

Hello, Tawaramoto!

Hello, Tawaramoto! My name is Zaria Kelly and I am from Orlando, Florida, USA. My hobbies and interests include crochet and knitting and travel! I have been crocheting and knitting for a few years, but I mostly do it for relaxation purposes. The repeated movements and stitches are a great way to turn off my brain while giving me a task to focus on and keep busy. I consider it to be a welcome break when life can become busy or overwhelming. Additionally, I love traveling and try whenever I can! Traveling has allowed me to change my entire worldview as I have met people and tried things that I didn't even know existed. Having the chance to tap into different cultures and learn more about the world around me has made me so eager to take on new challenges and adventures, such as moving across the world to Japan to become an ALT!

My love for traveling started in college. Education has always been central in my life. As a first-generation college student, I relied on education to take me to places no one in my family had reached before. It has granted me opportunities to travel to three countries, including Japan. Japan was the first country I visited overseas when I studied abroad, learning about its culture, history, and linguistic intricacies—especially the phonetics and syntax of the Japanese language. During that time, I developed deep admiration for the way cultural customs and history are preserved and expressed through the language. The experience was personally and academically transformative, and I have hoped to return since the day I left.

I decided to participate in the JET Program to grow as an educator while contributing meaningfully to cultural exchange at the community level. While the experience of studying abroad in Japan gave me valuable insight into Japanese culture, I realized that experiencing Japan as a student is very different from living and working there as an educator and public servant. Through JET, I'm excited to support English education while also representing my home culture thoughtfully and respectfully. I want to build relationships with the students, teachers, and the

local community, and to continue learning about Japan in a more grounded, long-term way. JET felt like a unique opportunity to contribute, not just observe.

I look forward to working with the JTE and students at my schools, as well as my other colleagues with the Board of Education. From what research I have done so far, I am aware that Tawaramoto has a rich history and culture that will be lots of fun to explore as well. I am excited to learn more about the historical significance of the town of Tawaramoto as I live there and experience/participate in the local traditions and specialties you all have to offer!