

Sara Beinert

I am proud to have been the only non-JET serving on the JETAANY board for the last two years, lending what I think is an important 'outsider' perspective. I was asked to join because of my background in fundraising and nonprofit management. I have been doing fundraising professionally for 12 years, particularly with individuals. (Currently, I serve as the Senior Major Gifts and Planned Giving Officer at the Center for Constitutional Rights, a nonprofit social justice and civil rights law firm). As you've probably heard, the JET Program has been under close examination from the Japanese government, with budget reductions likely in the next few years. In that case it will be imperative that JET begin fundraising in earnest if we are to sustain our current level of programming, and my skills will be especially useful. As a newly-created Board, we had to establish many policies and procedures and tease out what roles and responsibilities fell with the Board and with the Officers; unglamorous work, but I'd like to think that my knowledge from working with nonprofit boards professionally, as well the other boards I've served on, provided some helpful guidance.

I've been pleased to get to know many of you through a number of the JET events I've attended. Though I don't have direct Japan experience, I've traveled quite a bit, particularly in Central Europe, and I have a strong commitment to the cultural exchange of living abroad, which was a completely life-changing experience for me. Heading off to Japan required a ton of courage and enthusiasm on the part of each of you and I am consistently inspired by your commitment.

Jim Gannon:

When I departed to take up a JET post in Ehime Prefecture in the summer of 1992, I expected to spend a year learning about a new country, then move on to the rest of my life. However, I quickly became enchanted by my rural surroundings and the people around me. One year became three, and the rest of my career has ended up focusing on strengthening US-Japan relations.

In 2001, influenced by my experiences on JET, I joined the Japan Center for International Exchange (JCIE/USA), a New York-based nonprofit organization, to become its executive director. JCIE/USA is the American affiliate of one of Japan's leading international affairs organizations, and it distinguishes itself as one of the country's very few think tanks that is truly independent of government and business control. In this post, my main mission is to strengthen the underpinnings of US-Japan relations, the diverse nongovernmental linkages between the two societies that form the foundations for bilateral relations and which set the parameters for government-to-government dealings.

For example, to strengthen these underpinnings, JCIE regularly brings together American and Japanese legislators so they can speak freely to each other off the record, building the mutual understanding that proves invaluable when relations between the two countries are tested by sudden crises. In addition to political leaders, JCIE's work focuses on the nonprofit sector, helping to build ties between the nonprofit sectors in Japan and the United States and promoting philanthropic giving from one country to the other. Also, much of my work involves policy studies, including arranging policy discussions between US and Japanese leaders about how to strengthen various types of exchange, from grassroots exchange and student exchange to high-level policy dialogues.

This work has reinforced my sense that JET Program plays a uniquely important role in strengthening US-Japan relations. This is why I recently became involved with Steven Horowitz, Megan Miller, Shree Kurlekar, and other JETAA-NY members to raise awareness about the move to cut back on the JET program and to attempt to highlight its critical, but often overlooked, contributions. This has included a number of dealings with the media as well as with senior Japanese politicians, some of whom I was fortunate enough to have worked with before through JCIE's political exchanges.

We have had some initial success with the effort to demonstrate the value of the JET Program, but I remain convinced that this needs to be a continuing process and would like to work more intensively with fellow JET alumni on this. Moreover, during the last few months working with my JETAA colleagues, I have become increasingly convinced that the time is ripe for the further institutionalization and strengthening of JETAA-NY, building on the impressive steps taken in recent years. I hope my experiences running one of the major US-Japan nonprofit organizations will enable me to offer useful advice to JETAA-NY executive committee on both the technical and long-term strategic issues involved in doing this.

Cindy Hoffman

I would like to be considered for a seat on the JET Alumni Association of New York (JETAANY) Board of Directors. I have been an active member of JETAANY for the past 10 years and have helped with several events including JET interviews, the Pre-Departure Conference, the Career Fair and social events including happy hours and the softball tournament. Since returning from Japan, I have been active in the Japanese community outside of JET including volunteering with the Consulate to speak to students and also coordinating a summer visit of Japanese students to New York for the Japan Society. As a former teacher of Japanese History and currently a world history teacher in New York City, I feel I would be a beneficial member of the Board as JETAANY is concerned with promoting the JET Programme and serving the Japanese-American community in New York. I have taken students to Japan on study tours and have fostered both students and colleagues to participate in educational exchange programs with Japan. Several of my former students are currently studying in Japan and have already informed me that they will be applying for the JET Programme. A colleague I met in Korea just finished two years of teaching at a school in Fukuoka.

Thank you for taking the time to review my qualifications for the JETAANY Board of Directors.

Nancy Ikehara:

ABOUT ME

In 1994 I left my hometown Los Angeles as a JET Programme participant bound for the City of Yokohama. There, I was assigned to the Yokohama Association for International Communications and Exchanges, an organization whose mission is to support foreign residents living in Japan and promote grass-roots internationalization or international awareness. In the role as CIR I served as editor for the Yokohama Echo, an English-language city-backed newsletter that provides news on city events, local government notices as well as useful daily living info. I also supported several programs intended to promote good will and cultural exchanges between Yokohama and its eight sister cities.

In addition to my regular job duties I served in various support and leadership positions on a regional and national level. From '95 - '96 I was a Prefectural Advisor providing counseling and language support to Yokohama JETs, a group consisting of over 50 individuals. I was also elected by my colleagues as co-head for the Kanto Block ('96 - '97). In this capacity I worked closely with CLAIR and regional reps to disseminate info amongst CIRs via a monthly newsletter, organize social events and set up a CIR resources and reference library.

Following JET I continued on in Japan, holding various public relations positions for two Tokyo-based multinationals, Tosoh Corporation ('97 to '01) and Fujitsu Limited ('01 - '06). In 2006, after a 12-year stint in Japan, I returned to the US and set roots in New York City. Since then I've been working as public relations specialist for Toyo Ink International Corp., the regional HQ and holding company for parent Toyo Ink Mfg. Co., Ltd. of Japan.

MY GOAL

At a time when the Japanese government is becoming increasingly tight with spending and the JET Program itself is coming under greater scrutiny, I believe it is essential for JETAANY to improve our public profile and garner greater exposure towards our cause (TBD by board). Utilizing existing media and social networks as well as my experience in public relations, my goal is to help develop and execute a communications plan that allows JETAANY to get key messages out to a wider audience and increase our visibility.

MY QUALIFICATIONS

During my decade-plus career as a communications professional for Tokyo-based multinationals I've been responsible for creating a PR strategy involving issues such as media relations, corporate and web communications, B2B marketing and branding. In addition I bring a vast amount of knowledge and experience in organizing promotional events (i.e. trade shows, open houses) and building media relations.

As indicated above I bring leadership qualities and years of commitment in supporting my fellow JET colleagues -- before, during and after JET -- in the acclimation and re-acclimation process.

Since 1997 I've been an active participant in JETAA, both in Tokyo and New York, as a way to stay connected with JET alums and to the development of the JET Programme. Since my relocation to NY in 2006 I've attended many JETAANY events and meetings as well as participated as a speaker at a number of career forums and pre-departure orientations. Thus I am familiar with the programs and inner workings of JETAANY.

I am highly proficient in the Japanese language (S/R/W), a skill set that I believe is essential in promoting greater understanding of JET Programme and its contributions to US-Japan relations. Throughout my professional career, I've also acted as a communications liaison between Japanese enterprise and global business partners.

Owen Rosa

(CIR, Hanamaki City, Iwate, 1999-2002)

I would like to apply to be a member of the JETAANY Board of Directors because I believe my work on the JET program and other experiences in Japan and New York can contribute to the development of JETAANY. I have experienced the post-JET Program challenges of creating a career that utilizes the bi-cultural and language skills developed on JET and feel that I have reached a point in my career and life that I can give back to the program that helped me achieve the most important personal and career goals in my life. I understand how crucial it is for the JET program to continue and for people to increase their awareness of Japan, so I would like to support JETAANY efforts to promote JET and support returning JETs in the New York area.

I first went to Japan at the age of 16 for one-year as an AFS exchange student on a Tokyo Metropolitan Government scholarship program for New York City high school students and then again in my junior year of college I attended Waseda University for one more year. During this period, I lived with the same host-family in Tokyo and have developed a relationship with them that mirrors my own family and through their support I have continued my interest in Japan for over 18 years. After graduating from Washington University in St. Louis with a B.A. in East Asian Studies I decided to join JET as a CIR for Hanamaki City Hall, Iwate Prefecture to further develop my language skills and create friendships with Japanese that I felt would not be possible working in Tokyo for a foreign company. Originally, I only planned to stay on JET for one or two years, but stayed for all three years because of my dedication to karate which I started while participating on JET. After completing JET, I actually remained in Iwate for three more years to live in my karate school as a live-in-student where competed in tournaments and became an instructor.

Since returning from Japan I created a career in business development by working with small and medium-size Japanese companies in the beauty and fashion industries in New York City. During this period I was introduced to a new side of Japan, the artistic and creative world, a part of Japanese society that I found more open and individualistic than any other part. Unfortunately, the financial crisis forced these companies to withdraw from the US market, which then lead me to decide to strengthen my business skills by getting a MBA and riding out the financial storm. While studying for my MBA at the University of Rochester I worked with a number of professional Japanese bankers and government officials which again introduced me to a new side of Japan.

Currently, I am working for the Sojitz Corporation of America as a Senior Business Development Associate for new project development and the first non-Japanese employee to work for the company's corporate planning division. I feel I have worked my whole life to reach this point in my career and I believe my experiences and knowledge of Japan can contribute and bring value to JETAANY and the JET community. Although I have had few opportunities to participate in JETAANY events, I did attend the reading of *Sake with Haiku Geisha* where I realized how active JET alums are in NYC and that I would like to take this opportunity to have a more active role in the community. Thank you for reading my statement of interest and giving me the opportunity to apply for this position.