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Japanese tutoring services to be available for students



A.J. Parks (L) and Josh Parks (R)

By Sthefany Flores

A Rutherford County resident will once again offer free classes in Japanese starting this November to Gardner-Webb students.

Angelo “A.J.” Parks served as a missionary for two years in Tokyo, Japan, where he learned Japanese. During his time in the country he also visited Kanagawa, Saitama Prefecture, and Yamanashi.

Parks said he was introduced last year to Dr. Lorene Pagcaliwagan, Associate Professor of French and Spanish and Japanese Club sponsor, by his brother Josh Parks, a current Gardner-Webb senior. He explained that they were introduced to one another due to their mutual experience of living in Japan.

Parks said, "At first, I taught Japanese to get volunteer hours for school, but it eventually became something I enjoyed very much, and I started teaching about once a week." Dr. Pagcaliwagan and other members of the Japanese Club said that he has his own method of teaching Japanese.

Pagcaliwagan explained, "He uses your interests to teach Japanese so you feel motivated and to teach you better. He could use a song someone is interested in, or an anime, or a book."

When he was preparing for his mission trip to Japan, Parks said his church sent him to the Missionary Training Center in Provo, Utah. He said, "I underwent intensive language study for approximately 12 weeks [in Utah]. Unfortunately, when I arrived in Japan 12 weeks later, I couldn't communicate with anybody at all."

He said that what he learned from textbooks didn't aid him while he was in Japan and it took him about 8 months to be comfortable in his communication skills in Japanese. Because of this he says, "I try to teach Japanese the way I learned it...I always try to tailor the lessons to the needs of each person."

Chace Biagas, vice president of the Japanese Club said, "He is really laid back and you can take your own time learning...we have partner schools in Japan and kids come over to our school to visit. If Japanese was a course option, I feel like more people would want to learn the language."

According to Dr. Pagcaliwagan, the Japanese Club is still growing. "It is all student-initiated," she said, "They are very independent and I just watch it grow. They teach me! They taught me to watch anime and things I never looked at when I was in Japan. We learn from each other and I love it!"

She mentioned that Parks comes to GWU through his own will. "A tutor like him could cost anywhere from \$60 to \$70 an hour."

Parks says his future plans will concentrate in economics. "My plans are to work as an independent real estate investor, an active investor in international stocks and bonds, and an entrepreneur building my own businesses."

For more information please contact the President of the Japanese Club, Praise Gardea at pgardea@gardner-webb.edu.