MEET THE NEW
JAPAN OUTREACH COORDINATOR
MS. TOMOE KUMASHIRO
(熊代智恵)
AT UTSA’S EAST ASIA INSTITUTE

From Okayama, Japan to San Antonio, Texas with love to promote cultural and educational exchange...

The East Asia Institute at UTSA is pleased to announce the arrival of Ms. Tomoe Kumashiro, who has been dispatched through the Japan Outreach Initiative (JOI) Program, sponsored by The Japan Foundation Center for Global Partnership (CGP) and The Laurasian Institution (TLI).

The Japan Outreach Initiative aims to promote awareness and understanding of Japan in regions of the United States that have relatively few Japan-related experiences. The program is also intended to provide opportunities for cultural exchange. The Japanese individuals who volunteer for this program are selected through a competitive process in which they are screened and interviewed to make sure they meet the right qualifications. Those selected then spend two years as outreach coordinators at organizations such as Japan American Societies and universities.

Mission of the JOI Program:
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 United States who will take leading roles in grassroots exchange.
"I want as many people to know about Japan as possible. I want them to know that the people from Japan are different from the ones in the United States, but are similar at the same time."

Tomoe Kumashiro
Japan Outreach Coordinator
East Asia Institute at UTSA

The Japan Outreach Initiative (JOI) program is jointly administered by the Japan Foundation Center for Global Partnership (CGP) and The Laurasian Institute.

To learn more about the JOI program:
http://www.laurasian.org/joi/

To learn more about the Japan Foundation Center for Global Partnership:
http://www.cgp.org/

“I believe Ms. Kumashiro will help expand our Japanese program efforts,” says Julius Gribou, Senior International Officer, “in addition to strengthening our ties with Japan.” The JOI coordinators provide information about Japanese culture, society, everyday life, and language, as well as organize activities that foster exchange between the United States and Japan.

Kumashiro obtained her teaching license and graduated from the University of Kagawa located in Takamatsu, Kagawa in 2006. The school’s Faculty of Education is among the top programs in Japan for training teachers to instruct students with special needs. She has spent the majority of her career teaching at the elementary and middle school levels and is now looking forward to working with an adult audience.

Before joining the JOI Program, Kumashiro worked as a teacher for several years. She began her career at Timaru Christian School in Timaru, New Zealand, where she had taught both Japanese language and culture to her students. When she returned home to Okayama, she worked as an assistant editor before obtaining another teaching opportunity. At the Okayama School for the Physically Challenged, Kumashiro taught the basic curriculum which consisted of Japanese, math, art, science, music, society and health. She continued to teach there until recently joining the JOI Program and bringing her knowledge and experience with her to the East Asia Institute.

Not only is Kumashiro an experienced teacher, she is also a talented musician in clarinet, flute and koto. During her two-year tenure here at the East Asia Institute, Kumashiro plans to visit local K-12 schools to give presentations on Japan. In addition, she would like to be involved in the community organizations to promote awareness on not just Japanese culture, but on Japan as a whole. Kumashiro feels that her teaching skills will help her communicate ideas with a broad audience and she plans to give presentations and conduct workshops here at UTSA as well as at other schools.

"I want as many people to know about Japan as possible," says Tomoe Kumashiro, JOI Coordinator, "I want them to know that the people from Japan are different from the ones in the United States, but are similar at the same time." She is hoping to help Americans open their eyes to the Japanese culture. “The East Asia Institute welcomes Ms. Tomoe Kumashiro to our office and we are thrilled to host her for the next two years,” says Mimi Yu, East Asia Institute Associate Director, “We know she will make an impact not only at UTSA, but in the community as well. We are honored to be chosen as one of the six sites this year in the United States to host a JOI coordinator. Our office is looking forward to working with Ms. Kumashiro to further help people in San Antonio to understand and appreciate Japan better.”

To reach Ms. Tomoe Kumashiro and request a special presentation, conduct a workshop, or if you have questions concerning any other Japanese-related topics, please contact her at tomoe.kumashiro@utsa.edu or at 210.458.8550.

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