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**Gresham-Ebetsu Sister City Associatio**n

**Student Eligibility for Exchange to Ebetsu, Japan**

The purpose of this student exchange program with our Sister City of Ebetsu, Japan is to provide students with a unique opportunity to learn about Japanese culture. Selected students will travel to Ebetsu and live with a Japanese family while attending school and other activities with their host family.

**Benefits of Participating in a Student Exchange**

* Qualifying to serve as a Student Ambassador for the City of Gresham and the United States.
* Learning or experiencing a language and culture through immersion.
* Making lifelong friends with people from another country.
* Building memories that will last a lifetime.

**Criteria for Selection**

* Complete the entire application and all forms on the application check list.
* Be a legal citizen of the United States.
* Be a full-time student in good standing, preferably a sophomore or junior, in Gresham or Reynolds High School and be enrolled in a Japanese language class.
* Be willing to sign a publicity release statement.
* Have, or be able to get, a passport and be available to travel during the time specified: approximately late June through late July. The exact dates will be decided after the selections are made.
* Be able to represent the Gresham area and the United States in a respectful manner proper for foreign understanding.
* Have completed at least two years of studying Japanese. You will be traveling to Ebetsu and attending school a duration of four weeks. Your language skills will improve immensely while away. Although you do not need to know enough to effectively participate in Ebetsu’s school lessons, you will need to be able to communicate sufficiently with your host family and Japanese locals.

**Funding**

* Students must be able to pay for airfare to Japan approximately two months before departure. The GESCA may contribute toward the airfare of each student selected. Students receiving contributions from GESCA must be members in good standing. The remainder of the airfare and all personal costs will be paid by the student. **GESCA is a 501c(3) non-profit and can assist with fund raising efforts.**
* Students will need to have funds available for extracurricular activities that host families may or may not pay for (i.e. movies, sporting events, etc.). Students will also need to have spending money for souvenirs they wish to purchase. Basic needs will be supplied by the host family. If you have any questions on how much money is needed, please ask.
* The GESCA and the City of Ebetsu will arrange for host families for the duration the students are in Ebetsu.

**What if I am not sure about going on an exchange?**

This is something that every student has to think about carefully. You will be traveling with other local students, so if you are lonely you will have someone close by that you can talk to, however, there is no guarantee that you will be placed in the same schools as the other students going. It can be a great culture shock to travel to a new country. Talk it over with your parents and/or GESCA members to make sure that you are making the correct decision. If you feel that this is not right for you but still would like to have some cultural immersion, you can always apply to host a student.

**Rules While Abroad**

* Follow the local laws.
* Follow all cultural customs to the best of your ability.
* Follow the host family’s rules.
* Act as if you are a child in the home you are visiting and not a guest (help with chores).
* No illegal drug use or alcohol consumption (even if they feel it is culturally acceptable).
* Do not drive any motorized vehicle.
* No inappropriate conduct (be aware of what is considered inappropriate in Japan).

If you are unable to follow the rules while away and are asked to leave and return home, all airline fees and expenses will be the student and family's responsibility, not that of Gresham-Ebetsu Sister City Association.

**What should you do if you are accepted in the program?**

* Passport: obtain a passport as soon as you are accepted. Passports usually take 4-6 weeks to process.
* Health Insurance: all students must have health insurance which is effective for medical costs overseas. In the event that emergency medical care is required, your host family shall have limited authorization for emergency medical care.
* Obtain Immunization Documentation: make sure that you check with local health departments to determine whether you have the required immunization to travel abroad.
* Medical and Dental Checkup: it is always a good idea to have a medical and dental checkup before traveling abroad. It is good to make sure that you can have any necessary treatment for any dental or medical conditions handled before leaving. It is also good to have a record of your medical history to have with you in case of emergencies.

**Should I bring any gifts?**

It is culturally acceptable to bring gifts to your host family. Gifts do not need to be expensive or elaborate, but something that shows appreciation of the family for allowing you to stay with them. Popular gifts include favorite candies for children, postcards and other things that are distinctly North American or from the Northwest.

**What do I need to bring with me?**

* Clothing that is culturally acceptable. Please check with your language teacher to make sure you are taking clothes that will be acceptable.
* Passport and several photocopies.
* Health insurance card or policy number with contact information.
* Flight information.
* Emergency contact information and international calling card in case of emergency.
* Immunization records (if needed).
* Copies of prescriptions for medications, eyeglasses, and contact lenses (if needed).
* An extra pair of glasses and extra contact lens solution (if needed).
* Sufficient toiletries (it may be difficult to locate some items in Japan that you are used to in the United States).
* School supplies for the month you are away (paper, pens, pencils and a bag to carry them to school in).

**Can you bring electronics?**

Yes, you can bring your MP3 player, laptop, hairdryer, etc., but do make sure that you obtain the proper adapter before leaving to make sure that you will be able to charge without harming your devices. If you are going to bring your cell phone, make sure that you check with your carrier to make sure that it will be supported overseas and to check fees.

**What things do you need to know about Japan?**

* + How to communicate in a way that is not offensive.
  + How men and women usually dress and what type of clothes, jewelry and makeup is appropriate.
  + What an average day is like in Japan, when meals are eaten, food that is eaten, sleeping arrangements, etc.
  + What is considered taboo.
  + What religions are common and what not to do to insult a religion.
  + What the common leisure activities are and things that you would like to try while in Japan.
  + Learn the basics of local culture and local government so that you can know something about the people you will be staying with.

**Host Family**

Families around the world have much in common with local families. They have rules that need to be followed and chores that need to be done. Make sure that you show your host family the same respect that you would show your own family. You might experience some things that are different from the way that your family may do things, however, this is part of the learning process with the exchange. Stay open minded about how to do things. You may wish to share with your host family how things are done in your home, but ultimately things should be done the way the host family likes.

Make sure that if you have questions on what you should be doing that you ask. Things you might want to talk to your host family about upon arriving: what rules you are expected to follow, what chores they would like you to do, how meals work as well as what you are expected to do if you get hungry between meals (can you help yourself to food or do you need to ask for something to be prepared for you). Just remember that every student will have different experiences and should stay open minded and discuss any problem when they arise and not wait until there is a major problem.

**Feedback**

Within three months of your return, you should be prepared to:

* Write a brief summary of your exchange and should be willing to share your experience with the Gresham Ebetsu Sister City board.
* Present your experiences to the Gresham City Council and/or the community with Gresham Ebetsu Sister City Association sponsorship.
* Be available to speak at local schools.
* Be available to be interviewed by the local media.

**For Further Information Contact**:

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**Submission Deadline: End of February**

Do not delay in completing and returning your paperwork! Talk to your parents and make sure that you are prepared for being a Student Ambassador. We ask that once you are accepted into the program that you do not drop out unless you experience circumstances which prevent you from going. Remember that participation is not guaranteed upon applying and is a privilege, not a right. Once accepted into the program, you will be expected to maintain good grades and not get into any legal trouble or your application may be revoked.