

Messages from 2009 Senior Camp Counselors

David

My time at SCOA was one of the best experiences that I have ever participated in. Being able to give your time to help impact and make a difference in the lives of children from another country is priceless. Not only did I have the opportunity to help teach Japanese children about Americans, but I also got to learn about the campers and their way of life. I also had the opportunity to create a number of friendships with other counselors and Japanese staff with whom I still keep in touch with today. Besides this, my experience at SCOA impressed many interviewers from medical school and ultimately had a significant impact on my acceptance. As much as I had the chance to impact the lives of the campers, my time at SCOA helped shape who I am today in more ways than I could have imagined.

Alli

SCOA in my opinion is a significant step into the wave of the future. It gives two completely different cultures the chance to interact, bond, and grow together in an unexplainable experience. It instills the knowledge that language is only one aspect of communicating and through athletics, much more can be shared. My SCOA experience involved singing at the top of lungs around a camp fire, playing endless games of sports, frisbee throwing competitions, and putting on skits session after session. It was hard work, and I was exhausted after each day. But the rewards of the entire experience outweigh the tough times, and with the support of the other counselors the experience was extremely rewarding and fun. The children are amazing, they are eager to learn and socialize with the counselors, and for the counselors, it gave us a chance to learn so much about ourselves and the Japanese culture. I would recommend this experience to anyone; it truly is one I will never forget.

Ashley

If you are interested in having one of the most *amazing* cultural experiences of your life you should strongly consider becoming a counselor at Sports Camp of America! Last summer I spent three weeks at camp in various areas of Japan working with some of the most incredible Japanese children, co-counselors, and staff. Teaching sports and games with a language barrier was one of the most challenging and rewarding endeavors I've ever experienced. Sports, games, outings, songs, campfires and s'mores in a beautiful and pristine country... what more could you ask for during your summer break??? Don't miss out on the opportunity of a lifetime - you won't regret it!

Eric

From the moment I stepped off the plane, I knew that this summer would be unlike any other. SCOA Camp had given me an opportunity to go to a country I'd always heard about and dreamed of visiting: Japan. Finally I was there and Japan did not disappoint. The crazy crush of people, the crazy mess of trains, the crazy neon orgy that is Japanese advertising--all gave evidence to the fact that Japan was vibrantly alive. The sensory overload would have been overwhelming if it wasn't all so magnificent. I knew little of what to expect from SCOA since this was my first time at a summer camp, in America or otherwise, but the first whirlwind moments of my trip did not belie the whirlwind that was to be camp.

As we stood in front of the Japanese campers for the first time--them gaping at us, us trying not to gape at them--we knew we weren't in the proverbial Kansas anymore. Immediately we were thrust into roles leading teams of energetic Japanese school children in games, sports, and--most of all--cheers. Remember, you need to have an awesome cheer. Every time. The campers were go-go-go all the time so we had to be as well. Even dinner was no respite. "Why do you hold your chopsticks like that?" Well, I never really learned-- "What's that on your arm?" There's something on my arm?! But the questions went both ways. English levels varied throughout camp so we engaged those kids who couldn't speak English very well through simple questions or even pantomime. Those kids must have thought I was slow because I asked them what the Japanese word for water was every time we had food. It's "mizu," by the way, but you'll want to forget that before your next meal. Food aside, my favorite part of SCOA Camp was the "Ask the Americans" time where the Japanese kids got to ask the counselors anything they wanted. Questions ranged from the innocuous like "do you have any hobbies" to something more racy like "which of your fellow counselors would you date?" Where's the safe way out of this one?! Answer: everyone is your favorite.

Camp shouldn't be the only draw for a would-be SCOAer because after camp ends counselors are given the opportunity to explore Japan. On my trip I went from Hiroshima to Tokyo, seeing everything from hundred year-old temples to state of the art electronics. In Kyoto I was even lucky enough to see one of the legendary Geishas on her way to work. Be warned, though, they're hard to spot as there are only about a thousand left in Japan. One thing that isn't a rarity in Japan is the country's natural beauty. On my last night in Japan I went on a night hike up the most famous of Japanese natural landmarks: Mt. Fuji, which the Japanese call Fuji-san or Mr. Fuji. The politeness that is a hallmark of Japanese culture was driven home most by this trek; only in Japan would people form a queue to climb a mountain at 1AM. Fortunately, the wait did not diminish the reward at the top of Mr. Fuji. When the clouds parted at sunrise to reveal all of Japan below, I felt like I was in a Renaissance painting. The stunning beauty of the strange and wondrous land below was a fitting end to my summer in the land Geisha and gadgets.

Even though the view from Mt. Fuji was ethereal and the temples were striking, these are not the things I remember most. As with any worthwhile experience, I most remember the people I encountered; my fellow American counselors and our Japanese campers. The stresses and frustrations of camp and traveling fade away and all I'm

left with are the people I shared camp with. SCOA Camp brought us together as companions on this amazing journey and in sharing this experience we all grew, learned, and changed together. And that is what SCOA Camp is really all about.

Julian

SCOA was unlike anything I had experienced before. It appealed to me because I always had an interest in athletics, kids, and travel. I joined the staff knowing I would be teaching children about American sports and life, but had no idea I would learn so much about others and myself.

Over the years I had worked and participated in several sports camps in the US, but SCOA is very unique. All parts of the day are filled with something new. Everything from how you get ready for the day to how you go to bed are different for both the campers and staff. Throw in the fact that you speak different languages and it all becomes very interesting. You quickly learn to face any and all obstacles, developing tight knit relationships with your co-workers. By the end of camp you have learned so much and developed so many new skills that you know it was an invaluable experience.

Traveling throughout Japan after camp ended was an added bonus to the trip. I had met great people at camp and was lucky enough to experience a lot of what Japan has to offer. Everything from the environment, to the people, to the culture is unforgettable. I would highly recommend this camp to dedicated individuals that have an interest in sports, children, and a desire to learn and embrace new things.

Mimi

I was a senior counselor for the 2009 SCOA summer camps in Japan. I had an unforgettable time. The staff and I bonded instantly and it made the summer pass by faster than I would have liked. The kids in the program were great! As hard as things are teaching new things to children who cannot understand you I had to keep in mind kids are kids no matter where they are from. They came through for me just like any of the kids I work with in the states do... with love. They looked up to us counselors and just made camp so much fun. I really enjoyed the "ask the Americans" section of each camp. Watching Keiko translate was such a trip I wish I could do that. Being a counselor for SCOA is an amazing opportunity I will always treasure. It took a lot of work though keep in mind the hours JR gives you are for real!!! :) Sometimes it seems like it will be easy to get through no problem, but back to back sessions takes its toll and with new faces each camp you have to be on your game, so everyone has a great time each session!

Kaitlin

Sports Camp of America is a great internship opportunity for college athletes who are passionate about coaching and playing with young children. I thoroughly enjoyed my experience as a camp counselor for SCOA. I was able to form long lasting friendships with my fellow counselors and travel around a foreign country with a truly unique and wonderful culture. The kids were a joy to work with, and learning to overcome the obvious language barrier in order to connect with them proved to be one of the most rewarding experiences I've ever had. I would definitely recommend this camp!