

B.I.G Mail newsletter

The family is one of nature's masterpieces...

Thank you for being part of ours.

HAPPY EASTER!!!

Easter Edition 2012



From the Director

If you knew how many times I started this newsletter, you would be horrified. Life just gets too busy to finish projects so even though it is already March, my New Year's resolution, is to finish some projects! So, the first one being our newsletter!! The second one to move to our new office location which at this stage, will be in the Northern Beaches and the third, to increase business for 2013 so I can keep all of my valuable homestay families happy...oh and the bank man! ☺

On a personal note, I wish to sincerely thank all of you for your support over the past 12 months. It was a trying time learning to juggle a career and motherhood, Michael fighting cancer for the third time and losing so many family members and friends to the dreaded disease in close succession. The shining light in all of it has been our beautiful son who continues to amaze me. It has been a pleasure over the years to see so many of your children grow and to now share this experience with each of you.

For those that don't know, we purchased a national farmstay company in December 2010. I didn't think we had enough to do! ☺ It is growing very quickly and offers exciting opportunities for our business to be more stable in this ever-changing economy. So far we have created programs and hosted people from Korea, Japan, China, Ecuador, Sweden, France, Canada, Switzerland and Germany!



My working holiday in Europe seems like a fairytale now but the good news is, we have already received new business from the trip and once the Euro stabilises, we will be on track to secure even more.



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NEWS



Left: Recent students from Mukogawa University didn't let a little rain dampen their spirit

JCUPC

As you may already know, we were successful in winning the tender to handle the homestays for the new James Cook University Pathway College (JCUPC). This is a very exciting contract for us. JCUPC is a collaboration between TAFE and JCU to create a foundation college that both domestic and international students can use as a pathway into University. UIL won the contract to handle the English and are currently managing 3 campuses between Cairns and Townsville. Thanks to everyone for their patience over the past few months as we ironed out a few operational issues with the new contract. We look forward to growing the business.

TSV Homestays

Townsville homestay has been a little harder for us so we are currently conducting promotions there. To any families that have contacts /friends or families in Townsville, please let people know. At this stage, the main campus is at Barrier Reef TAFE but another campus will commence at JCU campus.

Groups

February and March saw JCUPC hosting 4 groups from 10days to 6weeks. Thanks to all the host families who looked after these groups. They all had a terrific time. Our Gold Coast boys group returned for the 5th year in a row and Janine accompanied the group along with little Jackson. It was a huge success and they will be back again in 2013.

We also hosted a group at Freshwater Christian College for a few days. This group was particularly special as they were a group that was previously booked and had to cancel due to the Tsunami.

...The 11th of March was the 12 month anniversary of the devastating Tsunami that hit our friendly neighbours in Japan. No one will ever forget the horrific images and stories that emerged from this tragic event.

“This week was a special celebration for these young survivors and reminded us of how precious life really is.”

Tips following feedback

While many of the students coming through JCUPC are university students, it is wise to remember that Asian students in particular may not be as mature as Australian students of the same age. They might require a little more help.

Furthermore, they have chosen homestay instead of dormitory or apartments because they wish to interact with a host family and speak English with you. No matter what activity you have planned, try to involve them where possible AND if they decline because they wish to do something else, it is their decision. Don't assume because they are older that they wish to only spend time with their friends and are not interested in interacting. In most cases they do.

Not all personalities are expected to mix so if you do get an odd one, don't let that make you think all homestays are the same. Unfortunately, we don't get along with everyone in life. Often a misunderstanding is from unrealistic preconceived perceptions and simply requires some communication.

News continued....

What's new in our office...

Michelle Hosp, previously group's coordinator for Australearn joined the team in March this year. She is currently learning the operations of the farmstay organisation but will also cross train with the education and homestay business. She is looking forward to getting to know all of our suppliers and host families.



Above: Michelle Hosp

Ryuko Nakazawa will be cutting down to part-time as of April as she takes on a new venture in her life, renovating her home. We wish Ryuko san all the best with her new venture but you will see her from time to time when she needs to relax and come to the office!

BIG Travel Agency News

Following the successful inbound tour of Rugby students from Meiwa Highschool to Cairns last August, Trinity Anglican School will be taking 19 students to Japan in June this year. We have coordinated a full program inc matches, homestays & sightseeing in Japan and look forward to hearing great news upon their return!



Saint Francis Xavier will also travel to Japan again this year. They will visit their sister schools but also include a visit to Hiroshima for the first time. The school has been travelling to Japan for many years.

Homestay families of the Month

Following each group, we collect feedback forms from our students and hear some great stories about the kindness of our host families. There are too many to collate into this newsletter so from here on in, we will pick a family of the month and report a story on them. Thanks for all being so awesome!!

Special notes

Dawn Chaplin is one of the longest reining families within ASAP Cairns Branch. She has always been very accommodating and the feedback from her and partner Norman's students has been fantastic. Recently Dawn had to undergo some unexpected surgery and still managed to make it with a walking frame to her student's farewell. She is an amazing lady and we wish her a speedy recovery!!

Congratulations to **Belinda Turner** and family for their new addition, Olivia Ann Turner born on the 30th of March! We look forward to meeting her!

Funny Stories

Please feel free to send in stories for our newsletter.

Recently, after everyone went to bed, a young Japanese student discovered a cockroach in her room. Without knocking, she ran into her host parent's room, screaming about the bug in her room. She quickly learnt we don't wear pyjamas in the tropics! Luckily it was dark but the host mother scrabbling for clothes, kind of gave it away. When I apologised to the host mother, she exclaimed it could have been much worse!! (Ha ha!) Our orientation has now been extended to ask students to knock before entering the parent's room. ☺

Bad Stories

Unfortunately, one of our families was cut from the database this month for negotiating a direct fee with a student who wanted to extend their homestay. Please remember that there is a lot of time, energy and money put into bringing students into Cairns and actions like this are inexcusable. Not to mention, if there are any problems such as the student refusing to pay, there is no support for this host family.



Testimonies

From a Student

"Dear Janine, Thank you for all of your help with getting me an internship at Hilton Cairns last year. I grew day by day because of the great, practical, precious working experiences. I loved my job and working mates as well as Cairns! Now I am working at Hilton in Nagoya and I can see the wonderful picture of my life." Hiroshi Hibino

From a Host Family

"There were too many "Thank yous" following the recent Mukogawa Farewell Party. As mentioned, the BBQ was put together by JCUPC so thanks goes to Damien and the team. I simply helped with the cooking!"

From an Agent

"It was a pleasure to work with you during our recent group visit to Brisbane. You are a very professional, yet personable company. Your staff are a true credit to your organisation and your families are fantastic! We never knew there were so many educational tours to do in Brisbane. Thank you for your insight. We look forward to visiting again." Agency Name Withheld

Businesses

As a community orientated business, we like to help our own homestay families. In today's day and age, it's good to support your network. Here is one of our local homestay family businesses. John does all of our logo work. I can highly recommend him! Wish to showcase your business? Contact us at info@edrec.com

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Forthcoming Groups – Homestay only

At this stage, April – June will be spent catching our breath and preparing for a full-on peak season. Groups have been much slower to confirm this year but considering the tragedies they dealt with last year, we completely understand their tentativeness with booking. PLEASE KEEP ROOMS FREE as there will be more including several groups for JCU Pathway College!

CAIRNS

July	[JAPAN] G1207-001 Higashi Uji	28JUL – 31JUL	Twin Homestay	Freshwater Christian College
	[JAPAN] G1207-004 A Kosei Gakuen	07JUL – 09JUL	Twin Homestay	Weekend homestay only
	[JAPAN] G1207-004 B Kosei Gakuen	09JUL – 06AUG	Single Homestay	Trinity Anglican School, Whiterock
August	[JAPAN] G1208-002 Meijo	06AUG – 19AUG	Single Homestay	Freshwater Christian College
	[JAPAN] G1208-003 Kansai Daigaku Daiichi	14AUG – 27AUG	Single and Twin	Kaplan on McLeod Street

GOLD COAST

July	[CHINA] 120 Students	13JUL ~
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BRISBANE

July	[CHINA] 80 Students	JUL – TBA
August	[CHINA] 80 Students	04-18 AUG

TOWNSVILLE

TBA We are presently waiting on advice in regards to the JCU groups. – Stay tuned!!