

Around September or October of last year, when I was starting my 4th and last (I thought) year in Japan, I often wrote in this journal about the sadness of doing many different things for the last time. While I haven't thought about those lasts for a long time, I was reminded again that the end is coming near as I sat at my high school's graduation on Saturday. I felt sad as they played the school song and I thought about the time when I will have to give my goodbye speech to the students in the same kind of ceremony. But I didn't only think about endings and goodbyes, I thought about new beginnings, too.

While I still have a lot of "lasts" coming up in the next few months, it is not nearly as many as I thought. It's my last year teaching at Tsu Nishi, because I decided that it is time for me to move onto something new and try to find a career that is right for me. Unfortunately, it is not teaching! But shortly after I decided that it was time for me to finish my job and return home, I had another idea, and applied to be a CIR, or Coordinator for International Relations here in Mie. CIRs are in the same program as ALTs in Mie, but they don't teach as much as they organize events, and help with foreign language and international relations not in a school, but in the community. I thought this job would be right for me, since I would like to work in some kind of international relations in the future, so I sent in my request to change from an ALT to a CIR.

I honestly didn't think I would even have a chance to get this new job. But luckily my request was approved, and suddenly I wasn't feeling sad about all the things I was enjoying for the last time in Japan. I had thought I wouldn't have another chance to enjoy all the chestnut-flavored sweets that are so popular in the fall in Japan, so I was relieved to know that I would have another year. On the other hand, I will also have the whole, long Japanese summer to live through as well! These are just two things, but on the whole, I was relieved to know that this will not actually be my last year and excited to have another year and a new job to keep my life interesting.

Of course it will still be sad when I have to say goodbye at my school. At closing ceremonies for the different terms each year, I often think of the closing ceremony in July when I have to say goodbye. I don't know what I'll say, but I know that it will be really hard to leave my school, as well as this office and my office at the kencho. The people in these places have made me so comfortable and happy that my four years here have gone by so fast. But I'm glad that at least for now, it is just goodbye to my job, and not to Tsu or to Japan. I'm sure I will continue see my students around Tsu station, and a lot of my co-workers here as well. Instead of just feeling sad for leaving, I can also feel excited about my new job. That is a big relief.