

My experience at the National Japan Bowl was something I will never forget. It was truly amazing, and the support from everyone was incredible. I am so happy and grateful that I got the opportunity to compete, and it was very fun watching teams from all over the United States and further.

When we first walked into the competition room, I was very nervous. There were so many teams, staff, and observers. As the questions started, I knew they wouldn't be a walk in the park. Luckily, the sponsors and volunteers were very kind and helped my teammate and I get used to the atmosphere. Although stressful, the competition was extremely fun! We were able to have a great time because of the amazing efforts from the Japan-America Society of Washington DC staff as well as Ms. Kaoru from the Japan-America Society of Oregon.

After the competition, we were given the opportunity to do a very enriching speech practice. We went to another room in the college, and got to speak with other competitors. The speech practice was very fun, and it allowed me to expand my speaking skills greatly. After the speaking practice, I felt like I had improved my Japanese immensely.

On the second day of the competition, we had another test, a speaking round, and the final round. Unfortunately, our team did not place in the top 3, but I am still very grateful that we got the chance to compete. Even if we didn't win, I learned so much about the Japanese language and culture! Talking with various people from different schools, countries, and backgrounds, I was able to expand my worldview and knowledge of Japan.

During the competition, we received much encouragement from the volunteers and sponsors. I am very thankful for the sponsors and volunteers who were there to support and help us! By continually cheering us on, and helping us when we were nervous, the volunteers, staff, and supporters, made our trip very fun!

After the National Japan Bowl ended, we were afforded the opportunity to go to the Washington DC Sakura Matsuri. The matsuri was fantastic! There were many Japanese cultural items and events, which I found very interesting and cool. One of the booths at the Sakura Matsuri was teaching patrons about *karuta*. My teammate and I went to that booth, and learned a lot about the fun card game!

I am forever grateful that I got the opportunity to participate in the National Japan Bowl. Since my first year of high school, I had wanted to compete in the National Japan Bowl, so I am extremely happy that I was able to. Without the help of the Japan America Society of Oregon, I would not have been able to live my dream. I am extremely appreciative of JASO and Kaoru Miyanaga for their undying support and assistance.

Best Regards,

Lily Fachner

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