

Jumping for JOI Quarterly Newsletter

November 2011 – March 2012



From left: (Art of Sushi at UIW) A student cutting sushi; Kumashiro giving a demonstration, Kumashiro helping kids make *kabuto* at Multicultural Day hosted by Huebner Elementary.

Kumashiro, UTSA's Japan Outreach Coordinator, has been quite busy with making presentations in San Antonio. With about 17 visits and events, she has been hard at work promoting awareness and understanding about Japan.

Late November 2011, Kumashiro visited the young patients at the Children's Kidney Center inside Christus Santa Rosa Children's Hospital.

There she spent two hours with children ranging from ages 8-15 and worked with them independently. During her visit the children were able to make one of two crafts that she brought along as well as learn how to write a few Japanese words in *hiragana*.

Shortly after her visit to the Children's Hospital, Kumashiro visited the University of the Incarnate Word (UIW) where a member from the Japan America Society of San Antonio (JASSA) aided her as she taught participants how to make sushi. Participants were able to learn about three different types of sushi; Cup Flower, and Roll, and later were able to try to make their own. "Some students tried to make California rolls and Flower

learned how to roll sushi in addition to cutting without ruining the shape and beauty. Nonetheless, Kumashiro was soon asked what all the ingredients were and where they could be purchased.

As early December came about, Kumashiro was seen at Multicultural Day at Huebner Elementary School running two Japanese booths in the hall. Visitors to her booths were able to view a display board that held general information about Japan such as the flag, the population size, food, and holidays. Visitors were also able to have a look at some elementary school textbooks, which captivated many guests, while others tried on a *rando-seru*, or backpack, which elementary students in Japan use. Others were interested in the pencil case that was on display and were quite surprised to find that it had a pencil sharpener within it. Red and white caps that are worn by the students while



Teaching the students *kobutanukitsuneko* at Kuentz Elementary, Students making kites at Elrod Elementary.

they are walking to and from school were also on display.

At another table, Kumashiro was conducting hands-on activities such as folding samurai hats called *Kabuto* from newspapers, writing visitors' names in Japanese, and teaching some of her guest basic Japanese greetings. "Children kept coming to fold samurai hats," Kumashiro stated, as her younger visitors were quick to place the hats on their heads after making them.

At Kuentz Elementary School, Kumashiro attended another Multicultural Day. Unlike her last visit, Kumashiro had to give a presentation for first graders in three separate classes. For her presentation, Kumashiro introduced greetings to her students followed by a small and easy quiz about Japan. Then she sung a song called *Kobutanukitsuneko*, also known as "Pig & Raccoon & Fox & Cat," which was accompanied by a dance. Afterwards, she taught her students how to make *kabuto*. Kumashiro was very surprised to find that her students were able to remember the words to the song and the dance-steps with ease.

Later that same day, Kumashiro paid a visit to Elrod Elementary School where she worked with kids in kindergarten through second grade along with some special needs students. The

Students learned how to make kites with a tray and how to write their own name in *katakana*. "They looked happy to learn their name in Japanese and tried to write it neatly and slowly while looking at the character samples. Some students enjoyed it very much, so they kept practicing their name on the other side of the page," Kumashiro stated as she watched the children practice writing. After the students learned how to write their names, they were taught how to make kites. Within a short amount of time each student had their own kite with help from either their teacher or from Kumashiro and were happy with how it came out. Kumashiro returned later during the month to work with the third grade students and introduced them to the elementary school systems in Japan. She introduced them to school uniforms, backpacks, shoes, subjects and schedules while using photos to help the students understand schools in Japan. Since the children had just learned about Venn diagrams, Kumashiro was able to use a different teaching strategy to help the kids find similarities and differences between Japanese and American Schools. At the end of the lesson Kumashiro taught the class a Japanese song and was able to sing along with them. She was surprised to find that the students were already able to remember



From top: Student making *origami* at UIW Asian Festival, Kumashiro giving a presentation at Johnson High School, First Japanese Circle meeting, Second Japanese Circle meeting.

some Japanese words such as *arigato* [thank you], some greetings, a few animal names as well as other words from her presentation.

Kumashiro also attended two Asian festivals. The first was held at UIW where visitors were able to enjoy a *kimono* presentation and look at the many *kimono* that were on display. At the second Asian Festival, located at the Institute of Texan Culture, Kumashiro hosted an *origami* booth with student helpers from UTSA.

Visitors were able to make small boxes, bracelets, ribbons, and Pikachu from Pokémon.

Kumashiro also taught a 10-week Japanese language class for JASSA from January-March. "We have a small class of students. Most of them are adults and some are from Japanese companies," Kumashiro explained. Needless to say there is still a group of people who are willing to learn Japanese.

In early February, Kumashiro visited Johnson High School, where she gave a presentation about Japanese schools and was able to introduce the students to items that are a common sight in a school setting.

Aside from hosting language classes, Kumashiro has also become the founder of a group called the Japanese Circle. The group was created to promote cultural exchanges between American and Japanese students. In addition, the Japanese Circle is an

opportunity for Americans to practice Japanese and vice versa. "I initiated the because I had students who wanted to make Japanese friends and be able to practice Japanese with them." At the group's first meeting there were 22 people in attendance with 12 Americans and 10 Japanese, but for their second meeting there were appropriately 70 students in attendance with only 10 Japanese. During their meetings the group have enjoyed the opportunity to talk in either language and play traditional Japanese games such as *kendama* or read Japanese books.

For the next Japanese Circle meeting Kumashiro plans to have the group make sushi and looks forward to spreading word about the club to other campuses here in San Antonio. "Many of the Japanese members of the club come from the military bases and are happy to have the opportunity to speak to English native speakers," said Kumashiro. "Clearly I am happy that Japanese Circle has become very popular in such a short period of time."

On February 4th, Kumashiro attended the 23rd annual Japanese Speech Contest as a judge in San Antonio sponsored by JASSA. The speech contest is intended to encourage more American K-16 students to learn Japanese.

In early March Kumashiro attended the “2012 YMCA Expo: The Journey to Excellence” as an interpreter. The event lasted for five days with over 900 people in attendance. During the event Kumashiro helped with different activities, but also gave a speech about the earthquake that devastated her home country last year.

This past President's Day, Kumashiro was back to visit children in hospitals. This time she visited the Children’s Cancer and Blood Center at Methodist Children’s Hospital. She helped the children play *kendama*, make origami or practice how to write certain words in Japanese. Her day at the hospital did not go unnoticed though as her visit was even reported by the local KSAT news. A few days after her last visit Kumashiro paid another visit to another hospital allowing

patients of all ages to enjoy a change in pace as well as learn a little more about Japan through games and crafts.

In March Kumashiro spent her time doing school visits. Her latest visit was to the Alamo Heights High School where she taught the students how to make sushi in their cooking class. Though she has run out of time during this month for another school visit she already has events planned and schools listed for her next set of visits.

Kumashiro’s time spent in San Antonio has made a profound impact on the local schools, hospitals and organizations. In addition, she has been a great asset to the East Asia Institute. Due to her constant effort, awareness of Japan has significantly gone up within the city.



Ms. Kumashiro’s booth during Heburn Elementary’s Multicultural Day.



From top: Kumashiro playing the *koto*, International Day at Christian Elementary, making *origami* at the Asian Festival hosted by the ITC, teaching *origami* at Methodist Children’s hospital.