



Hamburg teacher to visit Japan on Fullbright program

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HAMBURG — A trip to Japan in June will allow Hamburg fifth-grade teacher Darby Kolb to combine two of the things she loves most: teaching and traveling.

As a participant in the Japan Fulbright Memorial Fund Teacher Program, Kolb will spend three weeks in Japan soaking up the local culture as well as meeting local teachers, students and parents. The program is funded by the Japanese government.

Kolb, Hamburg School 2008 Teacher of the Year, said she saw the information about the program in a teaching magazine and she knew she had to apply for it.

"I travel every chance I get, so a study tour for teachers was something I couldn't pass up," she said.

The program allows primary and secondary school educators in the United States to travel to Japan for three weeks to promote greater intercultural understanding between the two nations. This year, nearly 400 educators from all over the United States will participate.

Kolb, a lifelong resident of Sussex County, has been teaching at Hamburg for 14 years. She said she has been interested in Japan since she was a student at Long Pond School and her fourth-grade teacher did a unit on that nation.

Kolb, who has traveled extensively in Europe, China, Russia and Australia, said she is interested in learning more about how Japanese students learn, especially when it comes to history. Her goal is to incorporate additional Japanese history and culture into her lesson plans when she returns.

Currently, she said, the extent of teaching about Japan is to talk about what took place after World War II.

"This will be great, because I can develop art activities and history lessons," she said.

Kolb said she is as enthusiastic as when she first began teaching: "I love it. I enjoy the activities as much as the kids (do)."

Kolb said she plans to take a gift for her host family, and she will share letters from her students and photographs of New Jersey to "show the Japanese people the beautiful area I am from."

She is curious to see what they teach in Japan and she's especially curious about their history program. It will be interesting to see how they teach history from their perspective, she said.

"I think it's an absolute honor for the district," said Steven Engravalle, Hamburg superintendent. "It's an honor for the county and the state.

"If the governor walked into the school tomorrow, hers would be the classroom I would take him to. She is a role model for me as well as her students," he said.

The application process for the program began in December and included developing a teaching unit and submitting an essay.

During the program, participants will attend seminars in Tokyo and be introduced to Japanese culture through museums, historic landmarks and the nation's education system. They will meet with government officials and educators and visit urban schools.

Then they will be assigned to small groups and spend several days visiting a Japanese city, where they will visit local schools and teachers' colleges. They each also will have a short stay with a Japanese family.

All participants are encouraged to develop a plan for sharing their experiences with their schools and communities when they return to the United States.

Engravalle said the school will lend her photography and video equipment to document her trip that will be used for a multimedia presentation for the school.

"Her trip will be put to good use at the school when she returns," he said.

