

## Ellen Toyonaga



"I enjoy being busy, especially when that involves work I truly love. Before coming to the US, I was extremely busy as a physician conducting experiments, and also a mother. When my husband, who is currently an Associate Research Scientist (ARS) at the Yale Medical School, came to the US in 2017, I was simultaneously working as a dermatologist and completing my PhD in dermatology in Japan. Since I was so enthusiastic in my clinical work and research, I did not want to suspend them, and finally joined my family after graduation last year. In Japan I worked 24/7, taking care of the inpatient ward and outpatient clinic, guiding young interns at the hospital, giving lectures to medical and nursing students in the university, handling cells and performing experiments on mice, and - most importantly - spending quality time with my lovely daughter and family. I never felt tired and have always been passionate about my work and life.

Life is too short, and there are still too many things that I have always wanted to do, but never had enough time to accomplish. After I came here, I decided to challenge myself to do all the things that I would not be able to do while working as a physician in Japan. I learned to speak Japanese, English, Taiwanese, Chinese, and some German; next, I decided to pick up Spanish, Italian, and Korean. I also immerse myself in trying new hobbies and activities, such as taking piano lessons, learning ballroom dances, running the Yale International Cooking Club, and teaching cooking and baking classes. Most recently, I received my seventh certification; besides holding a physician license, scuba diving license, cooking license, baking instructor certification, royal icing sugar cookies instructor certification, and, of course, a driver's license, I am now a certified bartender as well." I also love all kinds of art like music and painting. In fact, I was a vocalist and sang in a band for 3 years during college. Recently, I am obsessed with painting abstract paintings. Djoulia - one of my best friends, whom I met at Yale - is a professional artist. She

returned to France last year, and we are planning to hold an art exhibition together in France this year!

Though technically I am Japanese, I was born and raised in Germany until the age of 9, when my family moved to Taiwan. After spending junior and senior high school there, we moved back to Japan. I have moved and traveled around more than 20 countries; perhaps because of my multicultural background, starting life in New Haven wasn't as challenging for me as it seems to be for some others. The OISS made my transition here a very pleasant experience. Last year, I joined almost all activity groups I could at OISS and volunteered to help with the orientation for spouses and partners of Yale's international affiliates. One of the biggest surprises I discovered after arriving here was the diversity of the people around me. In Japan, Japanese is the only language you need. But here, there are a huge variety of people using multiple languages. Since I speak several languages, which I never used when living in Japan, I easily make friends here from all over the world. Thanks to the OISS, I have met tons of awesome people from different cultures with different backgrounds.

One of the most beautiful things about Yale is the people. I feel grateful to be around so many brilliant and wonderful people, and every single day I learn something new and feel inspired. I do not know how long we are going to stay here, but I know I will not waste any minute; I will keep challenging myself, and I will live life to the fullest."

- Ellen Toyonaga, OISS spouse #HumansOfOISS

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