

# JET Program Recent Returnee Reception



On the evening of March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2015, a reception was held in honor of the recent returnees who came back to Florida in 2014 from the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program. There were 42 guests in attendance, which included former JET Program participants, faculty from Universities around the State, media and other community guests.

Consul General Nagashima opened the program talking about the 4<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Great East Japan Earthquake, and the lives of the two JET participants (Taylor Anderson and Montgomery Dickson) who lost their lives in the disaster. He spoke of the love that the Japanese people had for JET participants, and how impressed he was with their dedication to teaching English at Japanese schools.

Consul General Nagashima was followed by Dr. Mary Watt of the University of Florida, who spoke of the meaning of the word “home”, and how “home” can mean many things to different people, but ultimately, it is where our heart takes us.

Following Dr. Watt, Ms. Reiko Nishioka, JET interview panelist, spoke about the importance of maintaining contact with the Consulate and joining the local (JETAA) JET Alumni Association. After which, Florida JET Alumni Association President, Bahia Simons-Lane introduced the different activities that the Alumni Association sponsored during the previous year. Lastly, three of the recent returnees, Ms. Lauren Sorondo, Mr. James Fichera, and Ms. Sarah Ortega spoke of their own experiences in Japan, and how the JET Program had impacted them.

Among the attendees were those who had participated in the JET Program as far back as 1989. Some expressed their desires to return to Japan one day and help establish better Japanese-U.S. relations in the future. Through the JET Program, the bonds of friendship between our two countries will continue to grow.

*The JET Program was started in 1987 by the Japanese Government with the purpose of increasing mutual understanding between the people of Japan and the people of other nations. It aims to promote internationalization in Japan's local communities by helping to improve foreign language education and developing international exchange at the community level.*