



# ROTARY YOUTH EXCHANGE



## What does it mean to be a Host Family?

**PROGRAM HISTORY:** The first Rotary Youth Exchange occurred in 1929 between the Rotary Club of Copenhagen and several European Countries, and since then has grown into one of the largest programs in the world. Exchange is one of Rotary International's longest running programs designed to help clubs and districts achieve their service goals in their own communities and in communities abroad, fostering fellowship and goodwill around the world.

**THE STUDENTS:** Here in the Philadelphia area, we host about 10 students each year. They are carefully screened by their home district prior to being accepted into the Exchange Program. In most countries this selection process is very competitive. The student's range in age from 15 ½ to 18 years (Jr or Sr in High School). We've exchanged students with Germany, Belgium, Turkey, Brazil, Finland, Ecuador, France, Indonesia Japan, Mexico and many other countries.

**HOST RESPONSIBILITIES:** Students usually live with two different families in the same school district during their year here. This allows the students to experience different family situations and eases the commitment to the families. We only ask that Host families open their homes, and accept these children as their own. Some examples of your responsibilities over the year include:

- \* meeting your student on arrival at the airport and welcoming them as part of your family;
- \* working with the student master the language;
- \* involving the student in obligations similar to those established for your own family members;
- \* helping the student meet Rotary obligations, which include attending Rotary functions;
- \* exploring opportunities for the student to meet others through school, church club or community activities;
- \* providing a safe environment for the student and ensuring the student's safety.

Potential Host Families will be interviewed by a Rotarian, complete a background check and attend a host family training session. They DO NOT need to be Rotarians themselves or be of a specific age. We've had families that have children in school and young families without children. All families are eligible; with or without children; young or "older"; employed or retired. An open heart, an open mind and a willingness to share are all that are required.

**THE ROTARY TEAM:** Each student is sponsored by a local Rotary Club near you. The Club will identify a Counselor who will be responsible for developing and maintaining a close relationship with the student throughout the year and assist with any questions or problems. There is also a Rotary District Youth Exchange Committee that handles training, and deals with the larger issues of health insurance, VISA's and arrival/departure planning. They also plan about 1 group activity per month for the students. They are available to answer any questions and assist you with any issues that may arise during the student's year in the US. All program volunteers are devoted to the safety of the students, and the host club and District maintain policies and procedures to protect the students.

**CONTACTS:** If you are interested in this program – contact us for more information. Not only can you provide an unforgettable service to a student from abroad, but your family will also learn more about the world around them. Contacting your local Rotary Club, or look for additional information on the Rotary District 7450 Web Site at [www.d7450youthexchange.org](http://www.d7450youthexchange.org), or Email Rob Newman, Chairman of the District Youth Exchange Program at [captain\\_newman@usafa-grads.com](mailto:captain_newman@usafa-grads.com).