

To Whom It May Concern:

Hello, my name is William Smith. I am currently going into my sophomore year at Oak Ridge High School. During the summer I was able to travel to China as a part of the Jinan Sacramento Sister Cities Corporation Youth Ambassador program. I would like to thank you very much for your generous donation to JSSCC. Your donation helped fund the \$500 scholarship I was awarded and this amazing opportunity to visit China with many other students.

During my trip to Jinan with the other youth ambassadors, I experienced so much culture and had an extraordinary time. When we arrived in Jinan, I was greeted by my host student and his parents. At first conversations were slightly awkward, but very soon we began to know each other better and conversations went smoothly. I also got the opportunity to practice speaking Chinese with them. I spent an entire weekend with my host student's family, where they took me around to explore the Jinan city. I really enjoyed spending time with the family and getting to know them more. When Monday came, we woke up early in the morning to go to Dong Cheng Yi Jia Middle School. We had the opportunity to meet the school officials, tour the school, and participate in multiple classes, where we had a group discussion and talent show with the students and practiced some Tai Chi. After a special lunch, we travelled to The New High Technology District No. 1 Experimental School, where the students performed several amazing shows demonstrating Chinese culture. The school also provided us with an opportunity to make dumplings with the teachers and students, where I learned a new method of making dumplings. We had a good dinner together and played some sports afterwards. I enjoyed visiting these schools and interacting with the students, which gave me a deeper insight into the daily lives of Chinese children, allowing me to better compare the different lifestyles.

Another highlight of this trip was visiting Qufu, the birthplace of Confucius. In front of the Temple of Confucius, I enjoyed watching the traditional Chinese dances and listening to the Chinese music at its gate-opening ceremony. Once I entered the big, red gates of the Confucius temple, I immediately felt immersed in Chinese and Confucian culture. I enjoyed learning about the different parts of the temple, and what each part symbolically represented. We later travelled by horse carriage to Confucius's graveyard, where he and all of his descendants were buried. This trip to Qufu allowed me to truly experience Confucian culture, as opposed to only learning about it in a textbook.

Later we were received by Jinan government officials in the government building. We went to the rooftop of the tall building, where we had a spectacular view of the city from above. From up top I was able to see the Olympic stadium and all of the surrounding tall office buildings. The city buildings were

very organized and well-designed. We also visited the Shandong Museum and the Shandong Art Museum, where I got to learn more about Jinan's history and experience its culture.

Overall I had an amazing time being a youth ambassador for Sacramento. I really enjoyed exploring the city of Jinan, and I also liked visiting Qufu to learn about Confucian culture and history. My favorite part about being a member of the Sacramento youth ambassadors was that I was able to exchange cultures with the Chinese students and learn more about the daily lives of Chinese children my age. Although I have been to China many times before, I had never had an opportunity like this to expose myself to students in China. I learned that students in China have a lot of homework and study very hard, which is why they are typically so smart. In recent years China's economy and technology have been growing very rapidly, which is directly connected to the hard-working and diligent mindset in many Chinese workers. Seeing how Chinese students are so successful has inspired me to study harder and strive to learn more. I would like to thank you again for your donation to Jinan Sacramento Sister Cities Corporation. It has helped fund this amazing Youth Ambassador program so that students like myself have the amazing opportunity to travel to China and exchange cultures with other Chinese students.

Regards,

William Smith