

# Xander Peterson



Spotlight on: Xander Peterson (Miyazaki, 2009-12)  
JET Program Coordinator for San Francisco. Xander  
became the new coordinator earlier this year.

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## ***Why did you apply for the position?***

I applied for the position because I truly believe in the purpose of JET, and I want to see the program flourish. The cultural exchange and friendships that I built with my students and community changed my life and hopefully influenced theirs, too. I knew that it wasn't just me who felt this way; nearly everyone who goes on JET is profoundly impacted in some manner.

## ***Did you ever see yourself becoming the Program Coordinator during JET/JET application process?***

When I first applied to JET, I didn't see myself as becoming the Program Coordinator. However, after my first year as an ALT, I was in love with the program and began to think of ways that I could support not just the JETs in my area but all JETs across Japan and the program as a whole. At the end of my final year in Japan, I applied to CLAIR but to no avail. A couple of months after I returned to Santa Cruz, the position of JET Program Coordinator (for Northern California / Nevada) opened up. I applied and got the job.

## ***How do you see yourself working with JETAANC?***

I see myself as the liaison between the Consulate and JETAANC. I'd like to do whatever I can to build a strong working relationship between the two. One area that I think we can work on is connecting our local JET alums with the local Sister City Associations. Local Sister City Associations are a great place for alumni to share their Japan experiences and adventures with American students who are interested in learning more about Japanese language and culture.

## ***What's your favorite part of the job?***

My favorite part of the job so far has been interacting with the 72 outbound JETs and getting them pumped up for Japan. The tone I set now will influence their initial attitude towards the program, so I want to help calm their nerves while also getting them excited. I'm really looking forward to the recruitment period during the fall, when I get to go around to various schools and career fairs and market JET to potential applicants.

## ***What do other JETs/JET alum you met through the program think of your position?***

I think both current JETs and JET alumni respect the position, but after becoming the JET Program Coordinator, I've really learned just how important the JET alumni are to this job and to JET as a whole. I may be the one planning events and shuffling paperwork around, but it's really only through the support from the alumni that I have any true influence. They're the ones that are constantly marketing JET when they talk about their experiences with their friends and co-workers. They're the ones who help conduct interviews, volunteer at events for the outbound JETs, and generate goodwill towards the program when they get involved in the community. So really, I view my role as the mandatory coordinator, but see the JET alumni as the ones that breathe life into what I do.

## ***What is something unique you bring to the role?***

I'd like to try to use more technology to support JET, especially for marketing purposes. There are still a lot of people out there who would make outstanding JETs but have never heard of the program before. I'd really like to reach those people.

# A L U M N I SPOTLIGHT

## ***Do you see yourself getting involved with the Japantown community?***

I'd love to become more involved with the Japantown community. I helped out at the Consulate's booth at the Cherry Blossom Festival, and I know that the JCCCNC puts on a lot of great cultural events that I look forward to attending.

## ***Is working at the Consulate just like working in Japan/how similar is it to working in Japan?***

The Consulate is run like any other Japanese government office. While in Miyazaki, I was employed by the City Hall, so I had some experience with Japanese office etiquette. The main difference though is that everyone who works here is bilingual, which is helpful to avoid misunderstandings.

## ***What is your advice for anyone who's interested in the JET Program?***

My advice would be to really take your time on writing your personal statement – that's really important. Working with youth is also a great way to improve your resume; for example, being a tutor or volunteering at a summer camp looks really good. We also like to see that you're already interested in some Japanese hobby or topic of study. That shows us that you'll be likely to complete the second half of JET when you return – sharing the Japanese culture you learned during JET with your home country.

## ***What are your hobbies?***

My main hobby is gaming. I grew up a gamer, which was my impetus for being interested in Japan over other foreign countries. Aside from games, I enjoy studying Japanese, playing the shamisen, and am looking to pick up bonsai gardening.

## ***What's one piece of trivia about yourself you'd like to share?***

I used to compete in tournaments in America and Japan for the video game Super Smash Bros. Melee.

## ***What's your spirit animal?***

A squirrel.

## ***If you could travel around in a van and solve mysteries all day, who would be in your crew?***

I'd take along some of my friends from my hometown, college, and JET. I'd need a talking dog, naturally (a Shiba Inu would be my choice). (Editor's note: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LPjblqE3xHk>) And if I'm the one wearing the ascot, I'll need a Daphne to come with me when the gang splits up to go look for clues.

## ***How would you stop that pigeon?***

Either with a Pokeball or with that Ghostbusters ghost trap.

## ***Compose a haiku about yourself.***

Lemme think about  
This one for a bit ha ha  
OK there I'm done

(Editor's frown)

