



December 14, 2015

Dear District 6290 Rotary Club,

Happy holidays from Tokyo, Japan! My name is Sarah Sanderson and I am a Rotary Peace Fellow from the Holland, Michigan Rotary Club in District 6290. I'm writing to introduce myself and share how the experience has gone so far in the hopes that you'll follow along with me. Each year, Rotary International chooses one hundred candidates from a worldwide selection process to serve as Peace Fellows. Fifty Fellows study at a peace and conflict professional development program in Chulalongkorn, Thailand, and the other fifty study at one of Rotary's Peace Centers in England, Australia, North Carolina, Sweden and Japan. Peace Fellowships cover tuition and fees, room and board, round-trip transportation, and all internship and field-study expenses. The goal of the Peace Fellowship program is to train future leaders for careers in peace building.

I was assigned to study at the Rotary Peace Center at International Christian University in Tokyo, Japan, and arrived in early August to start a month of intensive language and culture training. For four weeks we studied Japanese for eight hours a day and had several field trips to learn about Japanese culture such as calligraphy, tea ceremony, flower arranging, drumming and history. During this time, we also met our local Rotary host counselors. My local host Rotarian is a Buddhist priest who is also very active in his club and community. He kindly helped me with all of the logistics of moving to a new country and continues to take care of my husband and me in a variety of ways.

Classes began in early September and life suddenly became extremely busy. During my first semester at ICU I was involved in many activities. I took three graduate classes: Ideas on Peace, Peace and Conflict I and Research Methods and Design along with a Japanese class that met three times a week. I also began teaching four English classes at a nearby university to experience the cultural differences of being an instructor in Japan. In addition, I've been working as a Virtual Student Foreign Service intern for the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. This involves projects to improve marketing and storytelling for State Department international exchange programs and a weekly Skype call to Washington, D.C. Recently, because of this internship, my husband, Sean, and I were invited to attend a reception at the embassy to meet and talk with Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs, Ms. Evan Ryan.

In my free time, I've been volunteering with a local organization called "Glocal" (Global + Local) that connects international students to community needs. I've participated in weekly book reading events for children at a local library as well as attended some short trips to the Japanese countryside to get to know some of the members of the group. I've also been enjoying getting to know all of the other Peace Fellows from both Class XIII and XIV; it's a privilege to study and learn with colleagues from all over the world and with a wealth and variety of experiences. Sean and I also spend a lot of time at local and district Rotary events, banquets, barbecues and speaking engagements. Sean is staying busy learning Japanese, playing sports with local clubs and supporting me during the first

semester. He just received his work visa last week and is currently looking for an English teaching job.

The winter term has just started this week and we are looking forward to another challenging and interesting semester. This term I will be narrowing down my research focus and determining where I will serve during my Applied Field Experience (AFE) next summer. I was also recently selected as one of the Global Peace Index Ambassadors in the new program offered by the Institute for Economics and Peace, a global think tank dedicated to shifting the world's focus to peace as a positive, achievable, and tangible measure of human well-being and progress. Training begins January 2016 and I am excited not only to learn about how the GPI is determined but also to share it with others.

I am having an incredible time and learning a lot so far as a Rotary Peace Fellow and the experience has only just begun. If you're interested in daily life at the Rotary Peace Center at ICU feel free to check out my blog at: sarahsandersonwanderlust.blogspot.com and don't hesitate to send me an email. If your club has the interest and technology for online interaction, it would be great to set up a videoconference during a weekly meeting. I am so grateful to be a recipient of this fellowship and am eager to pay it forward and share it in any way that I can. Thank you for your generosity in donating to the Rotary Foundation to make fellowships like this possible. Though we won't be home for the holidays, it makes it easier to celebrate in Tokyo knowing how many friends, family and Rotarians we have supporting us from Michigan and Canada. Wishing you love and peace this holiday season.

Sarah and Sean



Class XIV ICU Rotary Peace Fellows

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Meeting with Asst. Sec. of State, Ms. Ryan



Enjoying a sushi class during Fall Break



Traditional dress during Japanese class



Volunteering by reading/acting at the library