

# Jumping for JOI Quarterly Newsletter

August-November, 2011



Form left: Tomoe Kumashiro handmakes a Kamishibai theater, a scene from the *One Thousand Cranes*, an origami *tsuru* (crane)

As part of the Japan Outreach Initiative (JOI), Ms. Tomoe Kumashiro, Japan Outreach Coordinator, arrived at UTSA in August of 2011. Her duties are to promote awareness and understanding of Japan in regions of the United States that have relatively few Japan-related experiences. In addition, part of her job is intended to provide opportunities for cultural exchange.

In October 2011, she gave a presentation on the Story of One Thousand Cranes at Johnson High School. The meaning behind the story is one of understanding peace, but it was emphasized that Japanese people fold paper cranes to wish for something important. Through this, the students were taught the importance of folding cranes while thinking of someone or something that is important to them. This presentation was held over two days. During the first day the story was told using handmade *kamishibai* (*mobile story telling theater*), which successfully captured students' interest. Following this, the students were given an assignment to think about what they would like to

pray and fold cranes for. On the second day, they were instructed on how to fold paper cranes. The large earthquake that hit Japan in March was also discussed for students to have an idea of something to pray about. She presented photos of the damage taken in March as well as photos taken three months after with the purpose of showing how much has been rebuilt. She taught that this could not have been accomplished without the support and warm help from others in the world. In a similar way, it was nice to see the students help each other with folding their cranes.



**The JOI Program is sponsored by The Japan Foundation and The Laurasian Institute. Its mission includes the following:**

1. To promote interest in and study of Japan through increasing grassroots exchange between the U.S. and Japan: This is achieved by facilitating dialogue about current Japan-U.S. issues and giving Japanese language and culture presentations in communities to promote a better understanding of Japan.
2. To cultivate a new group of individuals in both Japan and the U.S. who will take leading roles in grassroots exchange.

Kumashiro also helped with UTSA's Kimchi Festival. The purpose of this festival was to promote Korean culture. She ran an *origami* booth and taught guests how to fold Korean rice, a box, watch, ribbon, and bracelet. For younger guests, she prepared the watches, ribbons, and bracelets for them. The booth was very popular and many guests could be seen wearing their creations.

In addition, Kumashiro visited Elrod Elementary School during October. She observed many classes and met with Principal Daisy Winsenant to discuss future outreach lesson plans. On November 18<sup>th</sup>, she will be teaching in the third and fifth grade classes. The fifth grade classes will learn about conservation and recycling and the third graders will learn about school in Japan using a Venn diagram. Kumashiro will also be working with special needs students in multiple grade levels over the next few weeks. The school provides her with materials and allows her access to the equipment necessary for preparing materials.

International Education Week (IEW) is taking place November 14th-18th. Kumashiro and a group of volunteer students have been preparing for this event since September. Their group, called *Dai Nippon*, will have seven activities set up.

Their *origami* group will help guests create various animals from paper. The calligraphy group will write guests names in *katakana* as well as teach them how to use the brush and write Japanese letters. The games group has been practicing *Kendama*, *Darumaotoshi*, and *Otedama* for nearly two months. They have gained a lot of skill in these games and hope that guests will enjoy learning them. They will also have *kingyo sukui*, or goldfish scooping, which is a common sight at Japanese festivals. The food group will make *takoyaki*, or dumplings with octopus inside, along with other variations such as chicken, cheese, and jam *takoyaki* for less adventurous eaters. To allow the guests a hand in preparing Japanese food, they also plan to teach how to make *onigiri* or rice balls.



From top: Kumashiro teaches origami at the Kimchi Festival, Participants show off their origami creations, Kumashiro with Elrod Elementary principal Daisy Winsenant, Members of Dai Nippon practice calligraphy Left: Dai Nippon Calligraphy booth introduction





Traditional Japanese games to be played during IEW:



Kendama



Darumaotoshi



Otedama

The music group will introduce Japanese pop music as well songs from movies. There will be a group in charge of the chopsticks games where guests will be challenged by different difficulty levels. Beginners will have to pick up balls, while at the intermediate level, guest will have to pick up pencils. As for the advance level, the challengers will be picking up small round beans. There is also a tea ceremony group, which put together a nice slide show presentation to show guests. They will also perform a tea ceremony and make tea for guests. Kumashiro has been meeting weekly with UTSA students in preparation for the International Education Week.

Kumashiro is also collaborating with several JASSA members in planning for an International Education Week event to be held at Northwest Vista College (NVC). Many of the activities will be similar to the ones that are taking place at UTSA. However, there are a couple of

small differences. The event to be held at NVC will not have as many activities as those available at UTSA, for example. Although those who attend the one that is being hosted at NVC will be allowed to try on a *yukata* and take pictures of a traditional Japanese *kimono*.

In early November 2011, Kumashiro gave a presentation on how to make paper Christmas ornaments to members of JASSA at Igo Library. It was a good time to introduce *origami* and *kirigami*, paper cutting, while people were interested in the ornaments. She chose this, as opposed to folding *origami* since the participants are all of different ages and some of them already know how to fold or have folded *origami* before.



Chopsticks Competition, one of the many games to be offered during IEW



Ms. Kumashiro and several JASSA members making Christmas ornaments.

In addition to all the aforementioned activities and events, Kumashiro also has helped with UTSA's Japanese club. She has organized several of the club's meetings along with advising the club officers on scheduling and planning program activities. She has also designed cultural activities to help students deepen their understanding and knowledge of Japan. Language games have also been created to help students extend and practice the Japanese language. In addition, Kumashiro organized a sushi making demonstration that was widely enjoyed by all members of the Japanese Club.

Besides assisting with UTSA's Japanese Club, Kumashiro has attended several of Northwest Vista College's Japanese Club meetings. During her visit, she has given several presentations, including Japanese culture and traditional

Japanese games. She has even organized an *origami* folding and paper cutting activity.

Kumashiro has met with many high school Japanese teachers from the North East Independent School District (NESID) to discuss many potential ideas on collaborative efforts. In addition, she has sent out letters to libraries, hospitals, and k-12 schools to solicit presentations requests.

Kumashiro has also attended a Texas diversity council meeting and has met with representatives from the Girl Scout headquarters of Texas. More networking opportunities arose when she attended the Ikebana International San Antonio Chapter meeting. Finally, Kumashiro has met with members of *Piasano*, the student newspaper at UTSA for outreach. "It has been interesting to teach about Japan while observing

American culture and customs," said Kumashiro, "I am honored to be part of the JOI group to promote cultural and educational exchange on a citizen-to-citizen level."

The JOI Program is sponsored by The Japan Foundation and The Laurasian Institute.

For more info on The Japan Foundation, visit <http://www.jpff.go.jp/e/>

For more info on The Laurasian Institute, visit <http://www.laurasian.org/>

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Kumashiro leads a sushi making session at UTSA's Japanese Club