

## Jessica Record

- PNWJETAA President (2024-2026)
- PNWJETAA Co-President (2023-2024)
- JET35 Reunion Planning & Event Support (2022)
- JET Program Coordinator, Seattle (2021-2023)
- PNWJETAA Vice President (2021-2022)
- PNWJETAA Transitions (Career Day) Coordinator (2017-2023)
- JET Program, Sanda City, ALT (2015-2016)



The JET Program is in trouble. We aren't providing support nor effectively representing our alumni who had negative experiences on JET, our chapter boards are burned out, and new JETs are being sent unprepared while anti-foreign sentiment is growing in Japan. If the JET Program is to continue to be a strong program for its participants and for Japan, we must remember the core mission of JET is grassroots mutual understanding, this starts with the alumni.

Ten years ago, I returned from JET, changed. Like many others, my experience changed how I act and speak in my daily life and at work, and I have been an active member of the alumni community since my return. I have planned and ran multiple events, including supporting JET35, and I've participated in every aspect of recruiting for JET, including reviewing applications and interviewing future candidates. But my time during the JET program also presented me with uncertainty, and while I was on JET, I could not have imagined my life would be centered on this community like it is now. In fact, there were times where I was not sure if I would complete JET and took advantage of the JET counseling to get me through. I even hesitated to join JETAA at first because a few people told me my "only" one year was a waste and that the hardships I faced were not that big of a deal.

I know many others who have been on JET who described their experience as a nightmare. As Coordinator, I had many JETs reach out asking for help when their COs or PAs couldn't assist. As President, I've had JETs inform me that they returned home because they had no support. I believe PNWJETAA is becoming a more welcoming space for those who had difficult times because we have been open to people who need to heal. I want the rest of the country chapters to help *all* of our JETs heal too. We need better networks and resources for

returning JETs. This starts within our established alumni community where we need to have more mutual understanding with each other.

At the most recent national convention, I shared that our chapter was burned out but trying, and multiple people told me that they appreciated my honesty because they felt that way too. Why are we not being honest with each other about how our chapters really are? And for those chapters that are doing great, the tired and worn-down chapters need support. Likewise, some chapters have great relations with their consulates while other JETAA chapters are not even asked to speak at JET-related events. We need empathy and understanding in order to support each other and therefore, we need more communication together.

Being an alumni also means being a senpai. Many of the JET alumni before us have done an amazing job of supporting us and creating networks across chapters. However, newer JETs are not being prepared like they used to. I know this firsthand as a former Coordinator and one who helps prepare our Seattle JETs depart. Even though the amount of prep needed is different due to the internet, resources are still needed. This prep work should not be the burden of chapters. Rather, we should advocate together to our consulates about the importance of preparation. Not only will this give the new JETs better opportunities for their new lives, but if we send prepared JETs, better communication with Japanese communities on how foreigners are not the enemy would be a natural result. And then once those JETs become alumni, they will want to join our communities, in turn better preparing the next group of JETs, and thus the cycle of JETAA will continue.

Overall, I have three objectives if elected as Country Rep. First, my main focus would be to explore a post-JET support network for returning JETs that focuses on those who experienced difficult situations. Second, I want to help increase communication between chapter leaders by, for example, continuing to support CR Jennifer's current initiative. Third, I want to seek ways to strengthen relationships with consulates to explore pre-departure methods across consulates and chapters to find holes in preparation and how to fill them.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and I hope I have the honor to represent you with the other Country Representatives in 2026–2027.