

Mark Frey, Kumamoto, 2002-2006
JETAA USA Country Representative Platform
“Building Community: The Strength of our JETAA Network”

I was sitting in the ballroom at the JET30 Reunion in Washington, DC. Around the table were fellow Kumamoto JETs. Around us were 200 fellow JET alumni from all over the country and the world. At that moment I felt the immense power of our JET community all around me. If I am fortunate enough to earn your support to serve as your Country Representative (CR) for another term, I pledge to continue to strive to help *all* of our alumni feel the great power of our community that we felt in that room at JET30.

To honor this pledge, I will draw on the many different ways I have experienced the power of our community in action over the years. By any measure, it is a watershed time for JETAA and the JET Program. As a member of the planning committee that produced the [JET30 Reunion](#), I had a “front row seat” to this amazing reunion of JET alumni and friends from across the country and around the world -- including so many of you -- all gathered to celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the JET Program.

It was in front of those 200 alumni at JET30 that I announced the launch of the [KenJETkai Program](#), a global initiative to reconnect JET alumni with their home prefectures. I realized we needed this program in 2015, when I was selected by CLAIR to return to my beloved home prefecture of Kumamoto on the [JET Programme Satogaeri Project](#), 10 years after finishing JET. I wondered if we could give *all* alumni around the globe a meaningful “*satogaeri*” experience. I developed the KenJETkai Program with CLAIR and JETAAi, in response.

I’m happy to say that the KenJETkai Program is off to a successful start, having already reconnected over 3,800 alumni around the world with their home prefectures -- [38 prefectures](#) and counting. (Don’t see your prefecture group [listed](#)? Start it [here](#) today!) As your CR, I hope to continue working with CLAIR and JETAAi to connect each KenJETkai group with their Prefectural Office to increase local exchange.

I witnessed the power of our community in my “CR visits” to various chapters, including PNWJETAA, JETAASC, RMJETAA, JETAADC, and JETAANY. In talking with the officers and alumni of these chapters about their achievements, I’ve seen the great impact JETAA is making across the country. When I hear about the many obstacles chapters face, I try to share the advice and best practices that I’ve learned from other chapters, showing that we aren’t alone.

I also witnessed the power of our community in action at our [2018 National Conference](#), where I saw delegate after delegate share [valuable insights and experiences](#) that our chapters could use to serve their alumni and communities better. I was proud of my role in working with my fellow CRs Monica and Faye in planning and delivering what I hope was a meaningful conference for everyone.

I hope to use this experience to work with all of you to plan another fantastic NatCon in 2019 that helps us strengthen our local chapters and global network even further! In particular, I hope we can continue to work together to address our common, ongoing challenges, including:

- How do we best manage chapter operations?
- How do we deal with officer burnout and turnover?
- How do we engage our alumni and keep them active?
- How do we bridge geographical divides?
- How do we engage the growing number of alumni who prefer to interact virtually?
- How do we help our alumni find quality jobs and develop their careers?
- How do we develop our own professional and leadership skills?

In working with you to overcome these challenges, I will draw upon my 12 years of passionate involvement as a leader in JETAA. This includes the amazing past two years as your Country Representative, three years as [President of JETAANC](#), seven years as Vice President and [Communications Director](#) of JETAANC, and my current role on the Board of Directors of our new national JET alumni organization, [USJETAA](#). Over the years, I have developed a wide network of close friendships with officers across the country, as well as the CRs, [JETAA International](#) officers, [JETAA USA Advisory Board](#), CLAIR New York and Tokyo, Consulate General of Japan in San Francisco, Embassy of Japan, AJET officers, Steven Horowitz of [JETwit.com](#), and Bahia, Paige, and Laurel at [USJETAA](#).

I will also draw on my experience in the [Working Group](#) that established the groundwork for USJETAA. I will draw from the relationships I developed with the Country Representatives of 11 countries through my participation in the [JET Programme Satogaeri Project](#). I have formed an especially good relationship with Dustin Reimer and Greg Joughin, Country Representatives of JETAA Canada, as well as Canadian chapter leaders through my participation in the 2017 and 2018 JETAA Canada National Conferences. I will also draw upon my 19 years of professional experience, including 4 years as a JET in Kumamoto and 15 years as a Marketing Manager, currently at a “Big 4” accounting firm.

I derive great pleasure in being active in my local Japanese community. Eight years ago I started [JETAANC Kabuki Club](#) to engender a love of Japanese performing arts. As part of Kabuki Club’s activities, I have been teaching a monthly class on Japanese performing arts at the [Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California](#). I serve on the Board of Directors of the [Oakland-Fukuoka Sister City Association](#). I helped facilitate my firm’s corporate sponsorship of [Japan Society of Northern California](#) and collaborate with them frequently on cultural and business events in our area. I maintain close contact with [JETRO](#), [Keizai Silicon Valley](#), and [Japan Foundation Los Angeles](#).

I thank you sincerely for the opportunity to ask you for the privilege of continuing to serve as your CR for another term. I believe that there is so much more we can do together. As always, I welcome your ideas and questions at mark.frey@jetaa.com. I look forward to the prospect of continuing to work with you as we launch into the next 30 years of JETAA! よろしく願いたします。

Selected CV:

- [LinkedIn profile](#)
- JETAA USA Country Representative, 2017-present
- USJETAA Board of Directors, 2018-present; [Working Group](#), Member
- JETAANC President, Vice President, Communications Director, 2007-2016
- JET Program, ALT, Kumamoto, 2002-2006; JET Gun Leader, Aso-gun
- [Oakland-Fukuoka Sister City Association](#), Board of Directors, 2014-present
- University of Chicago Alumni Association, [Bay Area Club](#), Board of Directors, 2016-present
- JETAA USA National/Regional Conference, Presenter: [2018](#), [2017](#), [2016](#), [2015](#), [2014](#), [2012](#)
- JETAA Canada National Conference, Keynote Presenter: [2018](#), [2017](#)
- JET30 Reunion: Moderator, “[Engaging and Enriching Diverse Communities](#)” panel; Presenter, “[JETAA KenJETkai Program: Global Launch](#)”
- [JET Programme Satogaeri Project](#), Participant
- *JET Streams* article: “[How can we unlock the power of the JET network for our home prefectures?](#)”
- [Kumamoto “Monbassador”](#) cultural ambassador of Kumamoto Prefecture