

To Whom it May Concern,

My name is Michaela Connell and in my lifetime, I have only lived in two places, Rhode Island and France. I grew up in the Cumberland public school system, and it was at North Cumberland Middle School where my love of the French language started. In 7<sup>th</sup> grade, we took one semester of Spanish and one semester of French and for 8th grade we were able to choose one of the two. Being from a family of French immigrants, the choice was easy for me. I also had an incredible French teacher, Madame Shaw, who instilled in me a love of the French language, and the trip she created to Quebec is still a memory I will never forget. It was from there a dream was born, I wanted to speak fluent French and live in France.

I continued my French education through all four years at Cumberland High School and even earned college credits through the reciprocal program with RIC. When applying for college I knew I wanted to pursue a career in math and science and I applied to URI and was accepted into the international engineering program, where I would study Chemical Engineering and French and as part of the program, my dreams would come true, I would get to live in France.

In France, I studied and worked at the University de Technologie de Compiègne as a research scientist and had the privilege of working on a treatment for Alzheimers. When my visa ended I moved back to Rhode Island and started my first career as a research and development engineer at Fujifilm in North Kingstown, Rhode Island. My first thought when I moved back and started with a Japanese company, was “I will probably never get to use French again, and I’m thankful for my experience but French won’t help me in my career” but I was so wrong. At Fujifilm, one of our customers was based in France and Belgium, and it was my ability to speak French that put me at the head of the project in my first year at the company. Then my next position as Engineering sales manager at a medical device manufacturing company called Marle Group, fell in my lap because of their need for a French speaking engineer. At Marle, I was speaking French daily from my home office in Rhode Island. I was managing projects at manufacturing facilities in France, and taking American clients to rural manufacturing areas in France where no one speaks English. All this experience lead to my current position as head of global business development at a Medical Device Company called Cathtek.

Business is Global, and with today’ technology, we can reach the globe from anywhere, including my small town of Charlestown, Rhode Island. And whether it’s French, or Spanish, or Japanese. Being multilingual is the biggest tool for bringing global business to little Rhody.