



Ms. Megumi Furuta, an English major from Kobe College, is in Minnesota for a one month internship. She is working at The Sketchy Artist, a shop in Northfield, Minnesota owned by former St. Olaf student April Ripka that sells art, art supplies, stationery and gifts, and she is staying in Cannon Falls, MN, with KCC-JEE board member Marnie Jorenby.

“I was surprised at how much physical labor is involved,” says Megumi. “There is a lot of lifting, opening and disassembling of cardboard boxes. Another requirement is a detailed knowledge of art supplies, such as watercolors. Megumi has picked up some pointers from watching April. “If the paint is sticky, then the quality is good,” she explains. “April sells high quality items.”

I asked April what about working for April was different from her experience working at part time jobs in Japan. “In Japan, the customer is always right,” Megumi answered, “But April told me that if a customer is being difficult, ‘You can stand up for yourself.’ She also told me that, ‘As the manager, I will stand up for you.’ She has a frank, open attitude that is very different from managers in Japan.” This open, casual attitude, Megumi said, also holds between April and her customers. “At first I thought they were all friends,” she said, laughing.



On living in the country:

Although Megumi’s home town Kato is technically in the country, this internship has been Megumi’s first experience living on a farm. I was amazed that Megumi arrived from Japan with only three pairs of high heels in her suitcase. “That’s all I wear!” she said. In order for Megumi to enjoy activities like walking our two dogs, picking walnuts and painting, I took her shopping to buy some sneakers!

Another thing Megumi is finding hard to get used to is the crisp fall mornings and chilly evenings. “And the bugs!” she adds. “I’ve seen bugs here that I never saw at home!” Nevertheless, Megumi is enjoying life on the farm, and looking forward to “Hoho Days”, a pig-themed festival my father is planning for next weekend. Megumi and I have been helping to design the midway, which features such games as “Hog Escape” and “Apple Toss.” By adding fashion accessories such as sunglasses, a necklace and a tie to the pigs, Megumi has lent her own personal touch to the festivities!

