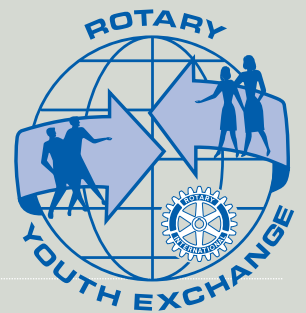
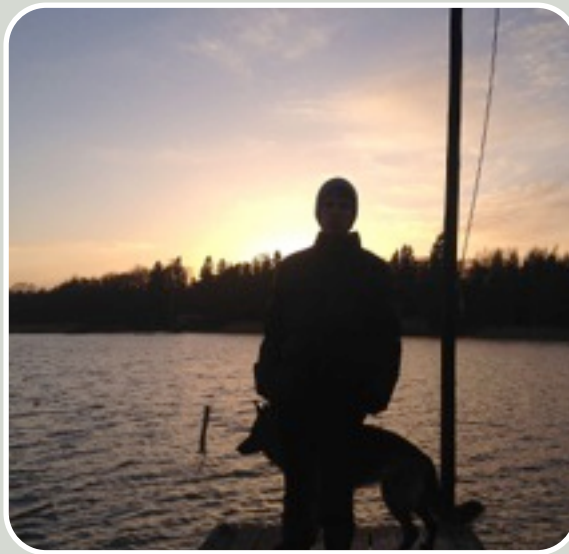


2014

LETTERS FROM ABROAD

ROTARY INTERNATIONAL DISTRICT 9800 YOUTH EXCHANGE PROGRAM

EXPERIENCES AND IMAGES
FROM OUR OUTBOUND YOUTH
EXCHANGE STUDENTS FOR 2014





OUTBOUND STUDENTS 2014

ROTARY DISTRICT 9800 YOUTH EXCHANGE COMMITTEE

Youth Exchange Chairman	Vanda Mullen	Web Master	Clifton Warren
Deputy Chairman/ Insurance Officer	Geoff Asher	Inbound Co-Ordinator	Geoff Asher
Secretary	Peter Lamping	Outbound Co-Ordinators	Margaret Paulsen, Garry Gunnell
Minute Secretary	Judith Whelan	Marketing Co-ordinator	Clifton Warren
Treasurer	Peter Baker	Events Co-Ordinator	Joy Bruce
Insurance Officer	Geoff Asher	ROTEX Representative	Brett Riley
'Letters From Abroad' designer & publisher/ Co-ordinator	Barry Mullen/ Graeme Bird	Program Advisor	Trevor Pang

COUNTRY CO-ORDINATORS

Brazil	Emanuel Tumino	Taiwan	Judith Whelan
Poland	Anne & Ed Brown	Hungary, Spain & Turkey	Garry Gunnell
Finland, Norway & Sweden	Chris & Rosemary Drenen	Japan & Austria	Graeme Bird
Denmark & USA	Maria Silber	France	Anne Brown & Judith Whelan
Germany	Fay Lunn, Barbara Lamping		

DISTRICT 9800 REPRESENTATIVES

District Governor 2014 - 2015	Murray Verso
District Chair Youth Services	Gabrielle Morgan

A MESSAGE FROM THE DISTRICT GOVERNOR, MURRAY VERSO

“One of Rotary’s goals is to create peace and better understanding between people. I think Rotary’s Youth Exchange program is the best way of doing that. My dream is for every 17-year-old to become a Youth Exchange Student. If we could achieve this, there would be no more wars.”

This quote about Rotary’s Youth Exchange program was made by Carl-Wilhelm Stenhammer, the President of Rotary International in 2005-2006. It is a strong endorsement of the objectives of our Youth Exchange program which are based on the long standing Rotary principle of promoting international understanding, peace and goodwill. Our Exchange program gives the youth of the world understanding and tolerance of all people, irrespective of age, gender, colour, creed or country.

Youth Exchange began with short term Exchanges between a handful of clubs in Denmark and France during the 1920s. The current reciprocal long-term Exchange grew in popularity during the 1950s and became the primary type of Rotary Youth Exchange in Australia. Today there are about 8,000 Exchanges arranged around the world each year. These Exchanges allow 15 & 17 year old students from 80 countries to have the opportunity of a lifetime.

It is now increasingly popular for students to take gap years abroad between school and university. In one sense, Rotary Exchanges can be seen as a version of that but actually they provide a much richer experience. There is the magic of learning in depth about another country and its culture from the inside rather than as a mere tourist. Then there are the relationships that form with school friends, with host families and with other Rotary Students.

Without fail, Exchange Students also come to better understand and appreciate their own country and culture. Greater self-knowledge and a greater sense of personal responsibility and confidence inevitably follow. A year seems a long time but all students that I have met can never believe how quickly it goes.

That doesn’t mean it’s always easy for the students or for their parents. Despite the efforts of Rotarians and past Exchange Students to give students advice beforehand, students go through an incredible learning curve from the day they arrive. They dive headfirst into a new culture, a new family life and new social networks. They have to learn a lot about themselves and their responses to situations and be ready to take the initiative when necessary.

Being constantly asked about oneself and one’s background in an unfamiliar language can be exhausting as well as fun. Sometimes, students are tempted to retreat into their previous worlds for a few hours – made much more possible by the prevalence of Facebook these days.

But the overwhelming response from the many students that I have seen come and go on Exchange is one of continuing delight and pride at how they have adapted to and learnt from all these experiences.

Of course it’s not just the students who benefit from the Exchange; host families, schools, members of Rotary clubs and all who come into contact with the program can benefit. It is wonderful see Exchange Students brighten up a Rotary club meeting with their youthful exuberance. They are always smiling and members enjoy chatting with them, learning about where they come from and what they are doing in Australia. Exchange Students are a great reminder of why we are in Rotary – to make the world smaller and more harmonious.

Thank you to the members of the District Youth Exchange Committee who work very hard all year round to ensure that each inbound and outbound student is well prepared and supported before, during and after the Exchange year. These committed Rotarians have the experience and passion to ensure the successful completion of each Exchange.

Let’s not forget the mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters who have to cope with their loved one being away from the family for a whole year. Of course, they will miss them but they have the courage to accept that their son or daughter will benefit in so many ways from the Exchange experience.

I hope you enjoy reading this excellent publication. The letters and photographs contained in it provide a fine record of the life changing experiences had by Rotary District 9800 youth Exchange Students during 2014.



Murray Verso

District Governor
Rotary District 9800

A MESSAGE FROM THE YOUTH EXCHANGE CHAIRMAN



As we launch Edition 5 of our much-acclaimed D9800 Youth Exchange publication 'Letters From Abroad', it makes us at the D9800 Youth Exchange Committee very proud indeed of the achievements of each of our Outbound Rotary Youth Exchange Students. It is pleasing to read of the diversity of opportunities and experiences that Rotary International has provided for each of our D9800 Students. On occasions, whilst on Rotary Youth Exchange, our students need to step out of their comfort zones, to manage a range of challenging issues. Each student often requires courage, resilience and the network of support and expertise offered by Rotary International. At the outset, we like to instil in each of our students, as they prepare to travel, a sense of responsibility and resilience, which in many instances enhances their overall overseas experiences.

Rotary Youth Exchange is an educational and cultural Exchange, which provides opportunities for students to live with Rotary approved families in other countries. During their 12 months on long-term Exchange, the students become immersed in the Host country's culture and they develop tolerance and understanding, as they participate as volunteers in many aspects of Rotary Service. In addition, the students make lifelong friendships around the World, as members of our Family of Rotary. I urge the students to stay connected with their Sponsor and Host Rotary Clubs and our D9800 Youth Exchange Committee, as we strive to promote peace, understanding and friendship in our world and continue to celebrate the accomplishments of Rotary Youth Exchange.

Thank you to our 2014 Outbound Students for their contributions to 'Letters From Abroad' and I congratulate them for their excellent work as ambassadors for Rotary International, Australia, their schools and their families. As you read their inspiring stories you realise that Rotary Youth Exchange is a life changing experience and it promotes international peace, goodwill and learning. Grateful thanks to our Sponsor and Host Clubs for your support of D9800 Rotary Youth Exchange.

Congratulations and thank you to our dedicated and hard working members of the D9800 Youth Exchange Committee. In particular, grateful thanks to our 'Letters From Abroad' Team for their excellent work and commitment to produce such an outstanding annual publication. Good luck to our students and families in your future endeavours and thank you for your significant contribution to Rotary Youth Exchange.

Vanda Mullen

Chairman
D9800 Youth Exchange Committee

HANNAH WESTON

As I sit down to write this article, I wonder where on

earth to begin. How do you describe an experience that totally changes your perspective on the world? That opens up possibilities that you never even dreamt of before? That shows you a whole new way to live your life?

It was around this time last year that I began to wonder what I was getting myself into. I was about to turn 15, and I had just been selected to live in Finland for a year. To be honest, I was terrified. I was going to be fully immersed in a culture I knew nothing of, where one of the hardest languages for an English speaker to learn was spoken. Scariest of all, I didn't know a single person in the country that was going to be my home for a year.

Since then, so much has changed. Getting on that plane may have been one of the hardest things I have ever done, but ultimately it was the best decision I ever made. I've been in Finland for less than eight months but in that time I've seen and done things I could never have even imagined this time last year.

I've been lucky enough to live in Lempäälä, a small town in southwestern Finland, for my Exchange year. It could not be more different from Melbourne. At first I was worried that I'd find life in a small town too quiet, but now I wouldn't change it for the world. I remember driving with my host family from the language camp in Karkku, where I spent my first week in Finland, to Lempäälä and being unable to believe I was really going to be living in such a beautiful place. Every day for the first few months I'd look out the living room window at the frozen lake and have to remind myself that it was real.

Life in Finland is very different from Australia. For a start, the week I left Australia it had been 44 degrees. When I arrived in Finland, it was -24 degrees. The weather alone presented a whole range of things to adapt to; I had to learn how to dress for temperatures I had never even imagined before, to shovel snow so the car would be able to leave the driveway, and to walk on slippery ice without falling. The good side of this was that I got to go ice skating and skiing (both downhill and cross country), and even ice fishing.

One of the most frustrating things about living in another country

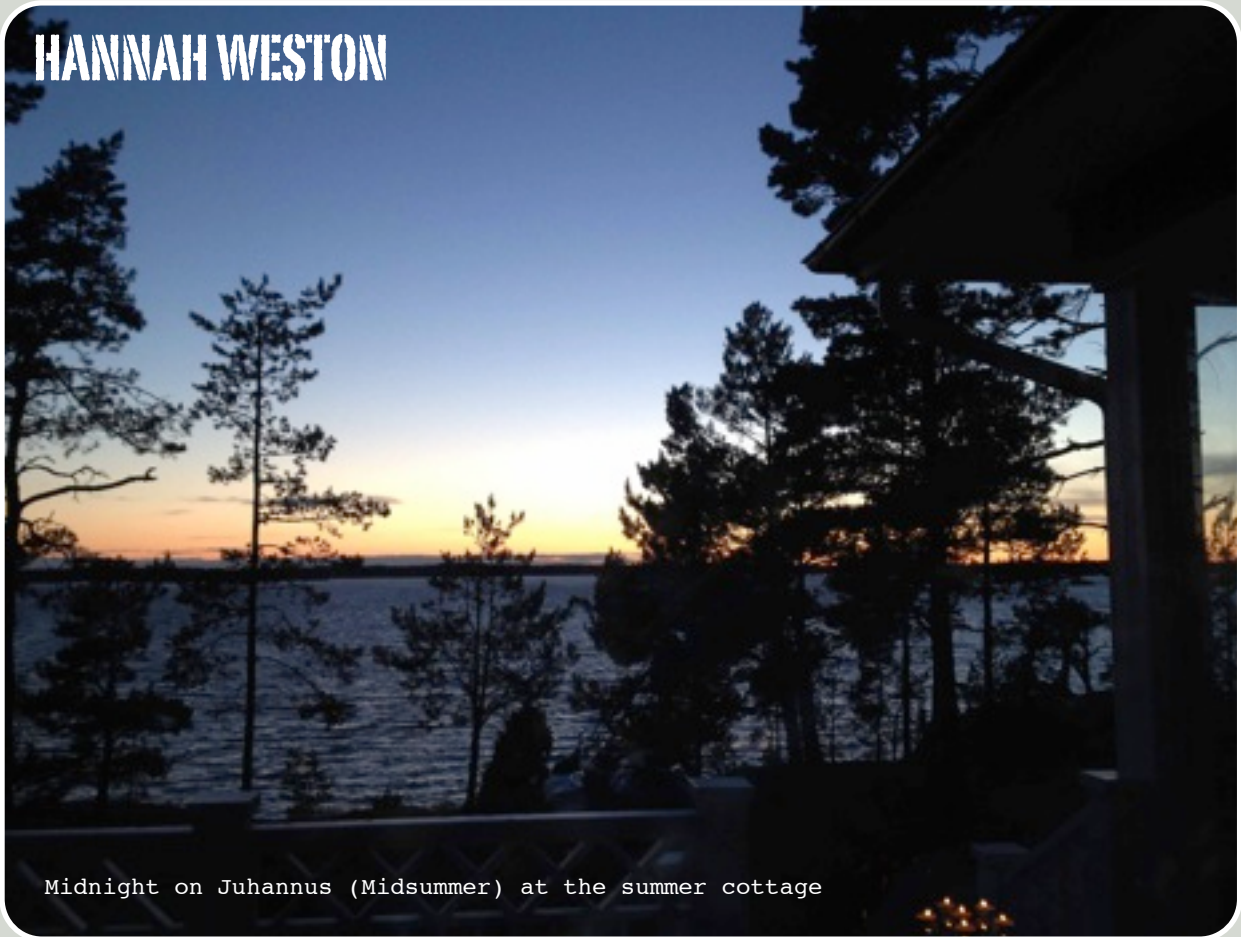
is the language barrier. While most young Finns speak very good English, they aren't always comfortable using it, and they tend to be much more reserved than they are when speaking their native language. As I mentioned before, Finnish is one of the most difficult languages in the world for a native English speaker to learn; not many Exchange Students are able to fully learn the language in a year. While I'm not at all confident I will be fluent in Finnish by the end of this year, I'm proud to be able to say that after seven months here, I managed to make a 10 minute presentation to my Rotary Club in Finnish, which is something that I wouldn't have thought possible a few months ago.

There have been so many highlights from this year, but best of all was Eurotour. In 19 days, I, along with 83 other Exchange Students, four Rotex, and two Rotarians, travelled through Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Monaco, Italy, Germany and Austria. It was definitely the best three weeks of my life and I feel so lucky to have had the opportunity to travel with such an amazing group of people.



From the kitchen window in January

HANNAH WESTON



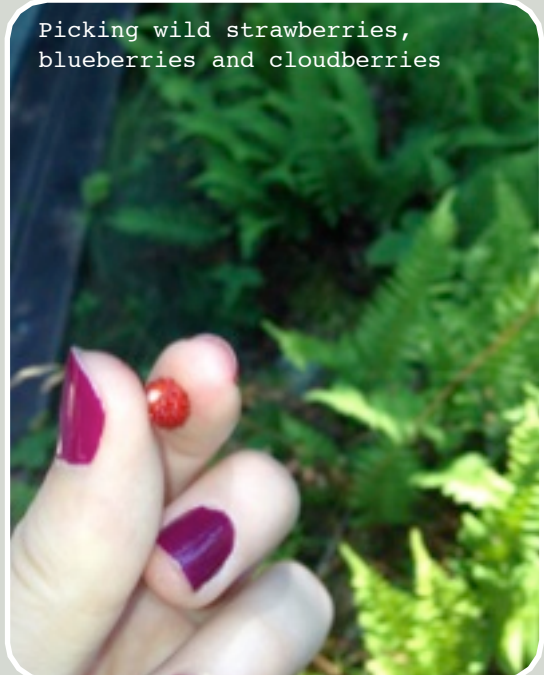
Midnight on Juhannus (Midsummer) at the summer cottage

In Venice (on Eurotour)



Clichéd though it might sound, this year has been totally life changing. I'm not saying it's always been great; there have been times when the only thing stopping me from getting on the next plane home was the reminder that if I did, I'd regret it for the rest of my life. But I've learnt so much in this amazing country, and the friendships I've made will last forever. Words cannot express how grateful I am for this opportunity: to Rotary, my parents, my incredible host families, to everyone who has made my Exchange possible. Thank you for the experience of a lifetime!

Picking wild strawberries, blueberries and cloudberries



Australian inbounds, D1390

It's hard to know exactly where to begin when I write about my Exchange because it is so hard to describe with words just how amazing it is. At first everything seems to go so slow but before I knew it I was saying 'Hi, I'm Emma. I'm one of the Australians and I've been here for almost 8 months.' Whenever I say how long I've been here I think of one thing; it's so amazing I don't really want to go home - I love it here.

It has taught me so much and I feel like I see the world through different eyes now. One of the most memorable things happened on my second day here. We were asked to lie down on the road and look at the mountain upside down. We were told that we could see this as an upside down mountain or as a mountain reflected in the Sky lake. Even the simplest parts of living can become interesting when in another country.

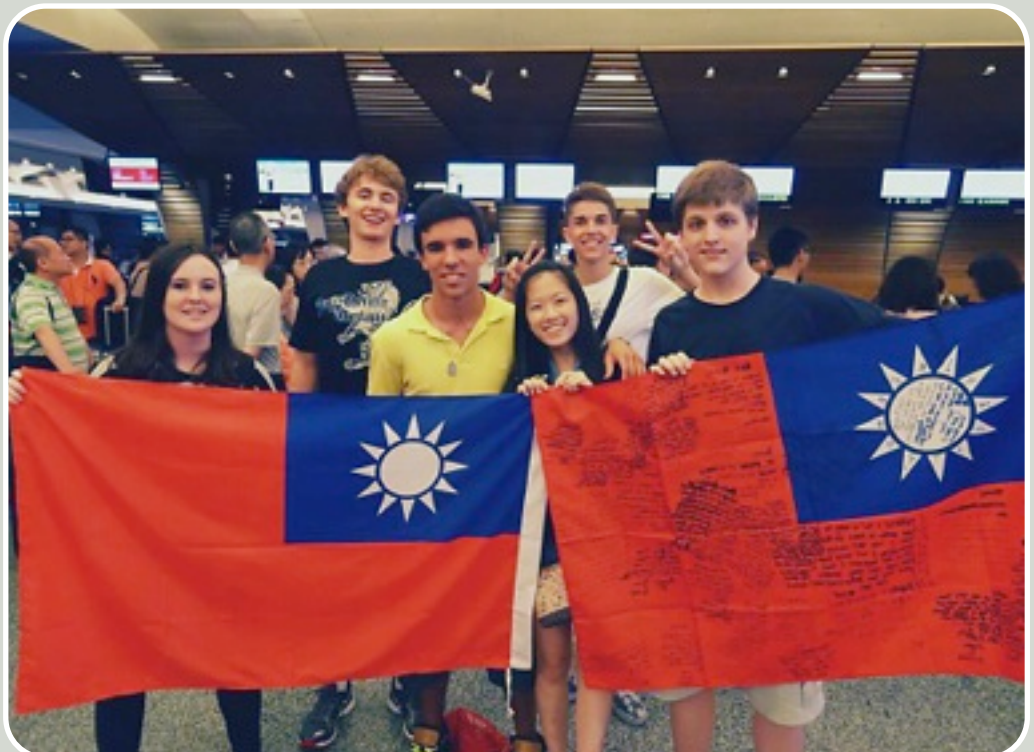
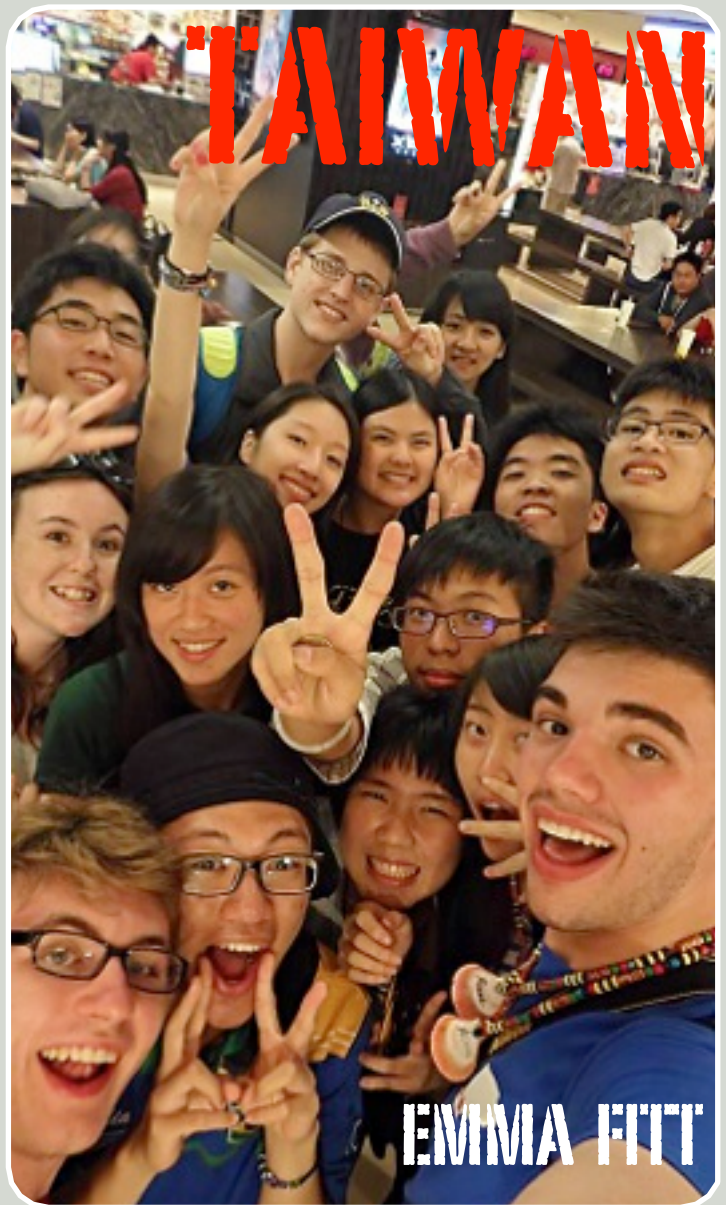
I feel that I'm lucky to come to Taiwan out of every country I chose because there is just so many different cultures packed into one tiny little Island which leaves me so much to explore with my new found friends like the many large, and very cheap, night markets in Taipei. Whether I want to see Chinese, Japanese, Taiwanese or indigenous culture I can easily find it because everyone in this country is so nice. There are host parents who joke about there only being one bad person in the whole of Taipei.

We don't have a big tour like other countries but Rotary takes us on two small bus trips and they are so much fun that I don't know what else to say. We climb mountains, swim at the beach, eat, go to hot springs, look at monkeys, walk through national parks, go to museums, eat, argue about whether Oreo's are biscuit or a cookie before we eat them and then we go to the night market and eat even more. It's safe to say that coming here involves a lot of eating; I still can't keep up with how much they eat especially during the new year.

They go home to their families, buy heaps of food and fire crackers and eat non-stop until midnight when they set off fireworks to ward off evil spirits. Everyone's favourite part of the Chinese New year is the red envelope. The red represent good luck and fortune and then they place money in it and hand it to someone younger as a sign that they wish them a good fortune.

June and July was, to be honest, the slowest point of my Exchange. I was saying goodbye to the friends I had made as they left for their own countries and mixing with the few friends I had left until the next group arrived. There is no way to compare these people to anything - its like having a huge

international family. It is hard when they leave but its amazing every time you meet someone new, make a new friend and essentially add someone to your international family. Who says you don't get to choose your family?



Exchange is not a year in your life, it's a life in a year.

Hi my name is Daisy McAree, I am 16 years old and I am on Exchange in Kufstein, Austria.

The process of picking a country for me was relatively easy, I had been learning Japanese for 10 years, thought I new what to expect from Japan and my Japanese teacher couldn't have been happier with my decision ... seriously she went around telling people for around three weeks that "Daisy her student had won a scholarship" Bless her heart.

Then it turned out that I wasn't able to go to Japan, and ended up being offered Austria as an option. I jumped at the opportunity as it sounded amazing, I new nothing about Austria geographically, culturally or linguistically.

I arrived in Austria, not speaking a word of German, I had never been to Europe and had no idea what to expect. Nine months on I can understand and speak German, I've seen my fair share of Europe. I still, however, have no idea what to expect, and that's the most exciting part.

Three days into my stay in Austria I had my first day of school. Throughout the course of the day I managed to say yes when someone asked me my name, tell my class I was a prostitute (turns out quite an easy mistake to make as the word tired is very similar) and got lost coming home... so I'd say it was a bit of a success. In my defence, at that point I was very jet lagged and was living in Germany and going to school in Austria.

On Exchange you are forced to get out of your comfort zone and try new things.

Three months into my Exchange I managed to gain an impressive 15 kilos, I believe it was due to my immersion into Austrian life; attempting to try everything. Others may say it was due the copious amounts of Schnitzel consumed... I'd say it's open to debate.

At the 15 kilo mark I decided something would have to change as my fat jeans (a pair of jeans bought a few sizes too big in case of the event that said Exchange Students pre departure jeans no longer fit - this is a term I believe many an Exchange Student is all too familiar with) no longer fit. So I started running and it turned out that I don't like running. After my failed attempt at exercise I decided that I'd had enough of



sport for the moment: however, as I felt myself getting heavier day by day I decided to give another sport a go, something unique and interesting and from there I decided on kickboxing! However, I didn't end up going to kickboxing but instead my host dad took me to a gym that teaches MMA, also known as Mixed Martial Arts... I remember my first three lessons thinking 'I didn't know tackling was allowed in boxing' and guess what turns out it's not. To my surprise I actually ended up really liking MMA and being pretty good at it and 6 months on I'm still going and loving every second of it (much to my parents dismay) and guess what... I ended up losing 9 kilos in the process.

A definite highlight of my Exchange came in July when around 100 other Exchange Students and I travelled to Germany, Belgium, France, Andorra, Monaco, Spain and Italy over the course of 16 days! We made so many amazing memories that I will cherish for the rest of my life on my Exchange, and I met numerous Exchange Students from all over the world who I know will be friends for life, and it really does just go to show everyone is exactly the same regardless of their race, beliefs, language or colour.

Since I left Australia I have become much more mature, made life-long friends, learnt about all other cultures, completely changed my outlook on life, become able to appreciate and put into perspective all I have in Australia, learnt how to appreciate other points of view and different types of people and become a much more confident person.

I cannot thank Rotary enough for this opportunity and I would strongly recommend a Rotary Youth Exchange to anyone brave enough because it's the best thing I have ever done and I am so grateful to everyone who made it possible.



DAISY MCAREE



HUNGARY



CLARE HUGHES

So far I have been in this beautiful amazingly breath-taking country called Hungary.

For the past seven months of my life I have lived with two amazing Hungarian host families, I have attended a Hungarian school and met and made so many new and wonderful friends and have lived the best seven months of my life in this country that I am absolutely honoured to call my own.

Even though I've been here for seven months it only feels to me like seven weeks. I remember saying goodbye to my friends on the last day of school and I remember saying goodbye to my extended family the weeks before my departure date. I remember the day I said goodbye to my Mother, Father, Sister and Brother as I finally left to get on the plane to take me on the biggest adventure of my life.

I now have a younger sister, another older one and two more Mums that I absolutely love and cherish and they have made my Exchange so much better everyday. I have friends from all over the world who have become so important in my life and so many reasons to come back to this beautiful country I now call home.

Here in Hungary my city is called Gyor, not quite as big as Debrecen or Budapest. But this little city of mine is quite big compared to my little town of 800 people back in Australia. My school is much larger going from nearly 1500 students to about 3000 but it was great because everyone was so nice and friendly to me, even neighbours who I didn't even know would always say good morning and wish me a good day.

On one of my first days of school I was sitting in class and the teacher stopped the class for five minutes because it was snowing and I'd never seen snow before.

One of my favourite memories here is when I went ice-skating on February 14th with a group of Exchange Students in Budapest and they tried to teach me how to ice-skate on a frozen lake!

Unfortunately I still can't really ice-skate but the experience is something I'll never forget and always love.

Hungary has forever stolen my heart.



CLARE HUGHES



I remember feeling a type of way that made me feel excited, not once did I ever really feel nervous or sad about leaving my family for a year. I know that might sound cold but I believe if you have that positive mindset heading into a year without friends or family, you will find a way to make that place your home and make friends and people like your family.

The flight was a little bit of a struggle; it was long and boring. No matter how many times you have watched a movie it never gets any better the fourth or fifth time. At the airport I was greeted by my

counsellor and he was the person I lived with for a week because they still hadn't really sorted my first host family. I was so excited to be in the USA, I remember carrying in my luggage and the snow falling into my hair, its fluffiness oh so beautiful and something I had not witnessed before.

My first host brother, Nelson, was awesome. He took me sledding for the first time - what you basically do is find a grassy hill that is covered in snow and take a sled down it. It sounds simple but it is also a lot of fun. In my first five months with this family I did the most traveling on the east coast. I was lucky enough to see a Cleveland Cavaliers NBA basketball game and visit the Rock'n'Roll hall of fame in Cleveland. I was also lucky to see Niagara falls which was just beautiful as well as Washington D.C which has so much history where I also saw the White House and the Washington Monument. Making friends at school also helped me settle into the lifestyle. I was able to go to a Pittsburgh Penguins playoff game for Ice Hockey which was a super and memorable game because it was tight and the atmosphere was electric.

By this stage I had been able to meet all the Exchange Students that had been in Pittsburgh and surrounding areas. These guys were unfortunately getting ready to leave. I got to be good friends with almost all of them and it was sad to see them go. In the summer I went on a Belo USA tour to the West Coast of America. This was with 83 other Exchange Students from 28 different countries. This was the time of my life for two weeks and the time went so fast that it felt like five days. The places we visited were Phoenix, Grand Canyon, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Yosemite National Park and San Francisco. This trip will be one I will remember forever. The sights that I saw on that trip were one of a kind and things you can truly only see in person.

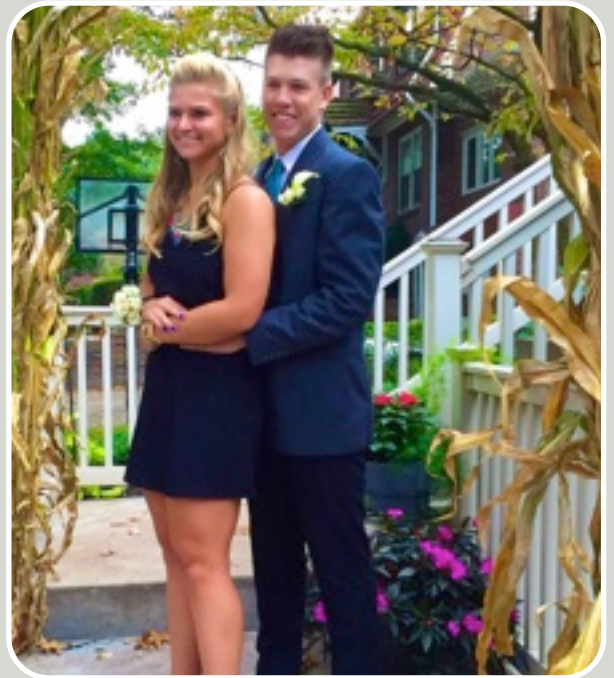
Schooling opened up a lot of opportunities for me. In the spring I participated for the Woodland Hills track team; the season went along well and it was a lot of fun and at the track meets I got to participate. During the summer and ever since school went back I have been playing American football. This was one of the most exciting things I have done my whole Exchange, for me to play on a sports team that is a new sport to me and to be able to be a starter on the Varsity (Division 1) team was fantastic. I was the punter for the Woodland Hills Wolverines. We had a good season finishing with 8 wins and 3 losses and making it to the quarter finals of the playoffs. In my last game I had a record punt of 74 yards (67 metres) so that really ended my season on a high, This opened up a lot of opportunities for me including meeting Australian Punter in the NFL Brad Wing who plays for the Pittsburgh Steelers. I am hoping to return for college football in two years. I have also attended 3 school dances including Prom and Homecoming. Those two dances are the major dances for any American school so to be able to attend them was a lot of fun.

JAKE RUSBRIDGE



I also went to three or four Pittsburgh Pirates Baseball games that were a lot of fun and with the pirates having a winning season I was able to see them win all the games I attended.

In my year away I have learnt a lot about myself and who I am. I also have become a better person in myself and now I am more willing to help people out. I would like to thank Rotary both in Australia and the USA for giving me this awesome opportunity to become more multicultural and to study abroad in a different country for a year. I would also like to thank my parents for giving me this wonderful opportunity and without them and their support none of this would have been possible. I feel that my Exchange year in the United States of America has exceeded my expectations.



Carla M. Davis Lee

Little did I know, that leaving with only 19 kilos and starting out with 5 different plane tickets was going to be the smallest adventure of my journey that I was entering this year.

Some would say this year is an “achievement”. Some would say, “that is an amazing experience”. Some would say, “that’s beautiful that you have the courage to complete that!” Others would tell you “oh, it’s only one year... Not so long.” But no one understands what I would say; “it’s been my entire life in one short year!” From growing, to learning, to starting out new and fresh, from being lost & confused, making new friends, learning to bond with anyone and everyone, to loving all kinds of families, to accepting different cultures. From trying your best to failing, going from laughing to crying, saying hello & then goodbye, switching from English to Polish and adapting to new situations instantly, creates one of the best charismas in ones self and this gives us the strength to complete such a year as Exchange.

I cannot begin to explain how living twelve months in a different country feels. Exchange is surreal, would be the best way to describe it for me. It’s mixed emotions, you’re super excited and thrilled to move to your new Host Country, a new adventure is arising, but at the same time you’re blood is running hot to your fingertips with heavy feelings of nervousness, knowing you have to leave your home and enter a new world. A world without your own parents, a world of different cultures and languages, a world where you must buy your own goods without your mum’s guidance, where you have to budget your money from your Rotary Allowance, twelve months where you must think independently.

When you walk onto a new land, you have something else flowing inside of you. It’s not the insides of a normal human any

TARLEYA MCCALMAN



more; it’s the heart and creativity of an Exchange Student flowing through you, driving you to do the indescribable.

And when you walk into a home where you feel like a daughter and not like an Exchange Student, you know it’s not just your ‘Host Family’ or ‘Host Country’, it’s your home, you have built another life there. It’s incredible to see such growth in a relationship when you spend twelve months in a completely new country. The bond I created with my country has shown me wonders over the past eight months of my Exchange, it is just astonishing and I’ve come to the realization that walking through the gates of Melbourne terminal was what I considered a challenge eight months ago, leaving a life to create a new one, and that I successfully did. But nothing will be a harder challenge than January 10th 2015, when I walk through the gates of Wrocław Airport, Poland, saying goodbye to not just a city, but my home. To the people that I met, to the families that I loved and lived with, to the friends that I made for a lifetime, to the places I walked through, I thank them for helping sculpt the best experience of my lifetime. I would never take it back for anything. This year was a success, and I truly could not be



happier. Exchange never dies, Exchange never leaves you, I'll be back to Poland one day and for that, I cannot wait.

My favourite quote from this year would have to be: "Who lives see's, but who travels see's more.." I like to think that I have left a footprint in Poland, and in the minds and hearts of people and places I came across along my journey.

It's extremely hard to show your appreciation to everyone that made this year possible for you, even saying thank-you to myself for having the courage and confidence to even consider taking on this challenge. There are only so many thanks & gifts you can give to everyone, but they never truly replicate how thankful you are towards them. So, as I say "thank-you", please understand that I mean it from everything I have. As you look into my eyes, you will see an Exchange Student staring right back at you, thanking you with their entire Exchange behind them and full integrity.

With happiness, regards from Poland!



**TARLEYA
MCCALMAN**



How do I even begin to talk about such a year I'm having... it's really difficult to say. If I was to write a book for instance it would usually start with the cliché "once upon a time", but this doesn't really feel like a story to me. This feels like the way I've been living all my life. Words cannot even describe how much I am enjoying my Exchange year in Brazil. I have had both ups and downs but without those few challenges I don't think I would have turned into that Exchange Student I had only dreamed about as a kid.

The country I was given was wonderful Brazil. But more importantly the city of Rio De Janeiro. I am currently in the city of Nova Friburgo with a population of around 220,000. From a boy living in the city of Melbourne with a population of 2 million people. It's safe to say that in Friburgo it's not hard to run into two or three people I know on the street. I'd like to think I've learnt a lot from my city as they have learnt from me. As soon as I arrived in Brazil I was introduced to the famous festival in Brazil (CARNAVAL). This was a festival going for two weeks of just parties and holidays. I was lucky enough to spend my first night in Friburgo where my town has an event called "Bloco dos piranhas" this is where all the males dress up like women and the women dress up like males. I didn't think twice about participating in this because all my friends were doing it so I thought I would join in the tradition. This was the life I was getting myself into so the "embarrassment factor" was left behind in Australia. I spent the rest of my Carnaval in cities like Buzios and Cabo Frio where I met the other Exchange Students. I fell in love with these cities and have been going back ever since because of their beautiful beaches.

Let me tell you about school. Now school was one of the difficulties. One thing I have to say about Friburgo is barely anyone speaks English which would prove to be good and bad for me. Going to school for the first two months, not being able to speak or say anything to anyone was difficult. Now, I'm a boy that loves to talk and me being held back by this language barrier was a little bit of motivation for me. Every day I would sit in class and read up on all the different verbs so I could start little conversations with people. This did pay dividends for me. I made more friends and more opportunities arose. I participated in school sports, activities and made friends in all different year levels. Being an Exchange Student in my school is like being a celebrity. Being a 191cm Australian boy that all people think you do is chase kangaroos with a boomerang creates a lot of stares.



It was really funny how many stares I would get on the streets because no one had ever seen such a tall person in their life. I was really glad when I saw my basketball coach and he was two meters and eleven centimetres (someone I didn't have to talk to by looking down). At the present moment now I talk to everyone in my school. I have been doing a lot of presentations in English and my teacher asked me if I was able to present to the equivalent year 12's. In Brazil every student has to learn every subject so you do not get any freedom on which subjects you want to do. So everyone has to learn two languages, English and Spanish. I presented to the class, with a few people commenting on my presentation and asking questions. But it was quite funny because I presented not too long ago and to see these people speaking English after I had only ever been speaking Portuguese to them was a little hard to grasp at the start. When on Exchange you have to be open to a lot of new ideas so doing subjects like philosophy, sociology was something a lot different for me. It's really cool to see the teacher student relationship here in Brazil too. The teacher will always be giving people friendly hugs, handshakes and high fives. It's nice to be able to say that my teachers are not only there to teach me but have also become my friends. I always say hello if I see them on the street and they always say hi back. There are teachers that look after the corridors in my school and one named Léo. Every time I walk past him I always say "fala Léo!!!" (Speak Léo) in a loud voice and he always gives me a hand shake. We have become good mates, I hanged out with him and a few of my mates when we

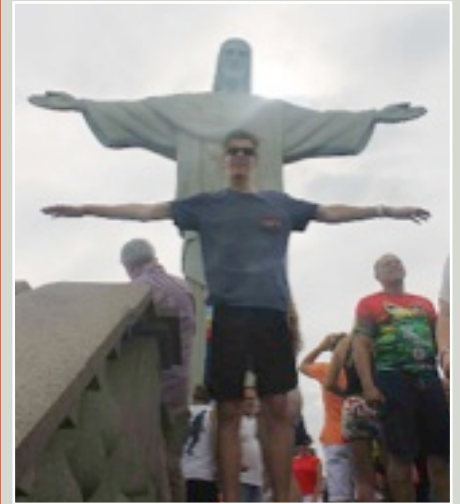


have been out because he is just such a good guy!! I have made a name for myself in my city for basketball and am competing in an all school tournament with my school soon which will be a lot of fun (which we ended up winning by about 20 points in every game). I have made friends in almost every school here so it's going to be good being able to compete against my friends.

Let me talk about my families. My families for me have been some of the most inspiring people I know and one of the most valuable things in my Exchange. The thing with me is I came in with no expectations. I didn't want to think that I was limiting my abilities by thinking that Brazil was going to be like the life I had in Australia. I spent 5 months with my first host family and they were awesome. We had a lot fun adventures together and they were really the people that know how far I have come. My first host dad spoke no English so it was a "hi and see you later" relationship for a long time. I was really motivated and wanted to get my Portuguese up to standard so I could speak with him!! After 5 months I achieved that and now we are having well-articulated conversations together. My second host family lived on a farm. For me this was very strange and also the challenge of my Exchange. I lived 15 mins from the town by bus, up high in the mountains. I was living in a town called Murry that was known to be very cold and got to around -2 some days. I lived with a lot of animals like chickens, rabbits, turkeys and dogs because my host father is a vet. He said he has the money to live in a house in the city but said he is a man that prefers the simple things in life and that the country is the best place for him. He is the one that got me doing all my charity work and got me involved with his Rotary club. My third and last host mum is 75 years old and still going strong. She lives on her own with her son and my good friends from school living 200m away as the house is so big. She is a great woman and only wants to help me and get the best out of me.

But my Exchange year has not just been traveling and sitting around. I really believe that to be the best Exchange Student you can possible be you have to be involved in the community. I think I succeeded in doing that. In Brazil I play in a Brazilian band, playing a traditional Brazilian samba instrument called the pandeiro (like a tambourine). We play every Thursday night at my second host family's house. This band really showed me how important Brazilian music is for the people living in Brazil!! I have been involved in a few competitions and performed at the biggest Rotary event in my city!! We won third place at one of the two schools I attend in the

MITCH ATANASOVSKI



MITCH ATANASOVSKI

category of “best music” with just over 20 bands participating in the competition. I also do social work in my city where I help construct the large dippers that they use in the hospitals. But more importantly for those who cannot afford them. I play basketball for my city where we play some of the biggest teams in Rio. Representing my city is a huge privilege and I am very honoured by the opportunities I have been given. I study at two schools and attend an afternoon class to just study Portuguese. I have made many new friends from this and once again appreciate the opportunity. I was also a part of my school basketball team where we won an all schools competition in the city of Nova Friburgo. I love and appreciate my Rotary! Presenting at their club in Portuguese was a huge honour after just 5 months in Brazil. I will present my final presentation at the end of the year in Portuguese before I leave after my year in Brazil!!! I really just want to thank Rotary so much for the opportunity to be an Exchange Student. There is a lot I have not mentioned here but, I do want to say that Exchange is not a holiday but involves hard work and dedication. I succeeded in all I wanted to do with hard work and effort that helped me make friends from all around the world. It was just a huge honour to be able to experience what I did in such a short amount of time! - “live the life you love and love the life you live”





大家好！

The past seven months have been the most hectic, incredible, difficult and all round unforgettable months of my entire life. For seven months, I have lived in the beautiful city of Taipei surrounded by people I can now call my giant family: and although I had my eyes set on Taiwan right from the start of the application process, I could never have been prepared for what I had signed myself up for. But if my past seven months have taught me anything, it is that the most bizarre, outrageous decisions can sometimes be the best you could've ever made, and at this point in my year, I think it's safe to say that Taiwan would be one of them.

As I write this report now, I find myself reflecting on my past months and seeing how much has changed since I boarded the flight to begin my Exchange back in January. First, I think materialistically: my (literally) growing luggage, which is a problem that I have lately been ignoring: my Rotary Blazer, which has started to weigh down with hundreds of mementos: my photos, which seem to be multiplying every week. It takes me less than ten minutes, however, to find myself completely stunned by how much more has changed without my even realising. I realise the variety and diversity in my friends: my natural eagerness to try new things: how easily I can pick up a conversation with a person I know absolutely nothing about. Even before I think about how much my Mandarin has improved, or my adaptability to a culture different to that of a Western society, I've realised something: I am not the same person that left Melbourne seven months ago.

This could never have happened without the unique experiences that this Exchange has given me. Everything from the school life, to eating customs, to how one is expected to treat others is as different from Australia as I could've imagined possible. I came to Taiwan expecting my Japanese background to at least give me some sort of leg-up when it came to understanding and learning the culture –but I was wrong. I arrived in Taipei thinking that at least I had a few years of Mandarin education behind me to make the first few months

easier –but when my host club and first host family greeted me at the airport, I found that that wouldn't be the case at all. In fact, those first few months had some of the most testing moments I've ever had to deal with.

That being said, however, the past months have also held many of the most amazing, incredible memories of my life. Everything from the first time I managed to order the correct bubble tea by myself to the district bus trips with all the other Exchange Students have been so awesome that I laugh at myself for ever second-thinking the potentials of a year long Exchange. I've made countless lifelong friends who I can't wait to see again and I've discovered so much about such an underrated country and culture, and of course, about myself. It's truly remarkable how such a small country can be exploding with so much culture and history. A tourist handbook couldn't possibly begin to cover even the surface of what I'm living in every day. One of the more surprising things about Taiwan is how much different terrain can fit into the tiny island: I remember one day, I was floating in a crystal clear bay under a beautiful blue sky, with mountains upon mountains crowding the peaceful landscape. One short, forty-five minute bus ride later, I was home, in a typical apartment on the side of a rowdy, city road. Having grown up in such a large country, it seems unimaginable that you could literally travel the whole country in two days, but to the Taiwanese, this is nothing new at all. Something else that surprised me was how eager the Taiwanese were to talk to you once it got out that you were foreign. I would never forget my first day of classes at school: students swarming over to my desk ready to know who I am with bits of English mixing with Chinese in an attempt to communicate properly with me. Being in the centre of attention has never clicked with me, but when the question "Do you see kangaroos on the side of the street?" was asked three times, I found myself bonding over swapping questions and rumours about the two countries, Taiwan and Australia.



There's a quote I've come across that perfectly describes everything you need to know about Exchange, which is, "Exchange isn't a year in a life; it's a life in a year." All I can say is, if you're reading this now trying to decide whether or not you should join the Exchange program, don't even think twice on it. Being one of the lucky people currently on my Exchange, I've come to realise that this is an opportunity everyone should have the chance to experience. It's truly a unique and wonderful way to explore and I'd like to thank Rotary Districts 9800 and 3480 for giving me this fantastic year to remember for years to come.



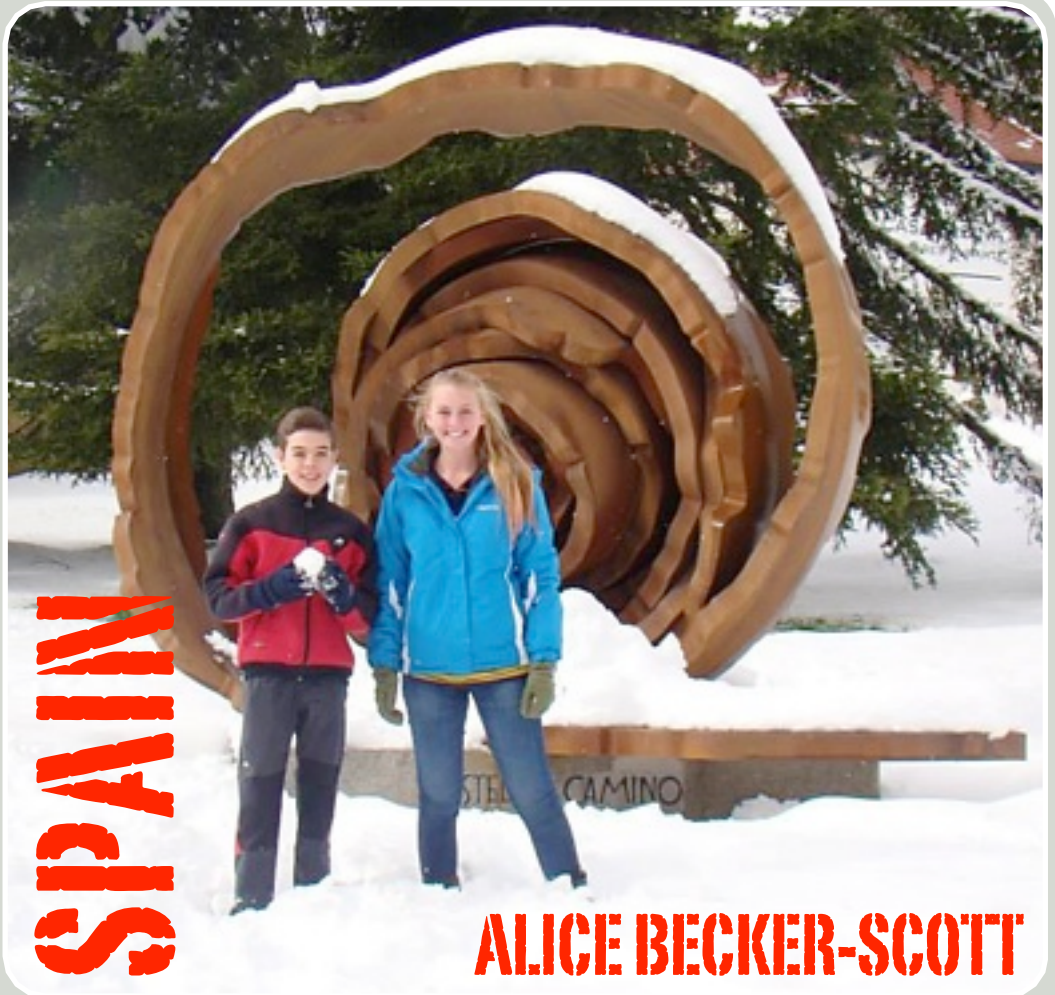
I can't believe that it was just over 7 months ago that I boarded a plane that was taking me 17,000km away from a world of knowns into a world of unknowns. There are no words to describe how absolutely amazing my life in Spain is, I have had endless opportunities to see and experience all of what this country has to offer and I have taken every single one with wide open arms, I have learnt a completely new language and I have never stopped meeting new people from every corner of the world, people that I now call lifelong friends and family.

I am Alice, 16 years old from Melbourne Australia and for the past 7 months I have been living in Spain. I started my Exchange in the far north of Spain in Pamplona, famous for the San Fermin festival which is more commonly known as "The running of the bulls" held every year

in July, but for the past two months I have been living in a small Mediterranean city called Torrevieja which has a population of about 80,000 during the winter months and in the summer months it grows to just over 650,000 with people from all over Europe (mainly England) coming to experience the endless strip of warm Mediterranean beaches.

I'm not going to lie, picking up my Exchange and moving it 13 hours to the other end of my host country for the summer has been one of the hardest things to go through this year; it almost felt like starting my Exchange all over again. The move was both an amazing and tough experience; because of it I have been able to experience a true Spanish summer and be part of an amazing festival "Moros y Cristianos" with one of my best Exchange friends but at the same time I'm looking forward to reconnecting with the wonderful friends I have made back in Pamplona as well as being able to see more of Pamplona, the city I fell in love with instantly. I think this move really shows that absolutely anything can happen during a year abroad and you have to be willing and open about every new idea that gets thrown at you; expect the unexpected.

When I signed up for Rotary Youth Exchange I had no idea that I would be given so many opportunities to travel not only through my host country but also through Europe. So far in my Exchange year I have travelled to over 10 cities in Spain and the two neighboring countries France and Portugal with either my host families or with Rotary; I even went skiing for my first time in France! I also went on the best 18 day tour with 30 other Exchange Students travelling to some of the most famous and



**MY
SPAIN**

ALICE BECKER-SCOTT

beautiful cities in Europe. Throughout the tour I licked (and yes I mean licked) some of Europe's most famous landmarks; from the Berlin Wall and a 700 year old Belgium city hall to the Eiffel Tower and the Colosseum. All places that have a permanent position in my memory; after all I don't think I'll ever forget licking 19 landmarks in Europe.

Part of being an Exchange Student is having the ability to adapt, throughout a year abroad you have to adapt to new families, a new school, new language and a new culture. Overall the adaptation isn't hard but it definitely isn't easy, it's important to remember that everybody around you is there to help you. For me, adapting to an entirely new culture has been by far the hardest. In Spain pretty much everything is late, everything is laid back and if there isn't a siesta (nap) at 4pm...there must be something wrong. Everything about the Spanish culture is perfect, it took me a month or two to get used to but now I feel like a true Spaniard taking a little siesta every afternoon and putting my social and family life before anything else.

Who would have known that in 7 months I could do as much as I have, Exchange for me is much more than a year abroad, it's a year of endless learning. A year of some of the most beautiful, scary, interesting, different, fun and amazing experiences of my life. Don't get me wrong, there are days I ask myself what made me take this leap into the unknown because it is harder than I originally thought it would be but there are more days where I don't even have the chance to think about my life back home. Exchange is unreal and I wish it could be my life forever.



**ALICE BECKER-
SCOTT**



SWEDEN



HAMISH WILLIAMS

I had no clue what to write, because the experience Exchange gives you is so large that you cannot easily place it into words. Let alone a few paragraphs.

In June last year Rotary told me I was placed in Sweden, my first choice. I'm not too sure why I wanted to come to Sweden, but Scandinavia has always really interested me as a mysterious place. Probably because it is almost as far away from Australia as you can get.

The past 7 months have been an amazing blur of new experiences, I can remember the overflowing excitement as we landed in Sweden; 12 Australians gazing out tiny airplane windows at the sparkling white snow on the dimly lit ground. I also recall as we went through the doors to greet our families, we were so excited we forgot to say goodbye to each other before we were whisked away to different parts of Sweden! The drive to my host family's house was delicious, I was captivated by the snow-covered landscape in the early morning sun, the snow went on forever! I was so mesmerized the last thing I was worrying about was the 'important information and documents' my counselor was giving me as we were driving!

Exchange didn't really kick in until I saw my room where I would be spending the best part of 12 months. I remember sitting down for breakfast with my host family for the first time and my host mother pulling out this tube from the fridge, turning to me and saying; "Hamish, have you tried Kalles Kaviar yet?" Everything since she asked me that question that has been a complete whiz of excitement, explorations, laughter, wonder, and thousands of other mixed feelings.

In Sweden we have 3 main Rotary trips that were all within my first 6 months.

The first one was a 4 day Ski camp to Åre, a skiing town/resort/mountain in the north of Sweden. Around 30 Exchange Students attended, this was an insane experience, the snow was waist high, and a lot of it was un-ridden. And if you know

anything about snow, you can imagine that it was absolutely perfect.

Before I go on I must talk about the importance of other Exchange Students in my life here. Living in Stockholm, I see a lot of other Exchange Students on a daily basis. I become closer to them than any of my friends or family, because we are all going through the same experience; we can complain about things to each other, go to museums together, and share experiences with the strange behavior and language of the people living in Sweden.

When I arrived, I had a lot of 'oldies', mostly Americans and Canadians, who had already been here for 6 months. As my first half of the year progressed, they became my closest friends, some I even consider brothers and sisters. But as all good things do, our relationships were severed when their time was up, which was one of the hardest few weeks of my Exchange because it was so lonely without them. I say this because the Rotary trips bring back a lot of amazing memories of my 'oldies', some of the greatest peers I will ever know.

The second trip in Sweden was a week in Kiruna, a tiny little mining town 200 kilometers above the arctic circle. Where, in winter, they have 3 months of total darkness. No sunlight at all. And in summer, have sunlight all day for a month straight. The sun doesn't go down!

It was interesting to see how people live here, and how they feel about living here, because it's so different from the rest of Sweden. It's almost always cold (they had snow in summer) and there is not much to do, besides ride Snowmobiles, play in the snow and watch the northern lights, which is what we did with most of our time there, except the northern lights, because we weren't lucky enough to see them.

The last Rotary trip was the big Euro tour; 3 weeks long with 70 Exchange Students and visits to around 10 countries, as you

can probably imagine, this was fantastic and definitely the highlight of my Exchange..

But that being said, its not just like I came to Sweden for these trips, being able to live in such a beautiful city like Stockholm is a privilege itself. Everything about it is amazing, it's hard to explain such an amazing city.

Stockholm is the gate between one of the largest lakes in Sweden and the Baltic sea, it is a small city of 2 million people, but that doesn't stop the amount of cultural festivals and events they have in spots around the city. There is always something going on in Stockholm; a free concert, a food festival, a culture festival. You name it, it happens.

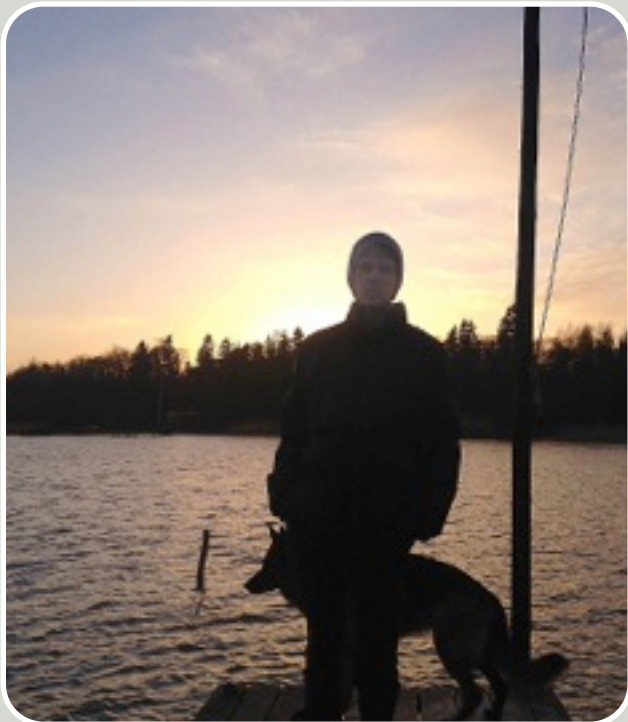
**HAMISH
WILLIAMS**



Stockholm also has many immigrants, and that brings a lot of different food, celebrations and cultures to Stockholm, so its not very hard to 'fit in with the swedes' since all the international people are trying to as well, it is a warm welcome, especially in the winter.

Personally, I love Stockholm and everything about it, the clean water, the old, beautiful buildings, and the people. Everything about the country of Sweden is magical, majestic, and very interesting. The weather is almost always perfect and the best of both worlds; snow in winter, and very warm, sunny days in summer, I am very grateful to be able to spend such an amazing year in such an amazing city.

Thank you the Rotary District of 9800 for giving me this amazing opportunity of sending me to such a beautiful country (its all about the Swedish girls, right??)





It has now been almost 9 months since I left Melbourne to embark on my Exchange year in Germany. Before I left Australia I found it hard to try to make logical expectations about what the next year had in store for me and still now nine months later I still don't know what my last few months will bring.

My Exchange has been full of learning; learning a whole new language. Learning to live in a completely new environment, integrate into new families but mostly learning about myself. Learning strengths, weaknesses, likes and dislikes that you have never had to or would never learn if I had never done an Exchange.

One of the highlights of my Exchange year was Euro Tour. Thirty Nine Exchange Students, Twenty eight Days, Seventeen cities, Eight Countries, Five Guardians, Two Compulsory Green Tour Shirts and One Bus. Its a very unreal experience to be able to travel the world with your best friends. Now these people that I have only meet three times are family. Exchange has given an international family. I am proud to say that I am part of a crazy, loud, over the top family made up of Exchange Students from all over the world. I spent four and a half weeks of my summer break on Eurotour and upon my return I changed host families.

Changing host families has allowed me to learn more about German culture and also to see new places around Germany. With each new family comes new challenges but it also can be a restart and for me it also came with living in different villages. By opening their houses and hearts to me over this year they have been my family.

Before Exchange I used to describe myself as independent but I don't think I knew the real meaning of independence until

being on Exchange. Although I have to rely on my host family a lot to drive me to certain places due to the lack of public transportation in my geographical location, I can now truly say that I am independent. With independence come a lot of responsibility and trust especially with host families and I am so lucky that I have gained that trust.

School has been a major part of my Exchange. I realised very early on in my Exchange that going to school was going to help me to become a part of the community and to find activities to join. I compete in a swim team where I train three times a week in the pool and once a week in the gym. Swimming in Germany is very different to the swimming I experienced in Australia. I am by no means a good swimmer and in Australia I would be pushed into the pool to swim but now I love it. The water has always been a calming place for me and I use my time in swimming to let out my emotions.

School has helped me in numerous ways it has helped me learn German, forced me to get out of bed in the middle of thunder storms and helped me make friendships that I can't imagine lasting anything less than a life.

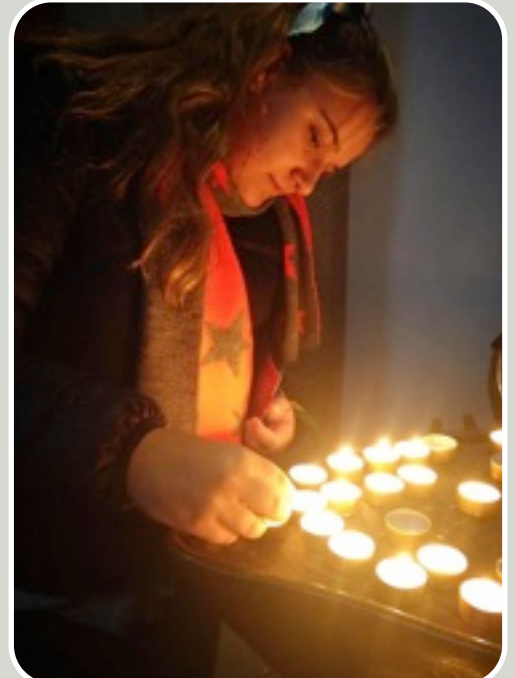
Challenges on my Exchange have mostly been mentally; I live in a village with around 300 people an hour and a half on the bus from school but also from my friends and my old host families. It is funny to think that the things that were most important to me at the beginning of my Exchange a year ago don't seem so important anymore and the things I hold highest now are things that I didn't even understand at home. My future is almost as uncertain as my Exchange appeared to be at the beginning of this year. Now it is so exciting to think that the

future could bring something as uncertain as this year has been.

In very little amount of time I will be going to the airport in Frankfurt and trying to hold in the tears as I say goodbye to people who before my Exchange were names on a piece of paper or emails in German that I couldn't even understand. Now these people are my family.

As time goes on and the end of my Exchange year draws closer I have begun to realise that I can never have another year like this; It truly is an unique experience that I can never have again.

Returning to Australia is full of uncertainties but one thing for sure is that upon my return to Australia I am a changed person.



I think that when everyone is young they dream of travelling the world, because when you are young, you learn about all these other countries and their cultures and it just sounds so different to your own that you can feel the curiosity that makes you want to explore all these other countries. Being in school, I hear all my friends talking about how they want to go here and there, but never getting the chance to do so.

I'm Connor Mackie-Allen and thanks to the Rotary Youth Exchange Program, I got to explore one of these countries. For the last 10 months I have lived in a beautiful city called Belo Horizonte. It is the capital city of Minas Gerais, which is located in the beautiful country of Brazil.

Brazil has made me experience many new things in my life. I remember in January, I was so anxious to just get on the plane and leave, that when I arrived it took at least a month to process the knowledge of actually being in another country. The 10 months that have passed have changed me so much in ways I could not have imagined - ways that have even scared me at times, but all for the better.

The people I have met on this crazy adventure have not ceased to amaze me every single day, whether it's a Brazilian, or an Exchange Student, at school, or on the streets. Every day is a new adventure and every little detail is what makes it one to always remember for the rest of my life.

Exchange is hard. I'm not going to lie. Getting through the interview and getting accepted into your country may be the easy part. Once you step on that plane, you are practically leaving your life behind, leaving your friends and family and being sent into a completely new world. At first it was scary, but going to school, making friends and bonding with my host family all contributed to making Brazil my home - one you end up not wanting to leave because it feels the exact same way it did when you left your home country

Exchange has taught me many things during the last 10 months. The language, by far, is the most important lesson. I honestly wish that I had studied the language more before I arrived. Thankfully, the Brazilian people are really friendly and are always up for a laugh, correcting someone's bad Portuguese while they practise their "just as bad" English.

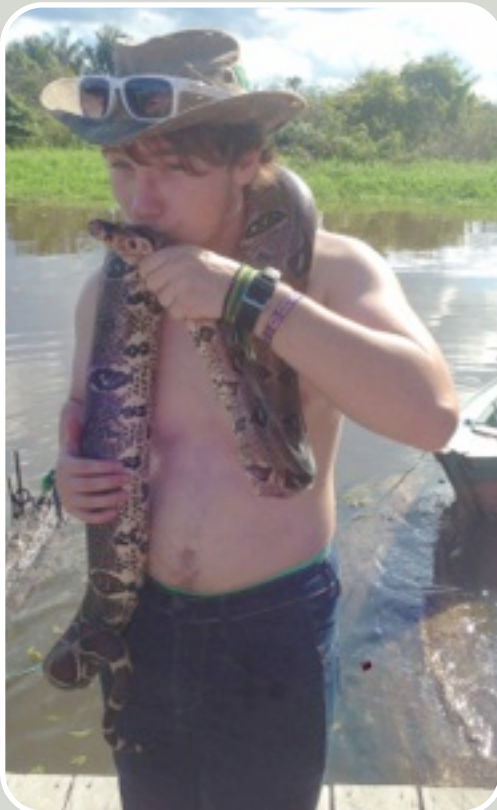
As many people in the world know, Brazil is a beautiful country and I have been lucky enough to see its beauty through my own eyes. I have been on a few travels during my time from the mega-city of Sao Paulo, to the Amazon jungle in Manaus, from the beach city of Cabo Frio to the statue of Christ The Redeemer. This country holds so much opportunity and it is unbelievable that I have had this short time to see what I have. I would never change a second of it for the world.

When you first apply for your Exchange you are told you will stay more or less eleven and a half months in your host country. For me, and I think for every Exchanger, it is the shortest 11 months of your life. I remember waking up to this after 2 or 3 months into my Exchange. I also hear this from the newbies "Where did all the time go...?" This year has gone so fast as if time itself is disappearing. It is important to take every opportunity to explore and to challenge yourself before your time runs out and trust me, it runs quickly.

The things that I have learned from this experience overseas could never have been achieved in the safety and comfort of my Australian home. If I were to go back in time, I would have done everything exactly the same way as I have done.

When I was accepted into the Program, a Rotarian at my Sponsor Club asked me a question, "Do you find yourself lucky to be accepted?" I said, "Yes of course!" He responded, "It's not luck. It's that you took the initiative to do something about it." And after these 10 months, I agree with every word.





DENMARK

GRACE GALLOWAY



I have seriously been thinking about this for weeks now. Where on earth do I even start? How do I put the past 10 months into so many words because all I can think of to describe it is amazing, crazy, unforgettable and the best 10 months of my life.

It's not a year in a life, it's a life in a year!

My Name is Grace Galloway and I am living in Denmark. I am 17 years old and living in this magical dream.

When I think back to the 18th of January 2014, the day I left my family, I was a shy, quiet, nervous, scared teenager not knowing what I got myself into. Not even knowing anything about the country I was going to land in the next day. Waking up the next morning in a whole new country, new continent, as far away from home as you could get was a frightening feeling. I seriously thought to myself what have I done, why am I here. But now I wouldn't want to be anywhere else but here.

When I applied for Exchange I thought I knew what I was getting myself into, I thought I knew what it was going to be like but I was completely wrong. It is so much harder than you can ever expect but it is the most amazing and rewarding experience you could ever have. You only know what it's like if you have been an Exchange Student.

The year is full of memories that will last you forever, funny, crazy, embarrassing and some sad.

Throughout the year I have been on an Introcamp, Travelled throughout Denmark, Europe, went on a sailing tour

and had get togethers with my district 1440 and with all the Exchange Students in Denmark.

After a few days being in Denmark I had my first day at my new school. We started at 8am and back then it was winter here so it was still dark at 8:30am. Walking to school in the dark not even knowing how to get there, luckily I had google maps on my phone. I think I have never been so nervous in my life. First time I opened my class room door I felt like the foreigner from Australia, not knowing anything because it was all in Danish which to me at that time was random sounds coming out of their mouths. The day got better as my classes started asking random questions about Australia, like do I have pet kangaroos in my back yard.

After about 3 weeks being in Denmark I went to an Introcamp with all the other new Rotary Youth Exchange Students. That week I met my family of Exchange Students, it was one of the best weeks of my Exchange.

The Best 18 days of my life took place in May. I set off for my Eurotour early in the morning with 70 other Exchange Students. I didn't really know many of them before the tour started but by the end of the tour we were one big family. On the tour we travelled to Germany, Czech Republic, Austria, Italy, France and the Netherlands. Those 18 days went so fast from the quiet hellos at the start to the sad tearful goodbyes at the end.

A week after Eurotour my District 1440 had a sailing tour for 6 days. There were about 50 of us split up onto two boats. These 6 days we learnt how to set sails on a sailing ship, we



also had to cook, clean and then we had watch people. We didn't know that we could become any more close after Eurotour but somehow all us Exchange Students did.

On my Exchange I have been very fortunate because I have travelled so much throughout Denmark, had Eurotour and sailing tour. I have also been to London for a few days with 3 other Australian Exchange Students and one of the girls host parents. I have also been to Sweden for a day. The past few months have gone incredibly fast, I just want to rewind time and go back to where this all began.

Exchange Students have a way of connecting with each other, we share a very special bond. We are family! I have met many people on this journey and I will always keep these people in my heart where ever we all end up in the world.

I now don't just have one house in Australia, I have 3 homes also in Denmark. I have 4 families, each one very different from each other and with each one I learnt so much about myself. This year I have learnt so much not just about myself but about everyone else. I have also learnt about cultures, not just the Danish culture but Brazilian, Colombian, Taiwan, Peru, USA, Indonesian and Argentinean. I still am yet to find out more about myself but I can't wait to explore that. I have spent my whole life with my family and friends in Australia but coming overseas being miles away from them has made me appreciate and cherish every moment I spend with them.

This past year has been the best year of my life and I can't thank my family and Rotary enough for giving me this opportunity to become an Exchange Student.

From all my heart thank you very much.



GRACE GALLOWAY





I'm Ethan, I am an Exchange Student and inbound from Rotary District 9800, I am currently on my Exchange in Remscheid, Germany in Rotary District 1810. I have been in Germany since January 2014 and I will fly back to Australia on the 9th of January 2015.

I had the great fortune to be in Germany for the 2014 FIFA World Cup or "Weltmeisterschaft". It was an unbelievable experience and something that I will never forget.

The first few rounds I was rooting for both Australia and Germany and though Australia had some great matches they were eventually beaten and failed to make it further in the cup. The first sign of German football culture started peeking through with every new eliminated team until it was every car spray painted black, red and gold; and every train spray painted in the same national colours. And after a while the whole country and everybody in it became a well-oiled machine with one task and one motive "FUSSBALL, FUSSBALL, FUSSBALL!!!" The students and teachers in the classes would be discussing strategies and stats of players, countries and even how the humid climate of Brazil was an unfair disadvantage to the cool blooded Germans, my host grandmother even stated and I quote "this weather business is blasphemy of paramount proportions!" I took these signs as a sort of training in preparing myself for the final rounds.

June 21st: My first public viewing, Germany vs. Ghana Cologne. I was in Cologne to celebrate the birthday of an

American Exchange Student, she was turning 17 years old. We didn't really have a plan so we decided to go to a public viewing area to watch the game. We arrived and already the better part of the mostly German crowd was intoxicated at 17:00. The game started and it was on, the crowd had become one organism cheering and booing as one entity rather than a group of 400 separate persons. Ghana scored first, the rage of the loyal fans was palpable throughout the entire proximity of the TV, slurred fits of rage towards the umpires and even more towards the small group of cheering Ghana fans. However the German fans still held hope in their hearts that the next point on the scoreboard will come from their beloved homeland. Tragedy struck Ghana scored once again and the rage filled arena quickly formed a blue monster that of which was the crushed hopes and spirits of the Germans. 20 minutes went by and the Germans and German supporters fell hearts first back into their beer and maintained the minimum amount of attention in regards to the game. Germany scores! Like nothing ever happened they all regained their attitudes and continued to watch as proud supporters. Like lightning Germany once again. The array of screams of joy and cry's of happiness erupted in the crowd. The game drew to a riveting close and even though there was not a clear winner the Germans were relieved they had not lost and the Ghana supporters seemed as though they were happy just to have been able to experience a game so close such as that.



June 26th: My birthday had arrived and I had finally turned 16. I had a normal day at school and when I returned home, I was surprised to find that my host family had organised a BBQ with my host extended family to celebrate my birthday and they as a small gift gave me German national team jersey with my name imprinted on the back. But what I had forgotten was that Germany was also playing USA that day. We all sat down with a BBQ reminiscent of home and as we dug in, I found myself more passionate about the game only because of having the same colours on my back. Germany came out on top and as I went to sleep on my birthday I can still remember thinking that was one of the moments that it hit me that Germany was like my second home.

Over the next week, as more and more teams became eliminated the amp of Germany's passion escalated and escalated until you could not walk around the corner without having a German flag being painted on your face by a drunken supporter or seeing a baby proudly riding in her head to toe black, red and gold baby stroller with her face painted with the national black eagle.

The inevitable finale came. I was anxiously but excitedly sitting in the living room of one of my best German friends Jonas. He and I along with 5 other friends from all different cultures (Eddy from Russia, Luigi from Italy, Kaan from Turkey, David from Poland and Shahid from Morocco) were waiting for the game to start. It finally began, the last few weeks of my life had been in lead up to seeing the reaction of my host

land if we had the great fortune of winning. The game carried on, many close encounters however someone was yet to score. A moment of silence took form as everyone in the room began to notice signs of a possible goal, we were not breathing just waiting for the certain goal that would grant us that joy we were longing for. In a few seconds it happened, we sat silently for a millisecond that felt like a year and then we erupted in a burst of ecstasy. We could not believe it, Jonas in tears as the only true German and the rest of us speechless with joy. We watched every last second of that game until the umpire blew his whistle. We celebrated of course but after a few minutes Jonas and his parents took me and the other guys outside and told us to wait there standing, we were too overwhelmed with joy to care why they brought us there. Then an explosion of colours in fresh German summer evening sky. The local neighbourhood had organised fireworks in the event that Deutschland won. I stood there under the sky with my new found accomplices and knew that I would never quite feel that exact feeling again.

The next few weeks went by and the Germans began to recuperate after their triumph, and as I started to see the propoganda and flags come down and the drunken supporters on the streets began to appear very seldom, until there was none at all. But I knew it had to end eventually and I just wanted to thank myself, Rotary and my parents for giving me the tools and values to be there.

Student	Country	Sponsor - RC of . . .
<i>Myles Ammett</i>	<i>Japan</i>	<i>Glen Eira</i>
<i>Mollie Andrews</i>	<i>Norway</i>	<i>Keilor East</i>
<i>Mitchell Atanasovski</i>	<i>Brazil</i>	<i>Laverton/Point Cook</i>
<i>Alice Becker-Scott</i>	<i>Spain</i>	<i>Wyndham</i>
<i>Scarlett Collett</i>	<i>Germany</i>	<i>Woodend</i>
<i>Emma Fitt</i>	<i>Taiwan</i>	<i>Bendigo Strathdale</i>
<i>Grace Galloway</i>	<i>Denmark</i>	<i>Bendigo</i>
<i>Kiara Hickman</i>	<i>Denmark</i>	<i>Brighton</i>
<i>Clare Hughes</i>	<i>Hungary</i>	<i>Bacchus Marsh</i>
<i>Ethan Kemp</i>	<i>Germany</i>	<i>Eaglehawk</i>
<i>Connor Mackie-Allan</i>	<i>Brazil</i>	<i>Bacchus Marsh</i>
<i>Daisy McAree</i>	<i>Austria</i>	<i>Richmond</i>
<i>Tarleya McCalman</i>	<i>Poland</i>	<i>Bendigo South</i>
<i>Darcy Mitchell</i>	<i>Germany</i>	<i>Castlemaine</i>
<i>Lisa Noda</i>	<i>Taiwan</i>	<i>Malvern</i>
<i>Lille O'Dowd</i>	<i>Germany</i>	<i>West Footscray</i>
<i>Jake Rusbridge</i>	<i>USA</i>	<i>Bendigo</i>
<i>Eloise van Aanbolt</i>	<i>Germany</i>	<i>North Balwyn</i>
<i>Hannah Weston</i>	<i>Finland</i>	<i>Footscray</i>
<i>Hamish Williams</i>	<i>Sweden</i>	<i>Flemington</i>

ROTARY YOUTH EXCHANGE - A CHANCE OF A LIFETIME! HOST FAMILIES INVITED NOW!

Rotary Youth Exchange invites kind and caring Host Families within the community to assist local Rotary Clubs offer an outstanding exchange program to young people from all over the World.

A Host Family is a vital part of this cultural and educational exchange and typically hosts a student on a voluntary basis for a period of between 10 to 16 weeks. In doing so, a Host family officially becomes a Friend of Rotary International. The Host Family plays an integral role in offering the student the experience of a new culture and language, whilst at the same time learning about a different culture from a young leader. It is a direct window to the world for all members of a Host family. You not only share a young person's hopes and dreams, but more importantly, you make those dreams possible.

Hosting is the beginning of a lifelong friendship and connection with a student and family overseas. Whilst it can be challenging to help a young person transition to a new culture and ease into the surroundings, it is always fun and the rewards are immeasurable.

Host Families in the Rotary Youth Exchange program come in many shapes and sizes! Young children, older children, no children at all, extended families and older generations – all have been successful in hosting Exchange Students.

Please consider this amazing and rewarding opportunity now. Enquiries are most welcome.

Further information is available at www.rotaryyouthexchangeaustralia.com.au