

日本語スピーチコンテスト2018 ホームステイプログラム報告会

Japanese Speech Contest 2018 Homestay Report

スピーチコンテスト実行委員会

昨年7月8日(日)に開催された日本語スピーチコンテスト2018において、高校の部、高等学府の部の入賞者の皆さんとオープンの部の優勝者に日本のホームステイプログラムが贈られました。ホームステイプログラムに参加した入賞者による報告会が3月9日(土)、日本人会ボールルーム(2F)にて開催されましたので、その報告内容を紹介します。

*Reports have been edited for length.



報告会の様子

鹿児島県ホームステイ報告

オープンの部優勝 Aditya Sriramさん

From my very first day there, I was blown away by the hospitality of the Japanese people. My host mother had arranged a welcome party for me. She cooked a lot of food and invited a few of her colleagues. She also had a lot of activities planned out for my stay.

Having lived in cities for most of my life, the sight of the mountains and the abundance of nature filled me with a sense of wonder and joy, and Kagoshima was full of nature, everywhere. I visited the iconic Sakurajima and also got to experience a lot of local activities. I had my first fishing experience and went orange picking on the mountains.



During my stay, I had a lot of amazing food but the ones that I remember the best are the home cooked meals such as the omelette rice and grilled saba my host mom made for me. On my last night, we went to an izakaya my host mother frequented. There were about four other guests there and everybody knew each other, including the owner. The folks at the izakaya made great conversation. After having dinner and chatting for a while, we started singing, because, there was a karaoke system in the izakaya! It was a great night with drinking, chatting and singing and was one of my favourite parts of the homestay.



This homestay program has been an amazing learning experience for me! I must admit that at the beginning of the homestay program, I was a bit nervous and honestly, a bit sceptical when I met my host family. I was worried that we wouldn't have enough to talk about, being from different generations. But I was wrong, my host mom was a very fun person to talk to and always full of energy! In the short amount of time I was there, I met a lot of people, had many new experiences and most importantly, learned a lot of new things.

I'm very grateful to my host family for volunteering for the position and for showing me around Kagoshima. I'm also extremely grateful to the Japanese Association, Singapore and the International Exchange Division of Kagoshima Prefecture for giving me this opportunity. I'll definitely be going back to Kagoshima!

静岡県、栃木県小山市ホームステイ報告

高等学府の部優勝 Lee Zhi Xianさん

I had two homestay experiences, the first at Oyama City, Tochigi Prefecture. Oyama is a tranquil place surrounded by nature. On my first day, I experienced many traditional crafts such as mamadahimo and yukitsumugi. I was fortunate enough to have the chance to wear the yukitsumugi, take a walk around town and even visit the Mayor of Oyama City in it. This was all filmed by NHK News.

That evening, I was handed over to my host family. My host family were all incredibly kind and wonderful people. Dinner that night was tempura, which was amazing. My favourite was the sakuraebi kakiage, which we don't get to eat here in Singapore. We also discussed about various topics such as the cultural differences between Singapore and Japan. I really enjoyed these conversations and learned a lot from them.

The next day, they brought me to Edo no Mura, a theme park which has buildings that mimic the look of Japan during the Edo Period. The following day, I was brought to experience farming where I harvested



some lettuce and even packed them into boxes to be transported for sale. This was an extremely rare opportunity, especially for us Singaporeans, who will probably never get the chance to harvest vegetables here. On the last day, I went to a polytechnic in Oyama City. I was led on a tour of the schools facilities. As a physics major myself, I've done some of these experiments in the NUS lab, and the equipment here are amazing.

My second homestay experience was at Fuji City in Shizuoka. Being a main producer of tea and having a Yamaha piano factory, Shizuoka was a perfect match for me. I learned how to brew tea and had the opportunity to try it out myself. I also visited the Yamaha piano factory. During my time at Shizuoka, I visited the Mount Fuji World Heritage Centre and Mishima Sky Walk. I had seen Mount Fuji in pictures countless of times, but seeing the real thing was completely different.

The level of hospitality I experienced during my homestay was really unbelievable. They prepared meals especially for me and just because I said that I liked tea, they baked some matcha muffins the same night that I enjoyed for breakfast the next morning. This homestay was really a once in a lifetime experience and I am grateful for all that have made this homestay experience possible.



兵庫県ホームステイ報告

高等学府の部入賞 Chan Ming Zhangさん

Hyogo is known for its produce, cuisine and scenery and I was excited to experience them during my homestay program. My host family, the Hosomi family, was a family of five. Staying with them gave me the opportunity to observe and experience the daily life of the Japanese.



We visited various locations together such as the Kaiyukan—one of the world's largest aquariums, the Goshikizuka Tomb—the largest keyhole tomb in the prefecture, and the World Heritage Site, Himeji Castle. According to my host mother, one could tell if a room in the castle was for important people or for common workers. As contrary to common belief, tatami floors are not that common, being reserved for only the VIPs.

Aside from the more touristy locations, I also went to Hitoto Bosai Mirai Centre, where the damage that can occur during a large magnitude earthquake was demonstrated. It showed me the spirit of the people in Hyogo and how they are able to recover a disaster like the Great Hanshin earthquake.

I also made two school visits, one at Hyogo Prefectural Agricultural School where they have their own barn for animals, vegetable plots and fruit plantations. As explained by the vice-principal, the school actually sells their produce when harvested. They also have a department that also produces cultured drinks and also packet milk harvested from their cows. The other school visit was at Arima High School in Sanda City where I had the chance to interact with students from Year 1 to Year 3.



On the last days of my homestay, I had a short gourmet trip at Akashi where the seafood harvested were much tastier than traditional foods due to the strong currents from which they were caught. I also went to attend a small concert with my host family and experienced some soba-making.

From this trip I have learnt that Singapore and Japan are not really that different with the mentality of citizens being similar. Recently the Diploma in Urban Agricultural Technology has been set up in Republic Polytechnic, it can be seen that efforts are being put in to involve young people more in the agricultural sector by both countries.

山口県下関市ホームステイ報告

高等学府の部入賞 Tan Xin Qingさん

My first homestay experience at a Japanese house was with Hirano-san. As Hirano-san was a teacher at the Kansai Elementary School, she suggested I do a presentation on Singapore to the kids. After my presentation, I participated in activities like kendama and a Q&A session. These became a news article on Yamaguchi news and became an important memory for me as I played and talked with the kids.

After that, I visited the Mayor of Shimonoseki who was a fan of Singapore. We only had 15 minutes to chat, but within that time we shared our views on Singapore and Shimonoseki, and I thanked him for making this homestay possible.



Some of the other places I visited include Shimonoseki's famous shrine, Akama Jingu, the Kaikyokan, where I saw some penguins, Karato Ichiba, a famous seafood market and Shimonoseki Tower where I got a 360° view of the city. I also got to experience soba-making, wear a kimono, learn to make matcha and try kawarasoba.

During my trip I also visited neighboring cities, Hiroshima and Hagi. In Hiroshima, I visited Miyajima, a famous attraction which I have always dreamt of going. As if it was floating in sea, the clear skies brought a beautiful scene. I ate some local delights and we ended the Hiroshima trip by visiting the Peace Memorial Park. In Hagi, I visited Shoin Jinja that enshrines Yoshida Shoin, an important figure who inspired revolutionary ideas during the mid-1800s.

My second homestay was with the kacho of the Shimonoseki International Affairs. We had a sushi party with the fish bought at Karato Ichiba. On my final night, I had live squid. To them,

it was a normal nomi-kai, which is something I will never get to experience in Singapore cause I can't drink and I enjoyed the atmosphere of the whole experience laughing along as we joked about our past experiences.



This experience was truly a life changing experience. I never believed it when people say "life-changing", but I truly believe that Shimonoseki showed me so much and gave me so many memories that no matter how long I live in Singapore, I won't be able to obtain them. I will be heading back during golden week again.

福井県小浜市ホームステイ報告

高等学府の部入賞 Shannon Teoh Yi Wenさん、
Jasmine Chua Xianhuiさん

《Shannonさん》

Last December, I left my warm island and went to the much larger islands of the Japanese archipelago. I had participated in the Japanese Speech Contest co-organised by the Japanese Association, Singapore and was fortunate to be invited to participate in a homestay program in Obama, Fukui Prefecture. To be honest, before I went there, I knew nothing about Obama other than that it had the same name as the former US president. However, throughout my homestay period, I was able to truly experience Obama.

Obama has shores surrounding the Sea of Japan, ensuring fresh supplies of seafood with lower transportation cost. It also boasts rich farmlands and mountains, providing a variety of produce according to the seasons. The city is also just a 100-minute drive away from the former capital of Japan, Kyoto. For this reason, it served as the main food supplier for the Emperor of Ancient Japan, thus gaining the name "Miketsukuni".

This historical role of the city is the reason why they are so particular about the species of fishes, agricultural conditions and wine production. In fact many of the local stores, be it wine refinery or sweets shop, are centuries old and have served since the times of ancient Japan.

Aside from seafood, we also visited an age old sake refinery. The sake factory had a fragrant aroma and we got to taste several types of sake that got me red in the middle of the day! We also learnt that travellers stopping by Obama would spend time in the thriving Geisha houses where they would drink and play games. The geisha would act as an emcee and play instruments and host the games and we got to try out some of these games.

In this traditional town, there's a very stylish café, the Green Café, adorned with beautiful hanging plants. Right at its doorsteps, there's a popup market on the theme of sustainability. All these initiatives by the young people will make country lifestyle cool again.



《Jasmineさん》

I visited Obama in December of 2018. It was a truly enriching experience stepping foot into Obama, one of Japan's most beautiful hidden gems. Obama was truly picturesque and tranquil, being surrounded by panoramic views of mountains and sea. The homestay programme was a culturally meaningful and enriching experience for me.

Over the five days, I managed to delve deep into various traditional Japanese artisanal crafts, which include traditional chopsticks making, wagashi making, and fermented fish preparation. The programme also allowed me to meet several of Obama's "Local Heroes", who are the successors keeping the various traditional Japanese artisanal crafts alive. It was interesting to note the level of intricacy and skill that goes into making these artworks, and the underlying spirit of Japanese Culture.



All in all, it was a unique learning experience which taught me more about Japan's history, and I believe that Obama has lots of potential from here on.

福井県越前市ホームステイ報告

高校の部入賞 Clara Ng Xuan Wenさん、
高校の部入賞 Png Jacquelineさん

《Claraさん》

We started off our trip at a small café where we were briefed on our trip. The itinerary having been kept a surprise for us, we were really excited to see what the next few days had in store for us.

With this being the first time I was travelling without my family, it was a obviously a really nerve-wrecking experience for me, but as we sat down in the restaurant just chatting and laughing, sharing with each other about Singapore and Japan, I could just feel myself getting more relaxed and at-home. This was personally a feeling that stayed with me throughout the trip.

Through the 5 days, as I met so many different people from our homestay families to the guides for each of our activities, every single one of them treated us with so much warmth and kindness, and I just felt completely at ease. And to feel at ease in a foreign place, speaking a language I am still in the midst of learning, is a very special feeling in my opinion. Whenever I think back about this trip, what comes to mind first is all the kindness I received along the way.

Our first homestay destination was a small temple where our host Ikeda-san took care of us as the monk-in-charge. He taught us how to make onigiri and even gave us a short tour around the temple, showing us the different types of worship people would usually engage in when they came to the temple to pay their



respects. We also got to visit various places and experience local activities. We went to the Echizen Washi Paper Museum, Takefu Knife Village, a wood shop specialising in making furniture and even tried skiing for the first time.



Overall, for me, this trip has taught me a lot about how amazing connecting with people can be, which in turn made me realise how lucky I was to have had the chance to learn Japanese, which allowed me to gain access to all these insights and ideas that everyone I met through this trip had. I really think this trip has made a huge impact on my life and who I am now, and I hope that I will be able to learn even more about the world through my study of Japanese and its amazing culture.

《Jacquelineさん》

As with the Washi Paper Museum and the Knife Village, the wood shop really made me feel how much effort was placed into preserving these important bits of culture and history here.



Our second homestay destination was another temple that housed the Horii family. What really struck the both of us was how well-behaved the children were, the older children taking care of their youngest sister, and despite their young ages, they showed us visitors the amount of respect and care as one could expect from an adult, which we found extremely impressive.

The next day we went to the Fukui Tougei Kan where we got to make our very own ceramics. Following this, we had lunch at a place that was famous for its oyako-don in Fukui City and did some sightseeing. As we walked back to the car, we actually saw a guy wearing just a t-shirt in the freezing weather. The fact that he was actually fine with wearing just a shirt while we were packed with coats and heat packs and still barely surviving is as shocking as it sounds. For dinner, we went to Okonomiya in Sabae City and had a chance at making our own okonomiyaki and takoyaki. As chaotic as it was, I had fun bringing three kids around for dinner.



On our last night in Japan, there was a party for everyone involved in the homestay. We were treated to a scrumptious feast. There was oden, sushi, yakitori etc. The party lasted from around 6 to 11. The party was an interesting contrast for me because one moment I was playing with the kids from the Horii family while the next I could be talking to Etsuo-san, the head monk of the temple about deep issues like politics.

My favourite part about this homestay was definitely, like last year, the people. Be it those who I met last year or new faces, the friendliness and hospitality of people in Echizen City never fails to amaze me. Ikeda-san waking up at 6 am to send us off, Yukari-san constantly asking us if we were feeling fine and even giving us a heat pack in view that we were going to Tojinbo, it's the little things that make me become increasingly attached to Echizen City.



報告会後のティーレセプション

ホームステイプログラムをご提供くださり、シンガポールと日本の友好関係をまたひとつ確かなものとする機会を与えてくださった鹿児島県、静岡県、栃木県小山市、福井県越前市、福井県小浜市、山口県下関市、兵庫県、そしてご協賛、ご支援くださった全ての皆様に深く感謝申し上げます。