



Meet Your 2009 JETAA DC Council!

Another new JET season is upon us, and we are pleased to bring you our new JETAA DC council members! Before introducing our new board, we want to extend a huge thank you to the 2008 council members, many of whom were just so great they decided to stick around for the 2009 year either in the same or different roles! Thanks to everyone!

Take the time to get to know this year's board—we look forward to seeing you at our upcoming events!

Spring 2009

Sakura Times

Michelle Spezzacatena (president)—Michelle is excited to be serving as President again in the 2009-2010 year. She hopes this year will be even more fun and informative than last year. She was a JET in Fukushima from 2002-2005.

Justin Manger (vice president)—In addition to his responsibilities as vice-president, Justin is taking the daunting role of filling in for Michelle when she goes to Japan for a few weeks this spring.

Susan Gundersen (treasurer)—Susan is continuing her run as treasurer for third year running. She does the extremely important job of reimbursing receipts for our events and keeping our budget from CLAIR perfectly in balance. Susan was an ALT and CIR from 1997-2000 in Hokkaido.

Brooke Howell (secretary)—This is Brooke's third year involved with JETAA DC. In 2007, she assisted with planning happy hours, in 2008 she was the ad hoc chair, and now we welcome her as secretary. Brooke was an ALT in Gunma from 2002-2004.

Heather McDonald (ad hoc)—Heather was an ALT from 2000-2003 in Kyoto-fu and has been very involved with JETAA DC as the newsletter editor and vice president for two years each. Heather will be in charge of planning some of our standard yearly events, such as the JET Rally, and a Japan-themed pub quiz.

Cynthia Hawkins (social)—Cynthia's role is to coordinate our Happy Hour events, social outings and other activities for the JETAA DC chapter. Cynthia was an ALT in Oita City, Oita-Ken from 2005-2007.

Margaret Burton (outreach)—Margaret is very excited to take on a new role with the JETAA DC Board this year, switching from last year's Volunteer Co-Chair to this year's Outreach Chair. In her capacity as Outreach Chair, she has already organized the 2009 Graduate School and Fellowship Night and is working toward her next event (a meishi exchange networking event). Margaret participated in the JET Program in Hyogo-ken from 2006-2007.

Jeff Herman (returnee handbook)—Jeff is happily using his editing talents to continue working as editor on the returnee handbook.

Maurice 'Mac' Maloney (non-profit)—Mac is assisting Justin in transforming JETAA DC into an NPO, meaning that we would be a financially independent organization. He was a JET in Fukui prefecture from 2004-2006.

Naomi Basik (volunteer)—Naomi recently returned from Shiga prefecture, where she was an ALT from 2007-2008. You may have recently seen her working as a Goodwill Ambassador at the Sakura Matsuri. Alongside Stacey Yanagawa, she will be working to find fun and creative volunteer activities for JETs to partake in around the city. Please look for updates on the yahoo listserv and facebook site.

Stacey Yanagawa (volunteer)—Like her fellow volunteer co-chair, Stacey was very involved in this year's Sakura Matsuri and was in charge of the JET and JETAA DC sponsored Children's Corner. Stacey was an ALT from 2003-2006 in Ehime.

Ben Bucher (online)—Ben faces the daunting task of keeping our webpage up to date, approving new additions to our yahoo listserv and facebook group, and sending out invitations via facebook for upcoming events!

Looking To Get Involved?

Abby MacBain, our current newsletter editor and returnee handbook coeditor, is headed off to be the JET coordinator at the Miami consulate! Unfortunately, that means that these two important jobs will be left unfilled! Maybe **YOU** are the person JETAA DC needs to keep these projects going for the 2009-2010 year!

For more information, please contact Abby MacBain at aimacbain@gmail.com.

BE PART OF THE JETAA DC TEAM!

JETs Share Graduate School Experiences and Insight At Annual Grad Night Event

Our popular annual Grad School night occurred March 31 in the Japanese Embassy. Newly appointed Outreach Chair Margaret Burton assembled a panel of six former JETs, all of whom have recently graduated from or are currently enrolled in graduate programs where they have capitalized on their JET experiences and international interests.

The panelists and order of presentation were:

Thomas Kodiak – College of William & Mary’s Mason School of Business, Masters of Business Administration and the Thunderbird School of Global Management, Masters of International Management

Michael Acton – The George Washington University’s Elliott School of International Affairs, Masters of Arts in International Development

Lisa Mayorga – The American University’s School of International Service, Masters of International Communications

Brooke Howell – University of Maryland Graduate School’s Phillip Merrill College of Journalism, Master of Journalism, Public Affairs Reporting

Bina Sheladia – The University of Michigan’s Rackham Graduate School, Masters of Higher Education Administration.

Each panelist provided different and interesting takes on their graduate school experiences and offered advice for those considering applying. Kodiak urged potential applicants to have a clear idea of what they wanted before applying, as different schools will specialize in different subcategories and offer different learning environments. Acton echoed this advice in his presentation, noting that the ability to tailor his program greatly appealed to him. He warned that defining an area of concentration by picking and choosing classes from different departments can be isolating, but that students are able to build core relationships with similarly interested colleagues and professors while setting themselves apart.

Unlike the previous presenters, Mayorga did not know what she wanted to focus on when applying for graduate programs. Like Kodiak and Acton, though, she shared the opinion that having a large number of course offerings and specialization options were important and useful. Having these multidisciplinary offerings helped her focus on her interests and ultimately determine what she field and subspecialty she wanted to pursue.

Howell offered the most generally applicable advice, particularly in justifying graduate school’s high cost. Howell passed around a handout containing several important questions, such as: “How much will you make starting out in that career and how fast can you expect your salary to grow?” “Where will you have to live or where will you have to work in this field?” “Can you work while you’re going to school?” “Can you pick a school in a cheaper location?” Howell also encouraged attendees to think about the cost of hobbies,

family life, and living and working needs when weighing whether or not to attend graduate school.

Sheladia was the final presenter and discussed the important decision of choosing between a lower ranked school that offers a full ride and a “bigger name” school that gives less or no financial aid. Sheladia pointed out that many graduate students do have to find alternative ways to fund their education, such as through working and studying part time, seeking out paid internships, and seeing if programs will offer a stipend or assistantship.

At this point, we transitioned into a thought-provoking question and answer period, which is summarized below.

1. How likely is it that an employer will pay for graduate school?

The panelists noted that they knew of some government programs that pay for employees’ programs and of some independent companies and associations that might give small stipends and tuition help. However, aside from those in higher-level executive MBA programs and those working for the government, full coverage was fairly uncommon.

2. How can applicants specify what university they will attend on scholarship applications when deadlines are often well before graduate schools decisions are released?

It is necessary in those cases to state where applicants believe they will attend both for scholarship applications and for FAFSA. However, even if an applicant ends up attending a different graduate program, scholarships will generally still award the funding.

3. What are the panelists’ opinions on online programs?

No one on the panel had taken online courses, and many felt that online programs were inferior traditional classroom settings, but noted that structured individuals may be able to benefit from them. Panelists suggested approaching professionals in applicants’ desired fields and asking for their advice and experience.

4. Did any of the panelists consider studying abroad?

Some had considered the possibility, but, as most of the panelists’ job interests were bound to the United States and Washington, DC, they needed to stay local. An attendee shared her experiences studying abroad and noted that an equivalency report may be necessary to be considered for government jobs.

5. Were the panelists’ programs useful in finding careers after graduation?

Some panelists declared that their programs did not offer career placement assistance, while others noted that the resources were there if individuals took advantage of career centers and career advisors. Those who had internships often found work through those experiences. (continued on p. 7)



Sakura Matsuri 2009 Recap!

This year brought record numbers to the Sakura Matsuri. If you weren't there, you definitely missed out! Okonomiyaki! J-Pop live! Sakura Mochi! Kimonos! Udon! Kitty-chan! Anything Japanese you've been craving, you could have found at the matsuri – especially the crowded streets and long lines for delicious festival food. Princess Mononoke even smiled down on us and the sakura were in full bloom for prime hanami (but only if you could pull yourself away from the excitement of the parade and matsuri).



The JET Alumni Association proudly hung our new banner in the Children's Corner. Record crowds meant a record number of children (and children at heart) who came to our tent to get a little taste of Japanese culture. Many dedicated JETs spent six or more hours imparting Japanese wisdom instead of American (what a pleasant switch!). A whopping eight bottles of sumi and 2 boxes of rice paper were used to practice calligraphy. We won't even guess at how many kanji were attempted! Chopsticks were great fun for people of all ages thanks to special easy and difficult pairs along with the patience and helpful tips from our volunteers. Making koi kites was a great hit as well – we had to shut the table down due to lack of supplies, even after two trips to CVS! Origami seemed to be a favorite among the young and young at heart, and our busy volunteers gladly expanded to cover our empty table after the unfortunate koi kite dismantling. Tex entertained,

as always, as children waited patiently for a chance to attempt the cool tricks on his Eastern and Western kendama toys. We also had the privilege of listening to traditional kamishibai Japanese storytelling by a husband and wife duo from California. More than one volunteer took a break from writing names in katakana in order to enjoy the show.

What started off as a cold and blustery morning, filled with slight trepidation and taping everything down (yes, everything), turned into a gorgeous day filled with sharing a little bit about Japanese culture to our DC neighbors and visitors. So keep your eye out for next year's Sakura Matsuri! We'll be sending out reminders so you can brush up on your katakana charts, remember how to make a paper crane, and see what other cool Japanese talents you can unearth!

-Stacey Yanagawa (Ehime, 2003-2006)

JETAANY Hosts First Author Showcase

JETAA NY hosted the first JET Alumni Author Showcase at the Holiday Inn in downtown New York City. The event was moderated by playwright and JET alumnus Randall David Cook. Panelists included former JETs and authors Roland Kelts, Robert Weston and James Kennedy.

The event was kicked off with special remarks by the director of the Japan Information Center of the Consulate General of Japan in New York, Akira Sugiyama. Moderator Randall David Cook asked the authors to share favorite sections of their works with the audience. Kelts, who wrote a non-fiction book on Japanese pop culture in America, read a piece from his book, while Weston and Kennedy performed selections from their children's fiction novels.

Robert Weston's reading from *Zorgamazoo* kept the audience entranced by his spine-chilling performance as a dark character in his novel. *Zorgamazoo* is a rhyming children's novel and focuses on a little girl. This unique book has won several awards since the debut in 2008. Weston traveled from Canada to participate in the event and was a JET for two years in Nara-ken from 2002 to 2004.

Robert Kelts, author of the non-fiction book *Japanamerica: How Japanese Pop Culture has Invaded the US*, is half Japanese and spent a year in Osaka on the JET program to have a "real Japanese experience." Kelts told the audience about his experiences growing up with his Japanese mother and his exposure to Japanese pop culture. He is currently a professor at three different universities, including the University of Tokyo. He is also a writer and editor for two magazines and columnist for *The Daily Yomiuri*.

James Kennedy and Robert Weston, armed with their flairs for performance, immersed the crowd into their readings. James Kennedy's background in physics, philosophy and computer programming seem at odds with his creative side, but that did not stop the young author from finishing his first book and getting a book deal with the major publisher Random House.

Kennedy's book for young adults *The Order of the Odd Fish* was one of the Smithsonian's Notable Books for Children in 2008. Kenny, who is also a musician and improvisational comic, acted out a scene from his novel between two characters arguing over the lethality of his made-up "apology gun." The crowd erupted in laughter as he darted back and forth across the front of the stage and switched between the two characters. Kennedy traveled from his hometown of Chicago to participate in the event and was a Nara-ken JET from 2004 to 2006.

Moderator Randall David Cook is the playwright of the critically acclaimed off-Broadway plays *Sake with the Haiku Geisha* and *Fate's Imagination*. He asked the authors questions about their past experiences as JETs, their present lives as authors, and their future projects. All authors already have plans to write new books in the near future.

Immediately following the panel, the crowd of over 60 JETs and their families and friends had refreshments and bought books provided by New York's Kinokuniya bookstore. Afterwards, the authors signed books and connected with old friends. By far, the most numerous audience members were Nara JETAAs, who were there to support their fellow Nara alumni Robert Weston and James Kennedy.

You can find out more about these authors from their respective blogs at the following web addresses:

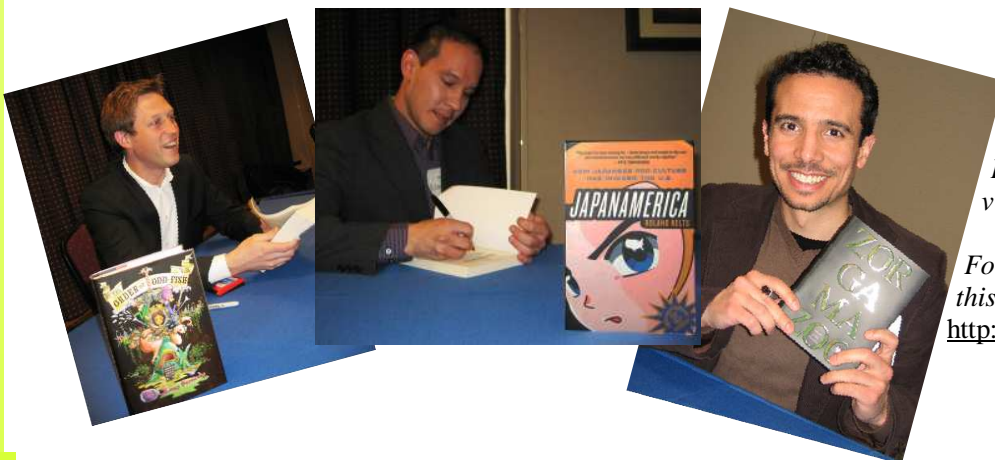
James Kennedy, author of *The Order of the Odd Fish* <http://jameskennedy.com>

Roland Kelts, author of *Japanamerica: How Japanese Pop Culture has Invaded the US* <http://japanamerica.blogspot.com>

Robert P. Weston, author of *Zorgamazoo* <http://wayofthewest.wordpress.com>

The event was supported by several noteworthy Japanese and American organizations, including the Consulate General of Japan in New York, Anime Festival, Kinokuniya, New York ComicCon, and up and the coming [Jetwit.com](http://jetwit.com).

-Gina Anderson, (Nara, 2003-2005)



Left to right: James Kennedy, Roland Kelts, Robert P. Weston. Images provided by the JETAA NY website.

For video clips and more information on this and upcoming JETAA NY events, see <http://jetaany.org/>

Jero: The JQ Interview

Enka, or Japanese blues, typically skews to older crowds in Japan. But for the past year, one American-born former information science student has made Japan pay attention again to songs about love and life lost. His name is Jero, and his first single "Umiyuki" became Japan's highest-charting debut for an enka performer. This breakout success allowed the 27-year-old to achieve his lifelong dream of performing on Kohaku Uta Gassen, Japan's year-end "song battle," at which Jero paid tribute to his late Japanese grandmother and lifelong inspiration. With his second single "Eisa" also riding high on the charts, Jero is now prepping his debut album Yakusoku, due February 25 in Japan. In this JQ exclusive interview conducted the week after his Kohaku performance, we talked with one of Japan's most recognizable foreign-born celebrities.

What are your thoughts now that you've performed on Kohaku Uta Gassen?

I am very happy that I was able to carry out my dream, and even more happy that my mother was there to share the experience with me.

Now that you've performed on it, what is your next career dream goal?

Quite frankly, to continue to perform on Kohaku every year, and get even more younger audiences listening to enka.

Which performers were you most excited to watch in person at the show?

All of the other enka artists, as well as J-pop artists I'm a fan of.

What do you know about the JET Programme, and do you have any impressions or stories about it?

I have met many former teachers of the JET Programme, and they have all enjoyed their time here in Japan. I was not a part of the JET Programme myself, but I have made some good friends who participated in the JET Programme.

What was your formal introduction to learning Japanese?

I have been listening to Japanese since I was a child, and started studying formally in high school.

For you, what is still difficult about your continued studies of the Japanese language?

Remembering kanji.

What do you think is the best way to proficiently learn another language?

Become immersed in the language as much as possible, daily if possible.

What are some of your favorite non-enka songs?

I listen to J-pop every once in a while, such as Ken Hirai and Noriyuki Makihara. My favorite R&B artist is Luther Vandross.

Have you ever been to New York? If so, what were your impressions? If not, what would you most like to do there?

I have been to New York several times. It was very much like Tokyo, very high-paced, and a lot of people. Lots of things to do and see.

Imagine you have a month of nothing but free time. How would you spend it?

I would spend half with my family and friends, the other half on vacation.

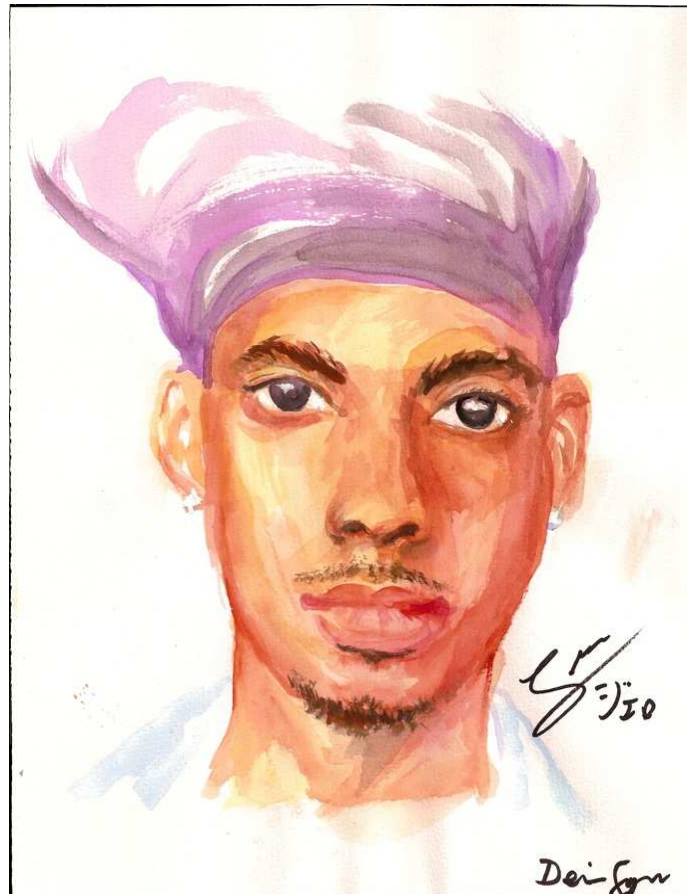
If you weren't a singer, what kind of job would you most likely have right now?

I would most likely be working in IT in Japan.

What's the most difficult thing about being a foreigner in the Japanese music business?

I don't think I've had any difficulties from being a foreigner in the Japanese music business. I think the music business in Japan in general is very highpaced and extremely busy. Much busier than the U.S. music industry, I would assume.

(continued on p. 7)



Thanks to JETAA DC member Devin Symons for providing us with this painting of Jero he created. Devin recently presented a copy of this picture to Jero at the Sakura Matsuri and received the autograph seen here.

What's Coming Up Next?

JETAADC Social Event at Pimlico Race Course

Please join us on a social outing at the Pimlico Race Course in Baltimore, MD on Saturday, May 23rd. It is Fan Appreciation Day, so the admission will be free.

Food Specials that day:
\$6 Grilled Chicken Sandwiches/Hamburgers
\$5 Orange Crush or \$3 Draft Beer

Gates open at 11:30 a.m., first race begins at 1:10 p.m.

For the newbies we will have a small introductory class (approx. 15 minutes) beforehand to get you up to speed.

Guests are invited.

In order to arrange space for everyone, we need to know how many people are or may be coming. Please reply to social chair Cynthia Hawkins at chawkins5000@yahoo.com indicating YES or MAYBE.

Details to follow shortly!

Happy Hours:

May 12: Uncle Julio's
4870 Bethesda Ave.
Bethesda, MD 20814
301-656-2981
Bethesda Metro - Red Line

July 15: Piola
1550 Wilson Blvd.
Arlington, VA 22209
Rosslyn Metro

Volunteer Opportunities!

May: There is still time to sign up for Servathon, DC Cares' biggest volunteer event of the year, happening May 2.

Those interested in joining our project, the National Mall and Memorial Parks' Potomac River Clean-Up on Haines Point, should sign up ASAP at <http://servathon2009.kintera.org/japanfans> or contact Naomi Basik for further information. A \$25 goes towards Greater DC Cares project overhead costs, and also pays for a volunteer after-party.

June: Pending approval, we will convene on June 27 at Loaves and Fishes, a soup kitchen in northern Columbia Heights/Petworth, preparing hot lunches for 200 people in need.

July: TBA

Bring your business cards and come out to our summer Meishi Exchange Event!

Meet old and new friends for social and professional networking on Wednesday, June 17th from 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. at Chi-Cha Lounge located at 1624 U St NW (3 blocks from the U St. Metro Stop on the Green/Yellow Lines).

There will be happy hour specials until 8 p.m. including \$3 beers, \$4 cocktails and wine + 1/2 off appetizers.

More information to follow via JETAADC listserv closer to the time. Until then, visit: http://www.latinconcepts.com/page.php?sec_id=9&art_id=81

Keep Track of These and other Upcoming Events Online!

- *Join the yahoo groups JETAADC listserv
- *Join the JETAADC facebook site
- *Check out the JETAADC website at:
<http://www.dc.jetalumni.org/>

(cont'd grad night)

6. If any of the panelists used graduate school to switch gears, did they feel disadvantaged compared with those students who had more experience in the field?

One panelist replied that this was a common feeling to have, but that each person has his or her own experiences that are likely useful in the field. The same panelist also noted that it is common on the first day for people to describe themselves in inflated terms. Another panelist stated that hers was a very experienced-based career and that it could be intimidating to come into a program and have less experience than one's colleagues. However, these more experienced people could be very good connections, particularly as they advanced through their careers and thereby left their old, often very good, jobs open.

7. Did the panelists all have references from undergraduate, or did they also have some professional recommendations?

A few panelists mentioned having recommendations from JET principals and advisors, and others discussed having a mixture of JET-connected recommendations and undergraduate references. One suggestion was to take additional courses on one's own that were relevant for the desired field and use those newer teachers as references. It was also noted that, particularly with scholarships, having a recommendation from someone who works in the field an applicant wants to go into weighs particularly heavily.

8. Is it worth the extra time and money to get a joint degree program? Is there a noticeable income boost after finishing?

One panelist stated that this is one of those questions that warrants additional research on the applicant's part. What is the additional cost and expenditure? Is it worth the invested time and money? Another panelist added that it was important to look at why the applicant was interested in doing the joint degree. Would it actually give a salary and career boost? Was it something that the applicant was actually interested in? Or were they pursuing it simply because it was there?

Thank you to both our presenters and our attendees for making the 2009 Grad Night a success.

For more on the presenters and handouts, please contact Margaret Burton.

-Abigail MacBain (Aomori, 2004-2006)

(cont'd Jero)

Do you plan to expand your career outside of Japan, or sing in English?

I have no desire to sing in English.

How long do you plan to live in Japan for?

I do not plan to return the U.S.

Traditionally, enka is popular with an older crowd. What makes you so appealing to all ages?

I honestly have no idea. I think I may bring something new to enka, and allow the younger listeners a new way to listen to enka.

What is it about enka that moves you?

Everything about it, from the artists, music and lyrics. I always enjoyed listening to music with a very distinct meaning, melody and soul. Enka is a perfect example.

Where in Japan and the world would you most like to visit that you haven't been to yet?

I would like to climb Mount Fuji one day, and perhaps visit some South American countries.

Do you feel that there's more Japanese interest in your hometown of Pittsburgh now (for example, in sister cities Saitama and Omiya)?

Possibly. I know many Japanese have not heard of Pittsburgh before.

If you were to cover one song of your choice in English, what song would it be and why?

Anything by Luther Vandross. His music is the very best, in my opinion.

Are there any musical instruments you'd like to learn to play?

I played the snare drum from elementary school to high school, and played a bit of piano. I wish I would have stuck with the piano a little longer.

Besides enka, are there any other forms of Japanese art or culture that you similarly enjoy?

I enjoy trying different types of Japanese food.

Thanks for sharing your time with us. Do you have any final message for your JETAA NY fans?

Please continue to share your experiences with Japanese youngsters, and continue to be positive role models for them.

-Justin Tedaldi (Kobe-shi, 2001-2002)

This interview appeared in the Winter 2009 issue of JETAA NY Quarterly Magazine. To view the original, please see: http://jetaany.org/magazine_files/IQ_Winter_2009.pdf

Upcoming Events and Happy Hours:

May 2: Greater DC Cares Servathon—environmental clean up at Haines Point

May 12: Happy Hour—Uncle Julio's in Bethesda, MD

May 23: Pimlico Race Course in Baltimore, MD

June 17: Meishi Exchange at Chi-Cha Lounge in DC

June 27: Loaves and Fishes volunteer event

July 15: Happy Hour —Piola in Arlington, VA

July volunteer event: TBA

July 31: JET Pre-Departure Reception

Please note that any of these events is liable to change. Please check the yahoo listserv and/or the JETAA DC facebook group for updates.