

Each summer, students from the University travel to Japan as part of the UF-Kake Bridge Program, an experience that allows students to immerse themselves in the Japanese culture. Soon after the group returns to the United States, students from Japan travel to Findlay as part of the UF-Kake Ambassador Program to interact with American students on campus.



► Bringing Worlds Together



This first-person account was written by Kake participant Yekaterina "Katia" Kontar '07

On Monday, July 23, 2007, a plane with six tired, happy students and a professor from The University of Findlay landed in Toledo Express Airport after a three-and-a-half week stay hosted by the Kake Educational

Institution in Japan.

The group hosts UF students and faculty each summer. UF returns the favor with the UF-Kake Ambassador Program, when Japanese representatives visit Findlay.

After a semester of Japanese language and culture classes, the UF group flew to the "land of the rising sun." Our first destination was Okayama City, the capital and the biggest city in the Okayama prefecture. We stayed in a dormitory, which includes two small, one-story buildings and a little cafeteria. During the first several days, breakfast consisted of eggs, toast with butter and jam, juice and coffee. Silverware was eventually replaced with chopsticks. One morning, without any warning, we were served a traditional Japanese breakfast of miso soup with tofu, rice and salmon.

I truly enjoyed Japanese cuisine, and that is what I miss the most. I particularly liked rice balls with salmon and pre-sweetened and pre-milked coffee beverages sold in vending machines.

But what all of the UF-Kake participants will miss are the people we met, including Japanese students who either already had visited Findlay or were planning to visit as part of the UF-Kake exchange program.

Our new friends took us to Nobeoka city during the Tanabata Street Festival. The streets were crowded with people in national costumes, playing traditional games and eating a variety of treats right off the grill.

UF graduate Zach Pina '06, who works for Kake, accompanied us to Hiroshima and Miyajima Island. At Hiroshima, the UF group was deeply affected by all of the images and artifacts that survived the atomic bomb explosion. The Miyajima Island, populated with deer freely wandering the city streets, is famous for the Itsukushima shrine that appears to float in the water when the tide is high.

We also visited the garden of the imperial palace and spent the last two days in Okayama meeting Kake officials during a once-a-year garden party. Tokyo was our last destination, and last, but not the least, shopping was unbelievable. Being a part of the UF-Kake exchange program was definitely the biggest adventure in my life.

UF-Kake Exchange Programs

This first-person account was written by UF-Kake host Kim Haddix '07, M'08



In the words of Sophia on Golden Girls, "Picture it, ..." Detroit International Airport, Aug. 21, 2007: There I sit with a hand-made sign waiting for a group of Japanese exchange students whom I had never seen nor spoken to, and I was just as unfamiliar to them. To top it off, I did not speak a word of Japanese! Finally, the chaperone of the group, Dr. Toshiba Akiba, and eight Japanese students found me. Another two students were separated from the group after de-boarding the 24-hour long international flight. After two hours of pleading with airport officials to help me find them, the two guys finally came through customs, and we all were on our way to Findlay.

As a fifth-year intern for the language and culture and communication departments, I had the opportunity to spend three weeks showcasing American culture to students in the UF-Kake Ambassador Program, just as they did for UF students in Japan earlier in the year. This particular exchange was especially interesting, as the visitors' first day in Ohio was the day of the record-breaking August 2007 flood. The group was flooded out

of the Findlay Inn after only one night, evacuated to The Cube for temporary shelter and transported to a hotel in Bowling Green with only what they could carry in their backpacks. The jam-packed schedule of tours and appointments was washed away with the flood waters, but with the guidance of Dr. Hiroaki Kawamura, UF-Kake program director, and a lot of creative improvisation, we created a great experience for our visitors.

Some of the highlights were the seemingly routine activities I take for granted, such as a UF family picnic and ice skating. We played American childhood games, like Who Stole the Cookie From the Cookie Jar and The Name Game, and Japanese childhood games. I co-taught the group to country line dance and took them to a Findlay High School football game. On their last night in Findlay, we made memory boards and enjoyed the ultimate Findlay treat, Dietsch's ice cream.

My experience with the UF-Kake exchange students was life changing. The most awe-inspiring part of the program was watching the students' English skills improve in only three weeks. I was so proud to listen to each of them deliver, in English, a speech they each had written about their experience in America. I fully believe that I benefited from this program as much as the students did ... only wish I could say the same about my Japanese as I can for their English!



Japanese students enjoy a day at Cedar Point; play a game of dodgeball on campus; ride horses at board chair Dr. Richard Beckett's farm; and pose in front of Old Main with UF hosts.