

Hello! My name is Stephen Cannell. Starting in August, I will be serving as a "Coordinator for International Relations" (CIR) in Toyohashi.

I grew up in Chicago, a large city in the middle of the United States of America. Chicago is located on the west shore of Lake Michigan, one of the Great Lakes. Because of this, the winters are extremely cold and the wind is extremely strong. Chicago is known for wind, pizza, sports, skyscrapers, and gangsters. Al Capone, a famous gangster from the 1920s was from Chicago. The most famous skyscraper in Chicago is the Willis Tower (previously known as the Sears Tower,) which was the tallest building in the world until 1998. If you ever have a chance to visit the United States, make sure to stop by Chicago!

After graduating from high school, I began my college education at the University of Missouri, and in my second year, I had the opportunity to spend the summer in Japan, where I would study traditional Japanese puppet theater, known as *ningyo joruri*. I lived with a host family in Shiga Prefecture for two months and learned to play the shamisen (a traditional Japanese instrument similar to a banjo,) the primary musical instrument used in puppet theater. Aside from studying *ningyo joruri*, I had the chance to experience a variety of Japanese customs, and to travel to many beautiful places in Japan. The following year, I spent a semester abroad at Kwansei Gakuin University in Hyogo Prefecture. I studied Japanese, explored Japan, and ate tons of delicious food.

After returning home from my semester abroad, I transferred to the University of Wisconsin and continued my Japanese studies with the goal of working as a CIR in Japan. In the summer of 2018, spent 6 weeks in Tokyo studying Japanese, and the following winter I graduated from university.

My goal as a CIR is to learn as much as possible about international exchange, promote both American and Japanese culture, gain Japanese workplace experience, and further my Japanese ability. Be it language, sports, traditional culture, food, etc., I believe that the more people understand and appreciate foreign cultures, as well as their own, the more we can cherish these traditions and preserve them forever.

I have a variety of hobbies including golf, snowboarding, skateboarding, and music, but when I am in Japan, I also enjoy eating ramen, visiting hot springs, and collecting *shuin* (red seals distributed by shrines and many temples throughout Japan.) While I am in Toyohashi, I hope to experience handheld fireworks and surfing!

I am excited to live and work in Toyohashi, and I hope that while I am here, I can help to deepen our international ties and get everyone excited for the Olympics!

