Rotary Youth Exchange Program

Our outbound students for Rotary Youth Exchange year 2023-2024 have been selected. While we only have six students selected for this new exchange year, we are very proud of every one of them and will do our best to prepare them for a successful journey.

COVID has done a number on almost every program within and outside of Rotary. As a result, we have seen each other less often than in previous years and returning to a full routine of "doing good" in our community has been a little difficult. But if you have had anything to do with Rotary Youth Exchange, you know that it's easy to be enthusiastic and to support this wonderful program.

Are you aware of why the US Department of State sanctions youth exchange programs? It is because the intention of the US is to send our high school students to other countries as ambassadors for the United States and receive high school students from abroad to make sure they take back the message that the US is a country leading the world with the hope of peace for all. That is how and why the J-1 exchange programs were initiated through the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961.

As we return to exchanges and other Rotary activities, it's time for District 5190 clubs to show up and commit to one of the best youth program Rotary provides. Let's be very concise on what is needed and what is required for a successful RYE program:

- **Club support**
  - Appoint a Youth Exchange Officer and/or a Youth Counselor for your youth activities. Once appointed, contact Chesa Keane, RYE Executive Secretary to begin the certification process.
  - The Certification process includes:
    - Submission of Volunteer Application
    - Three personal references; only one Rotary reference can be used and only if that reference is *not* associated with RYE
    - Background check
    - Training, including: Dept of State, Youth Protection, Host Family and Volunteer training. These courses are all online, fully sourced and done on the volunteer's own time.
    - Interview by someone on the RYE Committee
- **Club commitments**
  - The club must agree to sponsor an inbound student to send an outbound student
  - Budget allocation
    - The inbound student will receive $130 - $150/month as a stipend from the club
    - The club *may* choose to add student benefits such as ski tickets or travel assistance, but these benefits are not required.
  - Identify host families for your inbound student. Having three host families is ideal, although two families is sufficient.
- **Find host families**
  - We will have at least six inbound RYE students this year, but we may actually accept more than six
  - Host families are not always what you envision – we want to give our students the US experience, so host families can be:
    - Families with children or have no children
    - Single parent households with or without children
    - Same sex households with or without children
    - Adults of any age range

    - We prefer three host families for each student, but if only two are found, that is okay.
- **Find outbound student candidates for exchange year 2024-23**
    - We begin looking for the next exchange year outbounds as early as April or May for the following year – our Outbound Briefing is in October with selection of students in December.
    - Reach out to your community to locate students as potential RYE candidates. Where to look? Some ideas:
        - High school principal/registrar
        - Language teachers
        - PTA
        - Youth organizations
        - Media opportunities, such as press releases, online calendars, and social media to name a few
        - Ask club members to consider offering family, friends and associates with students aged 15 – 18-1/2 years old this opportunity
    - Once a student or students have been identified as possible outbounds, send the student to: rye5190.org to locate the preliminary application found under **Downloads & Forms / Preliminary Long Term Application Rev. Aug 2018** [first option in the list].
    - The student will send your club their completed preliminary application and they will be interviewed, usually by your youth committee. If more than one student appears eligible, choose your #1 candidate, and designate any other candidates you like as alternates. We want to give every student interested and eligible this opportunity and we will assign them a sponsor club if necessary.
    - Send the student's preliminary application and your recommendation to Chesa Keane, RYE Executive Secretary [ryeexecsec@rye5190.org]
- **Next step for the student**
    - The student will be notified that they and at least one parent/guardian must attend the Outbound Orientation meeting in October 2023
- **Reap the benefits – enjoy the experience**
    - Stay in touch with your outbound student and with some planning, your outbound can be a digital program for one or more of your meetings.
    - Involve your inbound student at your meetings and in your projects like Rotary-at-Work Day, Food Bank, bell ringing, collection of food/toys during the holidays, etc.
    - Get to know your inbound student, inviting your members to include them in their personal recreational plans where possible.
    - Stay in touch with your outbound and let them know you are following their progress

We can all learn from the international experience of our outbound students as well as broaden our knowledge of other countries from our inbounds. The community, schools and host families are all enriched by the presence of an inbound student. And the outbound students cannot even imagine how this program changes their lives.

Seems like a win-win, doesn't it? Let's get our RYE program running full-force again. Join us in making RYE bigger and better!!

For more information: RYE Executive Secretary: Chesa Keane ryeexecsec@rye5190.org or (775) 691-2700