised at the coincidence and glad to know that. Thanks to the coincidence, I got along with my host family very soon.

The host family's house stood near the lake and it had many grand rooms. And it had also a small hidden house for children near the woods. Plus, my host family owned a boat and I went to the lake for fishing catfish and trout. I also went to a mountain from where I saw views of Lakeside with my host family. I thought it was just hiking but it took two hours to get to the mountain. I felt a little tired but I cannot forget the downtown view from the top of the mountain. On the last day of the home stay program, my host family held a party inviting their friends. I was surprised to see everything in life was bigger than Japan. I am grateful for many precious experiences heartily.

I went to Lakeside High School. When I attended a class for communication, I had many questions from students but I was at a loss because of their way of speaking very fast. But I gradually came to catch what they said so I talked about my club activity of Kendo and they were interested in my story. I took a long measure for a bamboo sword and showed them Kendo practice. I hoped that I was able to show them about soul of the Japanese martial arts to some extent. The students were very kind to me in spite of first sight and brought me fried chicken and hamburgers next day because I told them I liked the food. So I enjoyed the real taste of them. I talked with the students about environmental issues that were a theme of the trip.

I went to Lakeside High School for only two days but was impressed that they were organized in free atmosphere and attended classes seriously.

I have many precious experiences in America. It was because there were many people to support me. I will use these experiences without forgetting gratitude to those people.



Thank you

Kanako SATO, Seinan JHS 2nd Grader

It is a great harvest for me to have an experience that everybody in the world can communicate heart to heart with one another if only they express gratitude honestly with smile.

The more I took part in a series of preliminary workshop for the exchange program, the bigger my hopes and wishes were. But on the other hand, I came to be at a loss about differences in lifestyles and language. My nervous feeling became as big as my hope because I was not so good at English. At that time, my teachers starting from Principal instructed me in many aspects and my seniors and friends cheered me up. So I came to be relaxed and had a firm feeling to take part in the exchange program hard. As a result I had the day to depart for America with decisive mind to see, listen to and experience everything in order to answer the expectation from people around me.

As I got off the airplane, I was surprised and moved to see the first-ever American view for me. I stirred myself, saying myself "I came over to America in real. Now my challenge starts right here." Even strangers on the road gave me gentle smiles. My nervous feeling was gone away without notice. My host family that treated me and Mizuki naturally was very kind. Everything was fresh and I enjoyed my stay everyday. I cleared up the table after a meal, introduced my school life to each other and showed photos of each family. I played marbles, folding paper, table tennis and bowling with them. I also watched TV and smiled as if I were at home because they took care of me well. Even if English words and phrases didn't come out smoothly, I was very happy when I managed to communicate with them. If somebody visits Hanamaki from abroad, I would like to have the visitor at my home and welcome warmly. At that time, I would like to guide the visitor in Seinan Junior High School and also would like all the students to welcome the visitor.

I have many happy memories at the middle school I went to. I received a handmade T-shirt present embroidered my name. I had a welcome party with handmade big cookies. I played favorite basketball with the students. I walked in a hallway at school holding each other round the shoulders. I had lunch as chatting with the students. Everybody was cheerful and positive in class. I would like to tell everybody here about the atmosphere of

the American school as I spare time to do so that the students of my school can use it for school life and school council activity.

In this exchange program, everything was first to me so I had continued impressive and surprising experiences. I toured many places but what was the most impressive is to see kind Americans starting from my host family and it is unforgettable. This became my lifelong best memory.

The world is really large but I have something to help with in the world to some extent. I will use a precious experience that people can understand each other if they communicate heart to heart and help with international exchange programs from now. And I also would like to study English more than ever. I am grateful to all the people who enabled me to have such a valuable experience. Thank you very much.





Student Exchange Program

Ken FUJIWARA, Ohasama JHS 2nd Grader

I participated in the student exchange program from January 7th to the 16th for ten days. I was looking forward to getting on the airplane because it would be my first time. I was at a loss when a cabin attendant talked to me in English but the Japanese passenger sitting next to me helped me. It was boring to spend time over ten hours in the airplane and I was very tired when I arrived in America after watching three movies without sleep. So I was relieved to get to the hotel.

I toured Space Center Houston and a nature museum in Houston. It was very impressive for me to touch a moon stone and see many things in the Space Center. In the nature museum, it was fun to see an instrument to experiment many things.

What was the most impressive in the exchange program is to stay at my host family's home. When I saw them, I thought they all looked kind. Actually they were kind. My host family's house was located in the mountains and it was very large and gorgeous with many things like a pool table. I was allotted a room. I was nervous at first that I was not able to talk to them but was accustomed to them bit by bit and finally was able to communicate with them with my electric dictionary. I played games and billiards with my host family. I didn't talk to them while playing but it was very fun. I went to school with Jesse and found the middle school was totally different from a Japanese school because the students dyed hair, wore earrings and looked very free and happy compared to Japanese schools.

I will never forget gratitude to city officials, teachers and my family that supported in the exchange program and use what I learned from this program to my school life to some extent. Thank you very much for giving me this precious experience.



Through the Exchange Program

Fuko SATO, Ohasama JHS 2nd Grader

The exchange program became a lifelong precious memory for me. I went abroad for the first time and learned many things like cultural and lifestyle differences between America and Japan.

The first impression I felt at first when I arrived in America was the land was very large and abundant in nature. I went to Space Center Houston and the nature museum first of all. I was able to learn about the space and American nature very vigorously. I had hamburger for supper on the day and was surprised to see how bigger it was than Japanese one. Every meal afterward was big and it was hard for me to eat it up.

What was the most impressive is to stay at my host family's home. Before I left Japan, I was feeling uneasy to wonder if I would be able to communicate with the host family while I was looking forward to staying at theirs. But once I saw my host family, everybody greeted me with smile so the uneasy feeling jumped away and I had a good time with them. On the first day, my host family explained me about the family rules and so on. From the next day, I went to Jessieville School with Zack. The students talked me cheerfully and positively so I came to get along with them very soon. At school, I saw classes and enjoyed American food ball with them. In a class, students sang songs for me and other students. Being different from Japanese schools, there were many kinds of club activities but the activities were not fixed. School rules looked free. I heard much about foreign schools and I had many things to be surprised at when I went there actually. I went bowling with my host family on the

third day and played together. After that, I practiced a dance that is a performance for the reception held next day with the students to attend Jessieville. I enjoyed practicing it picking up stream. Next day, I planted trees with the exchange students as thinking of “environment” that is a theme of the exchange program. I hope the trees planted by the exchange students will help the earth stop global warming. In the evening, a party was held to thank the host families and the girl students performed “Sakura” song with various instruments. Though I was nervous, it was good to perform it successfully. It was a big success to dance at Jessieville that I practiced with the other exchange students. I enjoyed making cookies and candies with my host family and went to church.

I felt it was difficult for me to express myself in English in the exchange program and thought I wanted to speak English more fluently because I was able to communicate with Hot Springs people beyond the language. I think I was able to have these precious experiences with many supports from various people. Thank you so much.



Wonderful Ten-Day Trip

Miyuki ITO, Hanamaki Higashi HS 1st Grader

I matured through the exchange program. I had many lifelong encounters and experiences. At first, I didn't think I would take part in the exchange program and was unrealistic about that but it was really good for me to go to America. Many people were concerned about me until I left for America but I had no concern but wishes to go to America.

On the departure day, I flew from Narita Airport to Houston, the fourth biggest city in America after my teachers and parents saw me off at Shin Hanamaki Station. I was surprised to differences in the climate and the language shortly after I arrived at the airport. It was warm and humid like rainy season in Japan. I also recognized their language had southern accents and some were speaking in Spanish. I felt their culture was mixed with many cultures. At this very moment, I realized I got to America.

On the second day from the arrival to America, I went sightseeing in Houston. I visited Space Center Houston and the nature museum in Houston. Space Center Houston was very impressive. I toured the vast campus and saw a cockpit of the Space Shuttle and a control tower of Apollo 11. Among them, the Space Shuttle engine was overwhelming. It was much larger than an image on TV and I was surprised to see it. I was impressed to feel

how great the Space technology and its history were.

On the third day, I went to Arkansas where I was supposed to stay at my host family's home. The flight was set early in the morning so it was hard but I was okay that after I arrived in Little Rock. In the capital of Little Rock, I toured the President Clinton Library and the former and present State Capitol buildings. In the former Capitol building I was taken a picture of me and my friend and the picture appeared in the local newspaper. It was a good memory.

Finally I saw my host family. I felt everybody was nervous before seeing their host families. I hear my host family took care of my senior that went to Hot Springs last year coincidentally so I was looking forward to seeing them. The host family, Ty and Cindy greeted me gently with smile. I was not nervous at all and it was good for me to understand what they said because their way to talk to me was easy to understand.

On the second and third days, I went to Lakeside High School that is a sister school of Hanamaki Higashi High School. I was surprised to know school started very early in the morning. I was feeling at a loss gradually when school started. But in the first and second period, I came to get along with the students as I knew they were very humorous and kind. I learned they were high school students like me that are interested in mobile phones and music. I felt there was no rank relationship in American high school and no one was fingering a mobile phone. And they talked to strangers like me frankly. I felt these were big differences between America and Japan. That's why they looked very cheerful.

I went to other schools. I was asked by junior high school students many questions but managed to answer them. It was good for me to tell them about Japanese culture.

I was also impressed by a basketball game held at high school in the evening. The players I made friends with them in class played in the game so I got accustomed to Lakeside High School. I also got along with the band players and it was very enjoyable. They were very kind to us and took pictures of me. I am proud of the sister school relation with Lakeside High School.

I played video games and billiards and watched TV with Ty's friends at home. On holidays I went to Starbucks, restaurant, tower and shopping malls with my host family. There were lakes in Hot Springs and stars were beautiful at night. It was also rich in nature.

I thought such good days would last for a long time but finally the day to leave Hot Springs came. It was very tough for me to part my host family. I would like to see them again and keep in touch with them from now on.

I had many experiences in the exchange program. I got confidence in my English skill because I was able to communicate with cabin attendants at airports, clerks at hotels and high school students. I also felt very happy that I was able to express myself to them. It was good for me to say greetings like "Thank you" that I was not able to do easily in Japan. I will not forget the feeling.

My sense of value was changed very much. I thought I would be kind to others because I was able to meet with kind and warm people in Hot Springs and above all, I felt

thoughtfulness and understanding was very important. The world is very large and what I saw was a part of the world. Therefore I would like to learn more about cultures and languages so that I can see many people. Through this experience, I feel the world became close to me. I will use this experience in my course and life.

Finally I am grateful to Ty and Cindy, my host family, my family and teachers, Tour Coordinator Oiakawa, city tourism & international officials and staff of Hanamaki International Exchange Association. It was very good for me to have wonderful experiences.



Impressions on the Exchange Program

Mizuki SHIMA, Hanamaki Higashi HS 1st Grader

It was my first time to go abroad and was nervous before I going to America. But once I arrived in America everything was amazing and my fear was gone at once.

In Space Center Houston where I went on the second day in America, I had a very valuable experience to touch a moon stone and Apollo 17. Next, I went to the nature museum and saw fossils of dinosaurs, minerals and jewelry. It was very magnificent.

Following day, I went to the President Clinton Library and learned about President Clinton's history. There were gifts to present to the president and documents written everyday schedules of the president, and it showed how busy the president was.

On the third day I was greeted by my host family warmly though I felt nervous before meeting them. And I got along with them soon. My host family composed of three siblings and the oldest brother, E.P at the age of 16, owned and drove a car, and I was surprised to know that. When I arrived at the home, I was also amazed to see how big the home was. First, it had numerous rooms in it, a billiards table on the second floor, a swimming pool and trampoline in the garden. I thought American houses were great.

On the first and second day, I went to Lakeside High School that is the sister school of Hanamaki Higashi High School and touched animals, experimented, got a Spanish lesson. I had a very valuable experience there.

On the fourth day, I planted trees with all the host families and exchange students for the first time. I hope I will plant trees positively from now on to offset carbon dioxide.

On the fifth day, I went to church with my host family. The church was a little

different from what I expected so I was surprised to visit it. If possible, I would like to go to the church again.

In the evening, I had handmade hamburgers with other host families because it was the final evening. They were very tasty. I also played table tennis and dominos, and enjoyed the final night.

This ten-day trip was a lifelong memory and no substitute. I thank my teachers and everybody around me for giving me such an opportunity.



Impressions on the Exchange Program

Yuka KIKUCHI, Hanamaki Higashi HS 1st grader

It was my second time to go abroad but this opportunity was happier than the previous exchange program. I went to Space Center Houston, the nature museum and the President Clinton Library, learned many things and had a very precious experience. In Space Center Houston, I saw a real Space Shuttle, command module and moon stone. I wanted to see the moon stone for a long time so was very impressed by it. There were fossils appeared in my book in the nature museum.

In the evening of the third day, after I toured the State Capitol of Arkansas, I went to Hot Springs and saw my host family. My host family was Grace and Julie. Grace belonged to the cheerleading group and her team teammates, Memory and Savanna sat at the same table I got along with the three and enjoyed the party.

During the home stay program, I went to school and attended classes for two days. I learned Spanish and enjoyed making a plastic bottle rocket in science class. I was impressed by the fact that the students got classes neatly as enjoying the classes. I made many friends at school and it was good for me to teach them Japanese.

On weekend, I planted trees in an activity to tackle environmental problems, went to church and played with Grace's friends. I was very happy to make many good memories in Hot Springs.

In the exchange program, I made as many memories as I cannot stop talking about. Julie and Grace welcomed me as if I were a family and were very kind to me. I voluntarily cried because I was very sad to part them and cannot forget the warmth they showed me when they hugged me.

I will try to improve my English skill from now on so that I can speak it properly. And I will go to Hot Springs again in the future to express my gratitude to them.

I will use what I learned in the exchange program for my learning from now.

