

Rotary Youth Exchange

Rotarians might think of the RYE program as stalled, canceled, ended ... but that would not be the case. We are actively working with Rotary volunteers to make sure they are trained and certified for our inbound youth coming in the summer of 2022. Just as our counselors and Youth Exchange Officers (YEO) are going to be working with the outbound students this fall.

If you understand the broad impact of this program not only on the RYE student that heads off to new country, then you realize the value to the community as well. Listing these benefits might be helpful:

- Studies have shown that an exchange student will be presented with about 40% greater opportunities for their future than students without international experience.
- Students exposed to living abroad are presented with challenges by which they grow in maturity and expand their awareness by having to deal with situations they would not know otherwise.
- Communities that welcome an exchange student broadens the awareness of other cultures as it reminds our citizens that we have a pretty wonderful country ourselves.
- Families that host an inbound student not only experience a more personal cultural expansion and awareness, but they create relationships that last for years - sometimes for generations - as they repeatedly visit the hosted student in their home country and that student returns to their home-away-from-home again and again.
- Schools that open their registration to exchange students learn by real-time means that students from another country are both the same and different from their U.S. students - and the same occurs in the host country schools where our outbounds end up).
- Students sharing a classroom with an exchange student are given a taste of the world and it encourages them to be more open of others' viewpoints.
- Even though the RYE program is built around education, what all exchange students learn is that school is the setting, classes are the medium, but the value comes in the cultural experience itself.
- The Rotary Youth Exchange program in District 5190 is a program for which any Rotarian can be proud. We are not only the least expensive but our outbound students receive the best training and preparation available to an exchange student. In addition, in our care, inbound students are safe and secure while having the best time of their lives.

If you have had the good fortune to spend some time with any of our inbound students or with our outbounds after they return, you had to have been impressed. Yes, they are still teenagers, but their viewpoint is so expansive as a result of their exchange that their new maturity can be astonishing. Any parent sending their student out on exchange can see how

this family decision was the best decision the family ever made. This is why you often see families sending out not just one child, but the next one and the next one. And once a family has hosted a student, it is rarely the only time they host. Some of our host families have hosted more than 10 times because the value is too great to miss.

One more thing: as Rotarians in a club that participates in the RYE program, please consider helping the program grow. As we share in the work of managing the RYE program, we become more involved with the RYE students and benefit more fully both as Rotarians and as a member of the community.

What might you do to help? Counselors, YEOs and club members can all do these activities:

- If you have a child between the years of 15 and 18-1/2, ask your child if they have ever considered going on exchange. You might be surprised. If you and your child do not know about the program, ask your Youth Services chair or RYE counselor and YEO to explain the program.
- Your child could ask at school if there are any classmates that might be interested in exchange and share the Rotary Youth Exchange program with them.
- Share your excitement with friends, family and even strangers. Put them in touch with District RYE Rotarians – in your club, at the district level and the District RYE Committee. Just ask; you'll find someone to help answer your questions.
- Talk to your school principal, registrar, parent-teacher association or language teachers at your school. If the school sees that parents and the community in general are interested in having exchange students in their children's classrooms, they will open up to the idea. If your school already has exchange students, remind them in a timely manner when outbounds are being recruited. [More on the timing of recruitment, selection and orientations in the next newsletter.]
- If you have media contacts, reach out to them. If you do not want to appear on TV or the radio to explain the program and promote community involvement, there are plenty of RYE Committee members who will appear for you.
- Ask someone from the District RYE Committee to speak at your club. When possible, the speaker will share the spotlight with an inbound student, a returned or soon-to-leave outbound student, a host family and counselors; and I can guarantee you, the presentation will inspire your club members to get more involved.

Just a few ideas to spur your involvement. Let us know if you have any questions or want someone to come to your club to do a RYE presentation. We are here to help expand the Rotary Youth Exchange program in whatever way we can.

For more information:

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