

Japanese Woman Wants To 'Experience' East Coast

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FAWN GROVE (York Co.) — Aki Iwai is a first for York County.

The pretty 19-year-old Japanese woman is York County's first-ever visitor through the International 4-H Youth Exchange (IFYE) program. Since July 28, she's been part of the Robert and Holly Barr family of Fawn Grove.

Aki's hostess is the Barr's daughter, Tanya. Tanya herself was one of York County's first three 4-Hers to participate last summer in the IFYE program, spending a month with a German host family. And because of her enthusiasm for the IFYE experience, Tanya applied to host an exchangee at her family's rural Fawn Grove home.

Aki traveled with a group of 27 Japanese exchangees to Pennsylvania through their counterpart of IFYE, known as UTREK. About 30 younger Japanese students are also visiting through a sister organization known as LABO. The UTREK visitors actually arrived on July 24 and spent their first four days at CamKiwanis, near Williamsport.

"We did hiking, Indian crafts, campfires," says Aki, who speaks English very well.

Like all Japanese students, she began studying English in junior high. A visit to Hawaii gave her additional exposure to the spoken language. And, three years ago, she visited a family in Utah on her first UTREK exchangee.

"I wanted to experience the East Coast, to see the typical American lifestyle here," she smiles of her reasons for applying for the Pennsylvania visit. "I want to see where the history of America took place."

The Barr family planned a full schedule of activities to share with their Japanese guest. Included are visits to Washington D.C., Baltimore's Inner Harbor, and Lancaster County's Dutch Apple Dinner Theatre. A camping retreat at southern York County's Camp Echo Trail, horseback riding, a family get-together and corn roast - and, of course, a trip or two to local shopping malls - are giving Aki an intimate look at the American family experience.

Aki is also taking part in several 4-H activities during her stay. She attended State Days at Penn State during the last week of July, observing the hippology competition in which Tanya took part. The county horse roundup and a visit with Tanya's 4-H club to the Lehman Center in York, a temporary family-crisis home for children, offer other glimpses of the varied 4-H programs.

A native of Tokyo, Aki is the only child in her family, which includes her dog, "a mutt." She is in her second year at the Jissen Women's College in Tokyo, majoring in home economics. Her studies include food science, chemistry, fabrics, childhood deve-

lopment, with cooking added to next year's schedule.

Next year's studies will also include driving school, Aki says. While 18 is the age at which the Japanese can test for a driver's license, the classes are very full. Aki now makes a daily, 90-minute-each-way commute to her classes by train, from a station a 15-minute walk from her home. Classes from April to July, again from late September through December, with a two-week Christmas vacation, and resume again through January and February.

While studying, Aki manages to hold down two jobs as well. Tuesdays and Thursdays she sells tickets for a live theatre near her home. Sundays she works as "a sort of waitress" at Tokyo Chinzan-su, a noted garden restaurant.

"Mostly I work with wedding parties," she explains. "June is a busy time for weddings, also spring and autumn."

She still finds some spare time in which to work at perfecting her tea ceremony skills. The tea ceremony, known as "cha-no-yo" or "sado", is a historic and cultural tradition of Japan, practiced to serve and honor guests with artfully-prepared tea and special sweet cakes. At age 11 she joined at tea ceremony club in her school.

"My grandmother does the tea ceremony; she helps me," Aki explains of the art young women practice in the traditional manner. "You never finish learning it; you just try to get better at it."

She also enjoys listening to music and concerts - hard rock included - and watching sports events. Skiing is a favorite pastime during the winter, when snow blankets Tokyo and mountainous resort areas.

Summer weather in Tokyo, according to Aki, is similar to that in late July in Pennsylvania - hot and sticky.

With chain restaurants like McDonalds, Wendy's and Pizza Hut plentiful in Tokyo, and through her earliest visit to Utah, American food is familiar to Aki.

"I like hamburgers, with cheese," she grins. "And mayonnaise" Ice cream and pizza are other favorites. So is chocolate.

"You should see how much chocolate she got at Hershey," teases Holly Barr, her American "mom". A visit to Hershey Park was one of their first trips after Aki arrived. In addition to stocking up on chocolate, Aki has been acquiring T-shirts, a favorite souvenir of her travels. And, at the top of her shopping list is "a big American flag."

While she'll take home T-shirts, she brought with her a garment of a much more traditional Japanese nature. The cotton "yukata" is a kind of kimono, worn for festival events.

"It is not formal, but not really casual," she says of the one-size-fits-all cotton garment. Excess

length is folded over and belted at the waist, then covered with the decorative "obi," the wide, heavy sash with a large bow worn in the back.

More formal kimonos are of silks and brocades and special ones are often passed down as a family heritage. They are sold at both department stores and at special kimono shops, according to Aki, who brought with her colorful advertising flyers for the traditional garments.

Children wear kimonos on special occasions at ages 3, 5 and 7, when they go to the shrines. Kimonos are also worn on New Year's Day, when the Japanese go to the shrines for prayers.

Most of the time, though Aki and her friends prefer the casual favorites, like shorts, jeans, soft-shirt tops and sneakers. Uniforms must be worn to classes by school-age students, but colleges permit more casual attire.

Aki does not anticipate presenting programs or talks on her Pennsylvania visit, but she will be required to write a report on her experiences and feelings about the visit.

Such follow-ups enable organizations like IFYE and UTREK to plan and oikug future international exchange programs, like those experienced by Aki and Tayno.

In Germany, where Tanya visited last year for a month, the international exchangee program is known as STEP. Through IFYE and STEP, Tanya and a dozen other Americans were hosted in various parts of Germany.

Tanya was hosted by the Schmidt family of Bad Nauheim, a little town in central Germany, north of Frankfurt. During her visit, she traveled to Berlin, Munich, Bavaria, and through the countries of Lichenstein and Austria. Her German "sister" took her to visit the famous "Cinderella" castle, from which the well-known castle of Disneyland was patterned.

Germans are avid soccer fans, and the World Cup playoffs were going on during Tanya's stay. She was among the millions watching German television when they won the final match.

In late August, Tanya will travel to the University of Wisconsin at Madison to begin freshman studies in agricultural education. A month later, her Japanese "sister" will resume her daily commute to the Jissen Women's College.



Aki Awai models a "yukata," a cotton-fabric kimono worn for festival-type occasions. Fabric is a navy print, accented with the red obi, or belt. A back view of the Aki's yukata shows the decorative bow of the obi, or wide belt which is worn with a kimono. Excess length of the one-size-fits-all garment is tucked under the obi. Children ages 3, 5, and 7 wear kimonos on special visits to religious shrines. The traditional Japanese garment is also worn to the shrines for prayers at New Year.



Aki and her York County hostess, Tanya Barr, look at Aki's scrapbook and brochures from Japan.



Enjoying the York County 4-H horse roundup with their Japanese IFYE guest Aki Awai are her host family, from left, Bob, Holly and Tanya Barr.

Homestead Notes