



2023
Exchange Program
Achievement Report

Visited: Hot Springs,
Arkansas, USA
Period: November 6th ~
November 15th

Fuji University
Motoha Ishikawa

1 Introduction

Thank you very much for recommending me as an exchange student. I am also indebted to many people, as well as the Hanamaki City International Association for supporting me during the pre-training session, and my homestay family, the Gentles. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

From Monday, November 6 to Wednesday, November 15, I visited Hot Springs, Arkansas, USA. Hot Springs is a sister city of Hanamaki. Four years ago, Abby Hanks of NPC (National Park College) came to Fuji university from Hot Springs as an exchange student, and this time I did the exchange program.

I have never been to another country and I think my English is not very good. However, I thought that if I could connect and talk with people from other countries, I would be able to broaden my horizons. When I entered Fuji University, I became friends with students from Korea, and I became more interested in countries outside of Japan. They are students who are taking a break from their home country to deepen their studies in Japan. They had more knowledge and experience than me, who had never been out of Japan, and the content of their conversations were very interesting. I was wondering if leaving Japan, even just once, would change the way I see and think about things a little. I was also filled with the expectation that there would be a lot of fun things to do by connecting with people abroad. This report is a description of what I have experienced in Hot Springs. I hope you enjoy reading it.

2 Advance Preparation

Mr. Nakamura responded and sent the NPC an introductory video I created about Hanamaki City. I went to various places in Hanamaki City, and it was also an opportunity for me to get to know Hanamaki well. I also communicated with Mary and Darlene who were my host family by email. I'm not good at English, so I had a hard time coming up with sentences. However, it was also a very good experience for me.

For example, we participated in the 30th sister city anniversary ceremony for our relationship. It was there that I was able to learn about the history of this exchange for the first time. I also met Mary and I was so nervous that I couldn't talk much, but I was able to take a picture with her.



These are souvenirs I took to Hot Springs.
The baggage weight is limited to 23 kg and I
was worried that it would go over, but it was
exactly 23 kg.



At the departure ceremony, I expressed my determination.



3 Travel Schedule and Events

(1) November 6

The travel schedule is as follows.

Depart from Shin-Hanamaki Station around 10:20, Yamabiko 56.

Arrive at Tokyo Station around 13:24.

Depart from Tokyo Station around 13:45, JR Yamanote Line.

Arrive at Hamamatsucho Station around 14:00, Tokyo Morur.

Depart from Hamamatsucho around 14:15.

Arrive at Haneda Airport Terminal 3 station around 14:45.

Depart from Haneda Airport around 18:00, Flight AA176.

Arrive at Dallas Fort Worth International Airport around 14:35.

Depart from Dallas Fort Worth International Airport around 18:30, Flight AA3475.

Arrive at Bill and Hillary Clinton National Airport around 19:44.

The first time I had an in-flight meal, there were several meals. The first meal was beef stew. I knew in advance that I would be asked if I wanted beef or chicken, so I was very excited to see if I would really be asked. I didn't know what was going to come out, so I replied beef. Then, the beef stew came out.

The in-flight food was delicious no matter what we ate (The story of the in-flight meal on the return trip is interesting).

The view from the plane was very beautiful.



When I arrived at the Dallas airport, I went straight to immigration. I was nervous. I hoped that the examiner would be kind towards me. But the male examiner looked like a very scary person. He looked exactly like the police officer in the movie I saw on the plane. When the screening process started, I was asked a lot of questions. I was able to enter the country, but the two Junior High School students who were working with me on the overseas training program did not know the address of the homestay, and as a result, could not enter the country. I had a very hard time dealing with that. Knowing that the other members had finished the screening with almost no questions, why was it just me! I was frightened by this.

This photo shows the Dallas airport where I struggled through immigration.



Next, I moved from Dallas Airport to Bill and Hillary Clinton National Airport. It was a flight of about 1 hour, so the time went quickly. I arrived in Little Rock and took a bus to Hot Springs.



When I arrived at the hotel, my host family was waiting for me. I was so excited. Darlene is on the left and David is on the right. They graciously accepted me. Darlene immediately took care of the meals and confirmed the busy schedule ahead of me. David first asked, "Are you hungry?" This is where my amazing experience begins.

After the introductions, we went for a drive and I saw a deer. To be honest, I was surprised by this because I love animals. In addition, I felt that the environment where animals can live freely in a place rich in nature is wonderful. The view of Hot Springs from the top of the mountain was very beautiful.



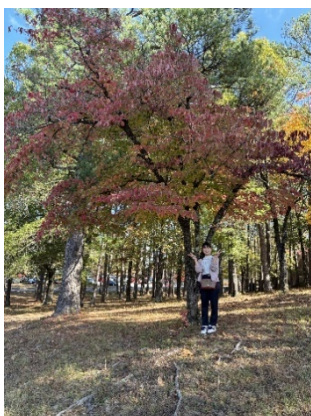
4 Scene at Hot Springs

(1) November 7

On the first day, an acquaintance of David gave me a ride in a Corvette because I like sports cars. When I arrived at the NPC, Darlene and Amber were waiting for me. Amber asked, "Don't you have a nickname?" I replied with "Mocchii". Then, "Rice cake!?" I remember being called that and we started laughing.



The NPC had a Hanamaki tree and a rose. I was happy to be able to feel a connection with Japan.



In NPC, I was interviewed by a local newspaper reporter, and Mariko the interpreter, helped me. At that time, I really wanted to be able to listen and speak on my own. I'm interested in cameras, so I talked to a reporter who had a Nikon camera, but unfortunately our talk couldn't get through very well. In Japan, it is called Nikon, but in the United States, it is pronounced Nakon or Nakon. I thought I couldn't understand what he was saying, but the cause was his American accent.

Afterwards, I gave a presentation at the Garland County Library. I introduced Hanamaki City and Fuji University. In particular, I was impressed by the fact that they laughed at me when I told them about eating Marukan soft-serve ice cream with chopsticks. In the short Japanese language course I did, I was surprised at how good the children were able to do it.



At the end, I handed out souvenirs to those who listened to my presentation. I brought a



variety of sweets such as Nambu rice crackers, Iwate cookies, and other Japanese sweets. Both the children and their parents were happy to receive them. The librarian said that she had eaten Momiji Manju in Osaka and had been impressed, so I'm glad I made her happy.

After the presentation, I was told that there was an ice cream that was similar to Marukan soft ice cream, so Darlene took me that night. Even though (see picture) this is small, I thought that the Marcan soft was big for its size. Everything in America seems bigger than in Japan, and I had a hard time with that.



(2) November 8

On this day, I went to the NPC library. Since I want to become a librarian I learned a lot just by being in the library. I want a library to be a comfortable place for students to use and feel at home with. Also, I felt that this was a library which reflected the student's wants and needs.



The main part of the day was going to a Rotary Club gathering. I introduced myself in front of 50 people. I also prepared a self-introduction that everyone could enjoy. I was happy that they accepted me straight away. I also gave away souvenir sweets. I'm glad I was able to play an important role this day. The stories of its members were very funny, with some jokes being told which made people laugh. But I couldn't understand everything because of their accents. I thought that if I could hear and understand more, I would be able to have a more enjoyable conversation with them. I was very frustrated and it made me want to study English more seriously.



After the Rotary club, I went to a place where we could dig for crystals. The beautiful ones were very small and I had a hard time finding them. I want to make a pendant out of the crystals I found.



In the evening I went to the Arlington Hotel and the Rocket Fizz soda store. Just walking around the city made me feel excited to see new and different things. Arlington Hotel was a hotel with a long history, and I was overwhelmed by the appearance of the the ball room.

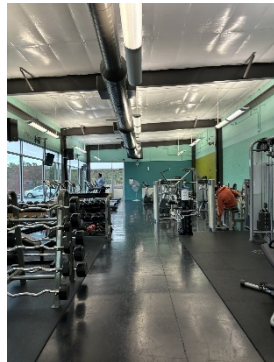
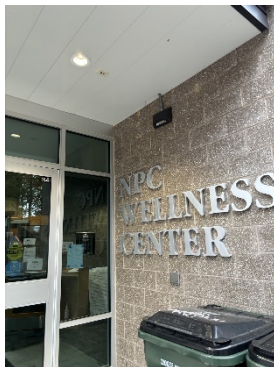


Rocket Fizz soda store had the atmosphere of a candy store in Japan. There were also a lot of Japan sweets on sale. I was talking with the clerk about Japan anime. After all, Japan anime seems to be quite famous overseas.



(3) November 9

In the morning, I took a tour of the NPC campus. The tour guide name was Christian. Even when I misheard his English, he laughed and always said sorry. I also had the opportunity to visit inside of the student dormitory, which was clean and seemed like a cheerful place to live. There was a room for studying, and there was also a game room. I could see that the students were spending their time freely. I thought it would be great if Fuji University's dormitory could be renovated to accommodate NPC students. The facility that left a lasting impression on me was the Wellness Center.



Inside, there was a gymnasium and a training gym. I think it is a place similar to the sports center at Fuji University. The facility was small, but it was much cleaner than Fuji University and there were more training machines. I really liked the expression "Wellness Center" which means trying to live a healthy lifestyle, both mentally and physically. I think it's a

wonderful expression because exercising is healthy for your mind and body.

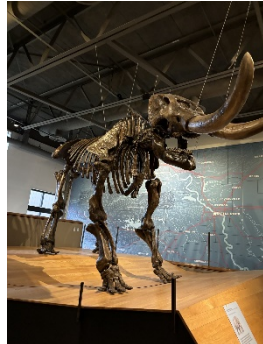
In addition, there were rabbits in the NPC library. I think students would feel refreshed from their schoolwork by seeing them. When I came to Hot Springs I was able to see a lot of animals, and I thought that animals help to refresh us. Would you like to keep some rabbits also in the Fuji University library? I think it would be a good idea for library science students and library assistants to work together to take care of them.





After the NPC campus tour, I went to the Science Museum. Darlene is a science teacher, so she knows everything about this topic. When I entered the facility, a pretend dinosaur greeted me with a squeal. I thought that by going there children would begin to like science. I think that open facilities like this one are very important in education. There are many things that I was moved by, and I thought it was a place that was easy to think and relax. I was also amazed at the machine that flowed electric current when

you touched it.



After that, Sarah and I went to the mall. The old lady in the candy shop asked me how to read ramune in Japanese, which is a lemon-lime flavor in English. At times, I was happy to be able to have the experience to teach others in the U.S. something about Japan because I was taught a lot in my short time in America.

The hardest part for me was listening and talking with Sarah. Her speech was fast and her pronunciation was difficult to understand. One time at McDonald's it was hard to hear the staff but she kindly talked back and forth many times until I understood her. Sarah asked me to play my favorite music in the car, and I chose a solo song by my favorite Korean idol. She seemed to like it and kept coming back to it. I felt like we were able to get along.

I learned the meaning of the word 'blonde moment' from her. Blonde moment is an expression which means that you have done something dumb. At first, I was confused but once I understood it, the conversation became more enjoyable. This is one example that was a good learning experience for me, thanks to Sarah.

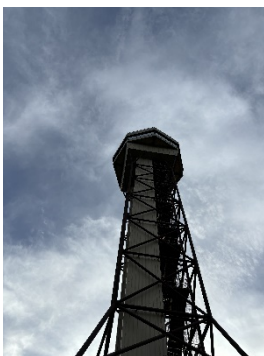


(4) November 10

In the morning, I went and harvested fresh eggs, and I also fed the chickens. There was a green egg, which is rare in Japan. It was colorful and lovely to look at. Male chickens have thick, strong-looking claws. That's how I was taught to distinguish them apart. David cooked scrambled eggs and it was delicious!



After Garlene's class was over, I went hiking. I did my best to climb the steep hill. I was often told, "You're young and you're fine," but Rollo and Truffle (pet dogs) were more energetic than me. The destination was Hot Springs Mountain Tower, and the view of Hot Springs from the tower was awesome. I was very impressed because it was the time of autumn leaves.





Also, I studied some history inside the tower. It seemed that there was a lot of hard work done before Hot Spring facilities became widespread. I felt that it was dissapointing that it caught on fire one time. I also enjoyed learning about Myths verse Reality. Read the descriptions below and try to guess whether it is a simple myth or a story that actually happened in Hot Springs.

MYTH:

Volcanoes under Hot Springs Mountain make the spring water hot.

Reality:

In earlier times, even some scientists thought this was true. Now we know that the water is in fact heated by continuous thermal processes occurring deep within the earth. Rainwater seeps through the earth's crust and forms pools far below. Pressure and the decay of radioactive material heat the pools of water. Because the Ouachita Mountain bedrock is full of cracks and fissures, the hot water finds its way back to the surface so quickly that it doesn't have time to cool.

MYTH:

The water from the area's hot springs reaches and maintains a high enough temperature that the water is naturally sterile.

Reality:

Previously thought to be perfectly sterile when it reaches the earth's surface, the water from the thermal springs is actually not sterile. It is, however, almost free of dissolved sediments because of its rapid rise through the cracks and fissures in and under Hot Springs Mountain. During the Apollo space missions, NASA studied the Hot Springs water and later determined that microscopic life does exist in the water.

MYTH:

In the 1930s, Al Capone and several gangsters used hidden underground tunnels to pass unnoticed between the bathhouses and the Arlington.

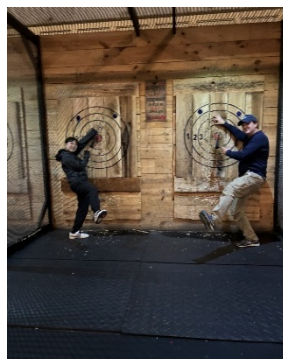
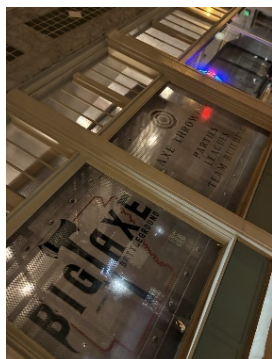
Reality:

No secret tunnels, caves or passageways have ever been found at Arlington or beneath the bathhouses. Perhaps this story is based on the park's underground (but certainly not a secret) creek arch built in 1884. Capone would have found this to be a hot, wet, miserable passageway, since the arch includes Hot Springs Creek, thermal seeps, rats, roaches, and a lack of any kind of walkway. In any case the gangsters would have had no desire to visit an area where the Federal Government held exclusive jurisdiction and which had no attraction for them except hot baths on the city-owned side of the street. Interesting right ?

As you would have expected there were hot springs everywhere. A sign with an explanation said it was 54 degrees. When I touched it I thought it was very hot. The scenery was rich in nature and this was also a reason why it was one of my favorite places.



On this night, I did axe throwing. I had seen it on TV in Japan and I told Darlene that I wanted to give it a try so she took me. At first, I struggled to get a hit. David did his best to guide me. Then our axe hit the mark and I was very happy. I want Fuji University students who like exercise to take on this challenge. The way you use your body is important, and the trick is to relax and aim.



(5) November 11

I was looking forward to watching an American football game. When we went I had a good seat in the front and watched a University of Arkansas game. Because I am interested in studying physical I learned a lot about how physical this game is. When the mascot of the opposing team passed in front of our team, everyone booed. I was surprised because in Japan, there is not much booing. I felt the cultural differences in sports might be idfferent in some ways. I also felt a great deal of love and affection for my home country and our ways at Fuji University. The power of the brass band and cheerleaders at this football game was also amazing. The number of spectators and excitement was unthinkable for a university game in Japan. Fuji University is very active in sports, so I would like to see the same level of participation and excitement.



This was the first time I ate fried pickles. It was located in a drive-thru store called SONIC. It became my favorite food in Hot Springs and I ate it twice. Also, in Japan it is called an American dog, but in the United States it is called a corn dog.





I ate Poke at Night. In Japan, it is pronounced Poke, but in the United States, it seems to be pronounced differently. For the first time in America I used chopsticks to eat rice. I was able to choose my favorite ingredients so it was fun. On the back of the bag of the disposable chopsticks packet, there was a description of how to use the bridge.



(6) November 12

I went to the Bill Clinton Presidential Library and I learned about President Bill Clinton's policies. It was difficult at times, but I tried my best to understand the English.



Here are some of the words left by President Bill Clinton.

"You can trust us to wake up every day remembering the people we saw on the bus trips, the people we saw in the town meetings, the people we touched at the rallies, the people who had never voted before, the people who hadn't voted in 20 years, the people who'd never voted for a Democrat, the people who had given up hope, all of them together saying, we want our future back. And I intend to help give it to you ..."



"Together we can do it. Together we can make the country that we love everything it was meant to be. I still believe in a place called Hope."

I could sympathize with his thoughts on education.

I learned for the first time that he was even putting effort into activities that improved the environment. Among the many policies, I would like to introduce the education policy that I was particularly interested in.

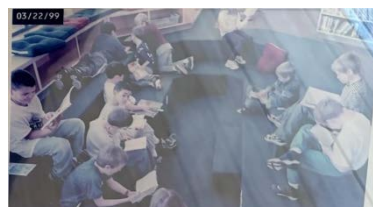
LIFETIME LEARNING

In the Information Age, learning cannot be just for the young. The Clinton administration worked to improve educational opportunities for people at every stage of life. From young children, who do better in grammar school if given a good start in pre-school, and to adults, who do better in the workplace when given a chance to learn new skills. From 1993 to 2000, this President put the resources of the federal government behind lifelong learning programs. His administration doubled the national investment in Head Start, funded after-school and summer school programs, and created the Lifetime Learning Tax Credit, increasing the ability of working Americans to upgrade their knowledge while on the job.



Getting a Good Start

All children can learn. But those who come into the world with a low birth weight have a much harder time. That is why the Clinton administration supported Healthy Start, a program to encourage better prenatal care for low-income mothers through innovations such as mobile ultrasound clinics. Following the pilot program's success, the President made it available to women across America by signing the Children's Health Act of 2000. Even healthy children need to get the best possible start when it comes to learning. In addition to supporting the Healthy Start program and increasing funding for Head Start, President Clinton recruited an army of tutors, including college work-study students, to help elementary school children learn to read. Students from over one thousand colleges answered the call, tutoring millions of children every year as volunteers for America Reads.



HIGH STANDARDS FOR ALL

President Clinton stated that he wanted to "make college as universal in the 21st century as high school is today." In order to accomplish this, America's public schools needed to be able to meet standards for both teaching and for learning, so that all teenagers would be prepared for higher education.



The Clinton administration invested more in public schools while demanding more from them academically. The President's vision for school reform was rooted in the belief that every child has the ability to meet high academic standards. His Goals 2000 legislation required states to create educational standards describing what each student must learn at each stage, as well as tests to see if students were actually meeting these standards. In 1996, 16 states had measurable standards in place. By 2000, that number had grown to 49.

Public School Choice

President Clinton believed that all parents should have a choice among public schools for their children. He believed that choice would force schools to compete, and thus improve. This is why the administration campaigned the creation of public charter schools— schools with more autonomy and flexibility, as well as greater accountability for their results. When the President took office there was only one charter school in America; when he left, there were 2,000.

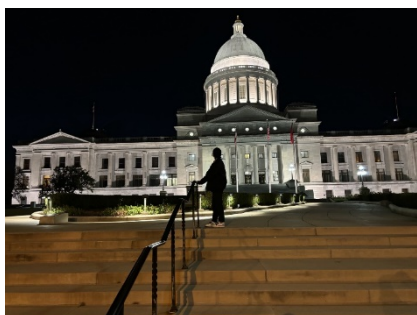
President Bill Clinton was also interested in sports. Sports were a big part of White House life during the Clinton years. Mrs. Clinton headed up the U.S. delegation to the Olympics in Norway, and went skiing with their daughter Chelsea every year. The President was a die hard sports fan, and he loved basketball, ping-pong, and especially golf. He played on courses all over the world, with Tiger Woods, Jack Nicklaus, and other golf legends. Championship teams, including the Chicago Bulls, the Arkansas Razorbacks, and the Women's World Cup team, visited the White House, President Clinton often invited guests to watch televised games in the White House theater. There was only one catch: he always had complete authority over the remote control!



In addition there were also vases sent from Japan to the United States and paintings of Mt. Fuji.



I met a girl from Quinceañera. Quinceañera has a traditional coming-of-age celebration for Latinos. An elegant party is held for the girl's 15th birthday, and it looks like she's going to celebrate. Happy 15th Birthday!



Then I went to the Arkansas State Capital. The Arkansas State Capital has a replica of the White House, but it is 33% smaller.

Yesterday's American football news. I found myself! But I don't think that you can find me?



(7) November 13

In the morning, I went to say goodbye to the person next door. I also gave them some Japanese souvenirs. I had scrambled eggs for breakfast again. Thank you so much for the fresh eggs.



I gave another presentation at the Rotary Club. There were about 20 people. The jokes seemed to be funny, and the kind adults laughed. I also told them a lot about Fuji University and they asked me questions. I was glad that they were interested in what I had to say. The winner of the rock-paper-scissors game was presented with an amulet from the Hanamaki Shrine. The winner was delighted with her prize.



This is Amber and she bought me a muffin. She teaches calculus to her students and her kindness saved me a lot. Thank you.



I gave a thank you gift to President John Hogan. I was so nervous! But he was kind and I was relieved. I received a gift from him to give to Professor Nakamura. I got a lot of gifts which I am very grateful for. I hope that everyone involved will continue to interact with Fuji University in the future.



When I got home, Darlene helped me pack my things. I ended up being over 50 pounds and went through a lot of trial and error to pack my things. Darlene was a genius for packing and traveling. Thank you very much for your help at all times and teaching me so much.

Finally, it was time to say goodbye. I didn't want to go back, but there were university professors and family members waiting for me back in Japan. Darlene also wanted me to get home safely and was truly like my mother. David took me to a lot of places while working and I am very grateful for the time he spent with me. The time we spent talking in the car was a precious time for me to communicate. However, I was full of frustration because I couldn't speak English so well. The fact that there was a horse in Taco Bell and he made a U-turn and came back so I could see it is a fond memory of mine. We even talked about animals that were sadly dead on the sides of roads and interacted well together. All our conversations were enjoyable for me. Thank you very much. I hope to see you again someday. The next time I see you, I want to show people that I've matured and learned more English skills. I'll do my best! Please come to Japan as well !



5 Returning Home

(1) November 14

This is the date and schedule while travelling home.

Arrive at Bill and Hillary Clinton National Airport around 03:30.

Depart from Bill and Hillary Clinton National Airport around 06:00, Flight AA3794.

Arrive at Dallas Fort Worth International Airport around 07:36.

Depart from Dallas Fort Worth International Airport around 10:30, Flight AA61.

In fact, we finally met at 4 o'clock in the morning. I didn't sleep at all, because I was working on my graduation thesis. I was very sleepy.

Here is an interesting introduction to in-flight meals. It's a pasta called couscous. When I heard the announcement about the in-flight meal, I heard the word couscou, but I couldn't understand it. When I looked it up later, it seemed to be a food that originated in Morocco. It was a texture that seemed to be good for digestion. The word couscous is an expression for laughing. I thought it was a food that would make me laugh, but ofcourse I was wrong.



On the plane, I watched a movie that was only in English. I challenged myself and I was able to hear a little better than before leaving Japan. I was also able to predict what would happen next. Although I didn't fully understand the movie I thought it was important to get used to watching movies in English.

(2) November 15

Almost back to Hanamaki.

Arrive at Narita Airport around 15:30.

Depart from Narita Airport Station around 18:15, Flight NEX44.

Arrive at Tokyo Station around 19:18.

Depart from Tokyo Station at 19:40, Hayabusa 111.

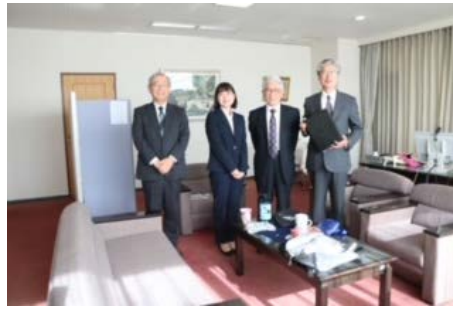
Arrive at Shin-Hanamaki Station around 22:10.

When I arrived at Shin-Hanamaki Station, my car's battery failed and the engine wouldn't start, but finally I was able to make it home.



6 After returning to Japan

I went to report to the president of Fuji University. Then I wrote a report, and attended a debriefing session.



A newspaper reporter from Hot Springs interviewed me.
The article has arrived. Thank you very much.



7 Conclusion

I would like to express my sincere gratitude for this valuable experience. The thing that impressed me the most when I went to Hot Springs was the kindness of the people. I often apologized because I couldn't speak English, but the people at Hot Springs said, "English is difficult, I'm sorry I can't speak Japanese." I was saved by their kindness. However, I was embarrassed that I could not speak English, which is a universal language. I was also impressed by how they always opened shop and car doors for one another. I also admired the

gentlemanly gestures that does not exist in our culture. I am currently practicing and showing this gentle behavior towards others.

In addition, when I met a Korean at a donut shop in Hot Springs, she thanked me in Japanese. Even at the Poke shop, the Chinese said "delicious" in Japanese. I thought it would be more fun if we all could communicate in various languages. I regret that if I could have spoken in Korean or Chinese at that time, the other person would have been impressed by it. I had a lot of enjoyable experiences where I could get to learn and understand English, and many other frustrating experiences when I couldn't communicate. This experience will be my driving force in the future.

I accepted this opportunity because building relationships is important, and I want to continue to cherish the connections I have with everyone I met. Also, from now on, as a graduate student studying Junior High school teaching, I would like to pass on this wonderful experience to students who will lead the future. I have set myself the goal of increasing the number of children who can possibly travel and see the world more. I will be leaving Hanamaki City this year and I would like to continue to cherish such connections and would be happy to be involved in some way in the special connection between Hot Springs and Hanamaki City, NPC, and Fuji University. I would like to continue to build a better relationship with the city of Hot Springs and NPC somehow in the future.

I would like to express my gratitude to all of you. Thank you!