

NOVEMBER 25, 2020

SUMMARY REPORT

J.LIVE Talk

2020



The final round of George Washington University's sixth annual J.LIVE Talk, a national presentation contest open to college-level Japanese learners and, for the first time ever, high-school learners of Japanese in the United States, was held on Saturday, November 14, via Zoom and live streamed to YouTube. The nine finalists who competed on Saturday were selected from 18 impressive semifinalists, who themselves were selected from amongst 47 applicants hailing from 10 states (CA, GA, MD, NC, OH, PA, TX, VA, WA, WV) and the District of Columbia.

Though usually held on the George Washington University campus, unavoidable difficulties arising from the Covid-19 pandemic caused us to hold the event entirely online. Yet this challenge offered participants in J.LIVE Talk a unique opportunity to develop and display both their presentation skills and language abilities in a real-time, online format. The finalists delivered their dynamic presentations to a distinguished panel of judges and an audience of several hundred viewers watching live on YouTube.

The judging panel consisted of Mr. Masashi Mizobuchi, Minister-Counsellor for Public Affairs and director of the Japan Information and Culture Center at the Embassy of Japan; Dr. Junko Mori, Professor of Japanese at the University of Wisconsin-Madison; Mr. Ikuo Nishimura, General Manager of the Washington Office of Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings; Dr. Takakazu Yamagishi, Professor in the Department of Global Liberal Studies at Nanzan University; and Dr. Mark Williams, Vice President for International Academic Exchange at International Christian University.

An equally distinguished committee of advisors also gave generously of their time. The advisory committee included Ms Yoko Lawless of the Naganuma School in Tokyo Ambassador John R. Malott; Dr. Yoshiko Mori of Georgetown University; Mr. Koji Otani of Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology in Virginia; and Ms. Noriko Otsuka of Fox Mill Elementary School in Virginia.

The judges, as real-time participants, viewed the presentations and then evaluated each presenter's interpersonal skills through a short question-and-answer session in Japanese. Audience members watching on YouTube were also given the chance to ask the presenters questions in Japanese via YouTube's live chat; these questions were then read to the presenters by a George Washington University faculty member. These impromptu

exchanges further tested the participants' abilities to articulate themselves in Japanese, though they were not officially weighed by the judges in compiling their final rankings.

The following decisions were announced at the Awards Ceremony:

High School Division Winners (*And Their Academic Advisors*)

Gold Award Winner: **Emily Coyne**, Lake Braddock Secondary School, VA

(*Advised by Ms. Yuki Melvin*)

Presentation Title: 家族の絆 “Family Ties”

Silver Award Winner: **Emily Ruber**, Washington Japanese Heritage Center,

Washington D.C. / Patriot High School, VA. (*Advised by Ms. Mina Seat*)

Presentation Title: 環境に優しい洋服 “Eco-friendly Fashion”

Bronze Award Winner: **Rebekah Nix**, Huntington High School, WV.

(*Advised by Dr. Natsuki Fukunaga Anderson*)

Presentation Title: 私の豆乳愛 “My Love of Soy Milk”

College Division Category I

Gold Award Winner: **Xueyuan Wang**, Rice University

(*Advised by Dr. Hiromi Takayama*)

Presentation Title: 日本の環境に優しい建築 “Japan's Green Architecture”

Silver Award Winner: **Ian Campbell**, University of Cincinnati

(*Advised by Dr. Noriko Fujioka-Ito*)

Presentation Title: 外に行けない時は、何をすればいいんですか “What Do I Do if I Can't Go Outside?”

Bronze Award Winner: **Tosin Olorunsola**, The University of Texas, San Antonio
(Advised by Dr. Makiko Fukuda)

Presentation Title: 日本の特撮ヒーローの影響と可能性を考察 “A Case for Japan’s Tokusatsu Heroes”

College Division Category II

Gold Award Winner: **Lorenz Vargas**, George Washington University
(Advised by Dr. Shoko Hamano)

Presentation Title: Shall we ダンス with コロナ? “Shall we *Dance* with *Corona*?”

Silver Award Winner: **Willow Wilkes**, University of Pennsylvania
(Advised by Prof. Tomoko Takami)

Presentation Title: 私の好きな日本語の言葉 “My Favorite Japanese Word”

Bronze Award Winner: **Minori Sekine**, American University
(Advised by Prof. Akane Shirata)

Presentation Title: 難聴と障害 “Hearing Loss and Disability”

Amazon gift cards of \$300, \$200 and \$100 were presented respectively to the Gold, Silver, and Bronze award winners of each category. Historically, in addition to cash prizes, gold award winners also received an even more substantial prize: study abroad scholarships to facilitate travel to Japan. Although this was not an option this year, the winners of J.LIVE Talk 2020 will retain their eligibility and may reapply for J.LIVE Talk in 2021.

Congratulations to all!

In addition to viewing the main presentations, J.LIVE Talk attendees were also able to visit “virtual booths” hosted by ten major businesses and organizations with connections to Japan and Japanese culture (see the J.LIVE Talk 2020 Program for a complete listing). These virtual booths replaced the physical booths set up in years past on the George Washington campus, and they afforded online attendees the opportunity to learn about companies at which they, as students of Japanese, might be interested in working, and also to learn about

ventures such as the JET Program, which employs motivated college graduates from the U.S. as English teachers or professional translators in Japan.

The challenges inherent to organizing and hosting a fully online, real-time presentation contest for learners of Japanese from across the U.S. was immense. MCs Nicole Tsuruta and Takuya Ito negotiated these challenges brilliantly and kept the event moving smoothly. Some participants, such as judges Dr. Mark Williams and Dr. Takakazu Yamagishi, joined us directly from Japan, and altogether the event required dozens of simultaneous Zoom participants and benefited from hundreds of viewers on the YouTube livestream. As of this writing (Nov. 25 — barely ten days later), the YouTube video has been viewed almost 1,500 times. J.LIVE Talk 2020 was a great success: it showcased to a national audience the abilities of nine talented students, and by demonstrating on a truly massive scale the technological viability of the fully online format, it paved the way for similar large-scale presentation contests in the future.