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Rotary Ohio-Erie Rotary Youth Exchange Student / High School Follow-Up Research 2010 - 2011



Executive Summary

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Research Objectives

As a requirement of Rotary Youth Exchange and the U.S. Department of State quality control processes, Rotary needs to obtain feedback from students, counselors and families on their Rotary Youth Exchange experience. The following report details findings from students who participated in the 2010 – 2011 Ohio-Erie Youth Exchange program.



Research Objectives

1. Quantify overall assessment of the Rotary Youth Exchange experience from student perspective
2. Identify challenges/difficulties students experienced, identifying what additional support Rotary might provide
3. Identify key marketing messages to promote the program
4. Obtain insights on rebound effect
5. Identify opportunities for improvement

Participation

In 2010 – 2011, approximately 175 students participated in the program, with roughly equal numbers of students who attended high school as inbound to or outbound from U.S. and Canada.

Study Design: In cooperation with Ohio-Erie, Janet Metzelaar, President of Beyond Data, Inc. and Rotary 6670 Inbound Chair, executed a Web-based survey designed to obtain feedback on the program.

Invitation: On behalf of Ohio-Erie, Dan Zimolzak emailed all students asking their participation in the study. We were able to successfully email approximately 94% of the students.

Participation: A total of 53 students completed the survey (32% complete rate), providing an error range of $\pm 9.2\%$ at the 95% confidence level.



U.S. or Canadian Rotary District	
1600	1
1630	1
2230	1
6062	1
6360	4
6380	6
6600	5
6630	4
6670	7
6690	8
6740	1
6780	3
7530	1
7670	2
7680	2



Participant Demographics			
		Count	Percent
Country	Inbound	20	38%
	Outbound	33	62%
Gender	Male	15	28%
	Female	38	72%
Age When Arrived	15 years	6	11%
	16 years	27	51%
	17 years	14	26%
	18 years	6	11%

Inbound/Outbound

Students participating in the survey represent 14 countries placed in the U.S. or Canada (inbound) and 22 countries (outbound.)



INBOUND SURVEY PARTICIPANTS (2010 - 2011)	
HOME	HOST
Belgium	USA
Brazil	USA
Chile	USA
Czech Republic (2)	USA
Finland	USA
France (2)	USA
Germany	Canada
Germany (3)	USA
Kyrgyzstan	USA
Mexico	USA
Norway	USA
Poland	USA
Russian Federatio	USA
Slovakia	USA
Switzerland	USA

OUTBOUND SURVEY PARTICIPANTS (2010 - 2011)	
HOME	HOST
Canada	Brazil
Canada	France (2)
Canada	Spain
USA	Argentina (2)
USA	Chile
USA	Ecuador
USA	France (4)
USA	Germany (3)
USA	Hungary
USA	Iceland
USA	India
USA	Italy
USA	Japan (2)
USA	Mexico
USA	Peru
USA	Poland
USA	Russian Fed.
USA	Slovakia
USA	Spain (2)
USA	Switzerland
USA	Taiwan (2)
USA	Turkey

Overall Rating

Students gave high marks on their assessment of their Rotary Youth Exchange experience, a score of 8.6.

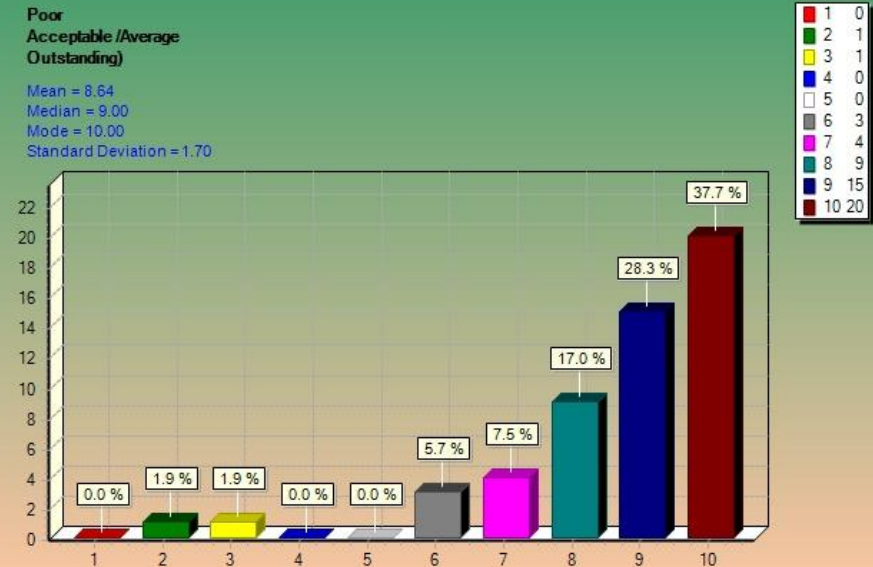
- **In explaining their rating**, they used expressions like “amazing,” “awesome,” and filled with new and life-changing experiences. Learning a new language, meeting people from all over the world, being part of a new culture and customs all led to an experience most consider the best of their lives so far.
- **That is not to say the year is perfect** for everyone. Need for more or less Rotary involvement, issues with rules and host families are all part of the equation and make for challenges to address.
- **Quotes from students** follow.



1.1.1) Overall(

Poor
Acceptable /Average
Outstanding)

Mean = 8.64
Median = 9.00
Mode = 10.00
Standard Deviation = 1.70





Overall Experience

Explain Overall Rating



Explain Overall Rating

Overall Experience

Before I went on my exchange I was dreading living in Poland for a year. But within the first two weeks I fell in love with Poland, the people, and the language.

Best year of my life so far

Except when my knee got injured... Everything went well, from the beginning to the end.. I can't explain it otherwise. Rotary was really present during my exchange and it helped because I knew someday will always be here for me in case of trouble like in my case for my knee

I can't say anything else but that it has been too good of an experience to not rate it with a 10. I learned more than I ever thought it to be possible and it's been the biggest enrichment to my life until this point.

I chose 9, outstanding because I had a most amazing, eye-opening experience.

I had a great time and I met so many good people.

I had a great time! I love my country (Japan), its culture, food, and people. I rated it seven because I could have experience and learn something more out of my exchange if only I wasn't sent home early due to the inevitable natural disaster that happened there.

I had a great year in which I met so many wonderful people and I had the best host families that I could have ever hoped for. I learned an incredible amount of things that I wouldn't have been able to by staying here.

I had a great year, which totally changed my life!

I loved my year.

I had a very positive experience with Turkey and its culture while I was there. I love the country and people and intend to return and continue with the language in college. However, in my opinion, I was treated very poorly by my host Rotary and was not allowed to do such simple things as take Turkish lessons in order to learn the language better.

I had a wonderful time, meeting new people, being introduced into a slightly different culture, getting to know myself in a completely foreign environment. The only drawback was that I felt I didn't really make a difference, as the community was already highly developed and I spent most of my time really working on interacting with the people around me and my relationships with them and also schoolwork and extracurricular activities, that, although some were service based, weren't quite what I was looking for. But overall, I wouldn't hesitate a moment to do it all over again.

I had an absolutely amazing year. I met fantastic people who I will always remember and made incredible memories that will last a lifetime.

I had an excellent time, but some challenges as well.

I had an incredible year; i made a lot of friends. All i now think is a way to go back to America. I loved it.

I had one of the best years of my life in France. I wouldn't change anything about my exchange!

I had the most wonderful experiences, and formed great international friendships!!

I loved almost everything about my exchange. There was never a moment that I wanted to go home. The other exchange students were great. I loved my city and my friends. My host family was the greatest I could ever imagine. I only don't rate it a ten because my classmates weren't that welcoming, but every other aspect was nearly perfect. I loved the language and the food, and the whole experience.

Overall Experience (cont'd)

I learned the language; I learned about the culture, the music, and the people and fell in love with my country and its continent as well.

I loved, every second I passed in USA with all my friends and I miss so much

I progressed a lot in my French, made friends with the exchange students as well as the Swiss teens, and made good grades in school. I enjoyed my time in Switzerland and by the time I left, it was my home.

I really liked my year but some parts were very slow and boring for almost months at a time

I really loved every moment of my exchange year, even the hard times, which in fact were fewer than I expected. Overall I met so many wonderful new people, visited many amazing new places, and experienced things that a regular 18 year old teenager can't even imagine. I'm so happy to have participated in this unforgettable year; I wish that it didn't have to end.

In Italy there was no Rotary events at all and the families were almost forced to host us since they sent a child out

It was a mint time!

IT WAS AMAZING!

It was amazing! Taiwan is a great place to live, and this experience has changed me so much! There is no way I could have ever experienced and learned everything I did by staying home.

It was an amazing year. It makes me cry when i think about all the things I got to experience this past year. There were a few problems I ran into, so I cannot give it a perfect 10. I am definitely glad I made the exchange, and I wish I could repeat the year over again.

It was great year. I'll never forget. I've made amazing memories and some friends for my whole life!

It was the best year in my life. I am really glad that I was part of Rotary youth exchange because this year i have collected a lot of experiences, met new people and improved in foreign language.

My Exchange year was the best year of my life. I had so many unforgettable experiences and made many more unforgettable friendships. I absolutely loved every minute!

My year in Spain was the best year of my life and because of that I will have friends and memories that will last a life time. The only reason I gave it a 9 instead of a 10 is because I did encounter several hardships on the way. However, this was to be expected and it made me grow as a person while I was there.

My year was awesome. I met so much people that I will remember all my life. The other exchanges helped me when I had some kind of hard situation. I am really thankful with Rotary for this experience. I wish I could do it again.

Nine" because nothing is perfect but this experience was really close to being perfect.

Since everything was new....everything was an experience and excitement!!

The exchange year in this district was life changing for me and I miss it a lot.

The past year has been amazing. The experience was life changing.

The year has been awesome. I have met so many amazing people and had just amazing time. I say 9/10, because the exchange year could be possibly better, but I loved my year.

Rotary Club Support

I had an amazing time in France. I loved my host families, as well as the French culture. However, I would have liked that the Rotary in District 1750 had arranged more activities with the exchange students. Throughout the whole year, we had one rotary event for the district and maybe two or three for the city of Reims students. Although they were not very good at organizing events for the students, I enjoyed the welcome I received from my own club. My club, Reims-Champagne welcomed me to the club, and invited me to their own events. Therefore, I give a rating of 8 because of my host families, and the rotary.

I learned a lot, Rotary cared a lot and I know a lot about a new country.

I loved it, but it was a tad unorganized on both sides.

Though on the **Japanese** side it really wasn't their fault because my host grandfather died. Also because of the earthquake I got sent home early against my wishes to stay. I did not get to say good bye to everyone and I have very little closure. There is not a day that goes by where I don't get a little sad that I left. Every day I think of the things I could have done and the plans that were a

Luckily, I got placed really successfully. I really enjoyed my Rotary Club and I felt very welcomed into the community. MY first host family helped me a lot in the beginning with school sports and everything. My second host family was a real family to me which I will never forget. I could never believe I could love some other people like my own family and get the love back. Also being in the sports gave a lot and I was a big part of our school and was able to feel The Spirit. I changed lives, my life was changed.

The overall experience was great, but I didn't receive much in terms of help or preparation from my **host club.**



Youth Exchange Officer was not very helpful in general, and I felt that he did not truly understand the pressures of being an exchange presented on the student.

I made a whole bunch of really good friends, and got to experience a whole bunch of things I would never have otherwise experience. However, I really didn't know my host club, nor did they know me. I only went to 3 or 4 meetings over the course of the year, and I really would have liked to go more often. However, the rest of the exchange was absolutely fabulous.

I loved my host country, however towards the end of my exchange my host family and host club wanted to control every aspect of my life and because of this I chose to return three months early.

I really made that had to be cancelled.

Host Families/Rules

Good, but too conservative on certain rules.

Had host family issues which took away from my overall experience

Had some problems with my host family.

I didn't have any problems during the year and my families were great. We lived really far apart from other exchange students from our district which is a bad thing.

I give my exchange a 7 because I had a great exchange but there were problems that I had to deal with while over there.

My exchange year was a great experience for me. I met lots of new people, went to new places, learned new things, and had a really great time. However, like most years in a person's life, I had a few rough times. With my first host family I always made it through these times, but my second family, although very kind and good to me, I didn't have the same trust in and I often felt very alone. I got the feeling that they didn't really want an exchange student living with them, as they were going through some hard times themselves, but in **Ecuador**, as with many other countries, in order to send a child abroad you must accept one. Therefore, in order to send their daughter on her exchange, they had to accept a student whom they weren't necessarily prepared for and happy to take. The rest of my year went very smoothly, I had a great time and I was very sad to go and leave all my new and very close friends. Ecuador, my host country, became my home away from home and I know I will always be welcome there.

The only thing which would keep me from rating my exchange a 10 would be complications with my host family because of misunderstandings and mistrust.



Students shared what they found most valuable about their Exchange year. As is shown in the following pages, inbound and outbound students considered it one of the best experiences of their lives, gaining understanding of themselves and of other cultures and becoming fluent in another language. Along with building relationships in their host country, they also valued the international friends they made. Here, one student made a list that covers many of what students found most valuable.

1. **Confidence** in myself
2. **A better understanding** of myself and who I actually am.
3. **Responsibility** skills.
4. **Better study** skills.
5. **The courage** to try new things.
6. **Friends** that will last a lifetime.
7. **I learned about other cultures** by meeting people.
8. **A bigger world** perspective.
9. **A family** from another country.
10. **A chance to study** a new language and culture.
11. **An introduction to the amazing** world of food.
12. **The ability to cook** all of the good food that I ate.
13. **A chance to see what Rotary** really does, and a reason to want to be a part of it someday.
14. **The ability to be thankful** for the life I have instead of taking it for granted.
15. (And finally...) **A voice.** Not only have I become more confident, but I also am able to share my experiences with them, and perhaps even inspire people (or in some cases provide humor for them).
16. **A list in my mind** of how I would completely answer this question that is too big to fit on here.



Most Valuable

Following are additional comments student made about their Exchange year including how it affected them personally, connecting to other cultures and expanding their world view, and building friendships.

Confidence/Self-esteem

A good self-esteem, a better sense of friendship and communication, Some people joined my Family, and a better understanding of a culture

Being more confident in myself, being more independent and open-minded...

During this exchange year I really got to know myself better, for example I know now that I can walk into a group of strangers and manage to really connect with them. I have improved many social skills but I have also developed a greater understanding of how I react in different situations, how to make different decisions without always having someone there to help me. I have grown into a more independent, understanding and open young woman and for that I will be forever grateful.



I gained confidence, self-esteem, tolerance. I learned how to speak French. I learned how to get along with anyone and accept cultural differences. I gained friends and a family over there.

My host family as well as my Rotary became part of my family. I gained respect for different nations around the world as well as a different point of view on everything.

I gained independence, a better sense of self, and a confidence.

I have gained the confidence that comes with living on your own in a foreign country, as well as realizing that I can take control of my own life.

I have so many new friends! I learned to just keep trying, even when it seems like things are going nowhere. I also learned to live everyday like it's your last because you really never know when a huge earthquake may take it all away.

I learned a lot about myself and the world. Also the friendships I made with the host family and classmates were definitely something I'll never forget. I learned from this exchange year how to handle myself in difficult and unfair situations and act appropriately even when others are not. I think I grew up a lot taking care of myself and managing myself in a different culture under different rules. I learned how to manage my time and a lot about keeping friends and letting them go, learning who to trust and make and keep good contacts.

I learned to be independent, I made incredibly good friends and I realized that I can make my own decisions.

I learned to be more independent and made many friends. I learned how to speak Spanish fluently.

Independence and maturity.

Independence, gaining an entirely new perspective on life and how precious it can be.

I've definitely become more independent. I've also begun caring less about what others think about me, and how to deal with problems better. Plus I think I became more outgoing and sociable.

I've learned to be more social, and to go after something if I want it.

When talking to people, after Spain, I felt and still feel like I could do anything. The satisfaction of having lived in a different country with a different language without my parents or friends is astounding. I notice this difference in myself and so can others and I think that's the greatest impact this whole exchange has given me and I am truly thankful. Aside from my confidence, I also obtained a great sense of sympathy. My first weeks in Spain, I learned this rather quickly because if I were to blend in, I'd have to understand their customs, way of thinking, and lifestyle. This is imperative to any youth exchange if you want to fully immerse yourself. I think I really did experience the saying 'You can't fully understand a person unless you walk in their shoes'. Furthermore, I did gain maturity while I was there. Going in as a sophomore, I didn't fully understand the level of maturity I would gain. But now, I can tell that I see the world differently. It isn't just a globe with different countries, it's a globe with different languages, food, customs, clothing, attitudes, outlooks, architecture, and history. Every little thing now has its own uniqueness.

Lastly, I gained lifetime relationships and an excuse to go back.

Patience. Experience

Language

Experience in the language, ability to bite my tongue and the ability to live without a family for my exchange.

I gained almost perfect fluency in the French language. Amazing trips within my country (with friends and my host family). And a good trip through many parts of Europe with Rotary. Also, the independence I gained from overcoming the daily struggles of living in a foreign culture.

I got a lot better at the English language and gained a lot of friends.

I learned French and made some French friends.

I learned German, I made new friends, I have more than one family now, I have a better understanding of people all over the world, and I grew up a lot. Those are the most valuable things that I gained. I made progress with my English and I passed all finals and I got American Diploma A second language.

Learning another foreign language.

Making friends. Learning to be outgoing. Able to believe in myself and stand with my decisions whether right or wrong. Having another home and family.

Mastery of a language, understanding of a culture (general, school life, home life), everlasting friendships

My English got much better during the year. I also became independent, I have made so many contacts to the future which I will hopefully use. The families I have lived with became my real family members. I have got the taste of American culture and know what America is like.

New language, international friends, life experience

The language, my American friends, my exchange friends and the new family I met over there.

The language, the culture, I gained responsibility, plus time and money management !

The language, the people, and the trips.

The new language, and the whole experience.



Culture/World View

I feel that I gained a broader view of the world. I learned the culture of not only my host country, but also picked up many bits and pieces of the cultures of the other exchange students close to me. I saw how small the world is by seeing all of the connections that this program makes. I learned how to be more of a self-sufficient person. I learned how important it is to try new things, and to not judge things. I feel that I gained a true knowledge of friendship, the importance of service to others and many more. There are so many things that it's hard to articulate all of them!

I gained a lot of perspective. I began to learn about other cultures- not just Ecuadorian, but the cultures of Europe, Asia and other parts of south America too. I gained perspective on their views on some of our current world events, as well as education, living, and government systems. I also learned a bit about myself; the choices I make, the way I act, it's all a bit different from the way I act when I am at home with friends and family.

I gained appreciation for the lifestyles of many different cultures. I also gained a greater understanding of how the world works. I gained a love for a family that is not my own and a love for people from all over the world.

I had really good experiences with school sports. I had so much fun participating in it and also trip to east coast with other exchange students. And of course host families and new friends.

I learned another language, of course, but I also got a better understanding of the world and its people. I learned how they lived, what they thought, and their culture. The culture. The "American spirit." Maturity.

Friendships

Friends and experiences.

Friends, culture and the language.

Friends, lifestyle.

I gained a lot of friends and I gained a lot of independence

I gained new friends, maturity, and a new sense of who I am.

I've got two new families, a lot of friends for all my life, I have met so many different and interesting people from all over the world and I have learned a new language.

Memories, friends, new perspectives and better understanding of American culture

Responsibility, friends, good memories and a great language, cultural experience.

The family and friends, adaptability, the language, appreciation, communication with host family

The friendships I made while abroad are the most important things I have taken from this past year. I also learned a lot about the world and about growing up. I learned how to manage money, clean, and take care of myself.

The people I met, the language I learned, and the new outlooks I obtained.

Unforgettable experiences and friends. I also mastered a second language.



Rating Key Elements

Leading with “making international friends” and gaining a broader world view,” students gave “outstanding” scores to 14 out of the 17 measures. These are outstanding scores overall. While it is an educational/cultural exchange, making sure expectations are clear on academics and how credits earned in the U.S. or abroad are credited in the home country.

- ♦ **Students indicated that it was a life-changing** experience, helped them become more independent, gave them experience with international travel, and was a great value for their time and money.
- ♦ **The three areas that fell into the “acceptable”** range include Rotary meetings, doing volunteer work and advancing their education.



Rating of Rotary Youth Exchange Year

(Means: 1=Poor, 5=Acceptable, 10=Outstanding)



Most Difficult Aspects

When asked to describe the most difficult parts of their Exchange Year, students indicated their greatest challenges were in adjusting to largely to the first host family, adapting to a new culture and a new school, making friends, and learning the language.

They also mentioned finding the right balance of independence, sharing and respecting others' opinions and getting along with siblings.



Host Family Issues

As I said before, my most difficult experience(s) were with my second host family. I really didn't integrate in the family too well, which was a disappointment and a bit of a surprise for me, since I fit into the first family so well and I am generally a very adaptable person. I don't think this was either of our faults- we both gave our best efforts, but they were going through some rough times and I was rather shy and homesick during the first few months of the family switch, giving us very little time to acclimate ourselves to each other.

First host mother didn't like my want to do as much as possible and explore.

First host parents.

Getting used to be in a house where anybody know you and opening your heart with people that you do not know

I didn't know how to call people. I didn't know should I say Mr. and Mrs. or not.

I think the hardest part about my experience probably was living with another family instead of my own. I am not suggesting that the family wasn't courteous or that I was not happy with my host family. It was only the fact that it is difficult for me to express any simple problems going on in school or in my daily life to

a person in which I don't expect a calming response back. This was mainly the reason I missed my family. Granted, I did have Skype so the issue would be taken care of rather quickly. But in the beginning, I'm sure everyone could admit that it is tough. My other hardship I had was following the Spaniard way of thinking. Sometimes it would get me into arguments with some classmates if they didn't agree with my opinion. Spaniards are quite opinionated so sometimes that would be the downfall of a great day. But at least now I know how to answer questions or comment thinking twice before speaking.

Leaving everyone was the most difficult. Also speaking the language was hard for me. It's hard to prove to Rotarians that you're better than they think. I got over some of my shyness but not all of it. Also being with my first host family for 5 months was stressful, and then changing after that was a bit hard too. I only ever had two host families.

Living with my host family issues.

Making compromises with my strict host family. Having to fend for myself when looking for other host families and other issues because my hosting club in Antibes, France did not take care of me.

Host Family Issues (cont'd)

My host family was not prepared for someone as independent as myself and had a hard time trusting me with the independence I already possessed when I arrived and thus I spent much of my time actually backtracking independence before I learned to accept that they were not going to accept that quality in me.

My second family had great parents but the siblings were very jealous with my relationship with the parents. But I could work it out.

One of the most difficult things was getting used to living in somebody else's home. It was sort of strange and awkward at times, because I didn't want to intrude, but at the same time I knew I needed to be a part of their daily lives. I eventually found a good balance, but although my host family was super, it was kind of difficult (for me anyways) to adapt to life in a fully-functioning family.

The first few weeks of moving to a new host family (because it's awkward). The language barrier.

The first host family I was with, I was not able to switch because there was no alternative so I was stuck there for four months in a very ugly situation.

The most difficult part of my exchange was dealing with the separation and divorce that started in my first host family that started 3 months after I arrived. The tension between every family member was very overwhelming, especially when I had just arrived in the country and wasn't very sure of what was going on.

Culture/Language/School

Christmas time and time spend by myself when I got to think about me and my problems....

Finding a ride.

Finding my way back into my own school system.

Getting into the school life and sport teams.

I found it difficult to accept many ideas present in my home country, and to find adequate venues to learn about the culture without much help or support.

I found it difficult to become friends with a lot of the local teenagers. They have little free time and I had to make most of the effort.

I found the cultural difference the most difficult about my experience. With adults it was okay to make these cultural mistakes; they were much more accepting and helpful. However, sometimes at school when I made a mistake that had to do with

French culture, the other students did not understand and would not let me live it down. So, I found that the cultural barrier was the most difficult thing to overcome.

I had times when I feel I didn't take full advantage of my being there. I wouldn't connect to the internet and spend all my time talking with people from my native country, but I would spend large chunks of time procrastinating or alone not really getting anything done and now I wish I would have made better use of that time.

I think that in the beginning the language barrier gave me a little trouble, but after getting past that it was great!

It's hard at first to make friends with the French, and in addition, the school day was very long so I did not have time to do things I enjoyed during the school-week.

Just being on my own. I went to a school all by myself with no other exchange students and for the first 4 months basically had nothing to do in terms of school and friends

Culture/Language/School (cont'd)

Learning the language.

School was difficult for me on the Exchange. I had a lot of fun there and made lots of nice friends, however I was expecting to be treated like a real student. The school was under the impression that I was going to audit the year, as I was expecting to be able to study as any other student. When I asked to change, I was told I could not be enrolled as a real student.

Talking in American slang.

That sometimes I had problems to get somewhere and always asking for a ride from somebody. I felt that I bother people but there is no public transportation where I was staying. It's not a big problem but I felt less independent.

The beginning at school seemed pretty hard, because I did not have any friends. It took me half a year to find who my real friend is and who is not.

The beginning, adapt the new culture

The most difficult thing I experienced during my year to France was getting people to open up to me. I read a few books on French culture and knew coming into my year that making good, deep and meaningful friendships would be a little difficult because being a bit closed to

foreign people is a part of the French culture. Although I was prepared for this to happen it still upset me that it always had to be me starting the conversation, sending a text, or making plans for the weekend. Eventually I realized that it didn't matter if I had to put in a little extra work because in the end it has all paid off, I have a group of friends that I know I can tell anything to, and they will always offer support and advice. By the end of my exchange year I had friends planning things with me for every single day I had free, so even though this was hard for the first 4-5 months everything worked out for me, they have taught me the value of determination.

The most difficult was the language and the culture.

The most problems I had were probably with my German Rotary. Most German Rotary members are very rich, and they tend to be a little stuck up. I had a few problems, but overall they were still nice and helpful.

The people in North America are a lot different than in Europe.

To make new friends at the high school.

What I found difficult was reacting to and being as warm as the people there. And responding to their messages and friend requests on Facebook. They felt hurt if I

didn't respond to their friend request or message right away! Changing families and getting used to their very different schedules, habits, and customs was also hard in the beginning.

What I found most difficult about my exchange was handling how I was treated by my host Rotary club and district. They were very biased according to student's nationality, very unfair, did not listen to us or help us in any way and caused me a lot of anxiety in situations that I found very inappropriate. Because Rotary was the program that I went with I had to deal with them through the duration of my year no matter how much I tried to talk with them and get help.

When I didn't know the language it was difficult to communicate.

Homesick

At first, homesickness was a bit of a problem, but after the first weeks I was able to get over it. My biggest problem was accepting that some people didn't like the way that I, as an American and not a German, thought. They believed their way was THE way. And that took a while to get used to.

I was very homesick at first, but I overcame that within the first three months.

Homesick (cont'd)

It was hard to actually realize the fact that I was gonna be gone for the next year when I first came to the US but that feeling didn't last very long. As soon as school started it was gone and I felt at home.

Some days it was really difficult to be so far away from my family, but that's normal I think.

The 30 day black-out period

The first two weeks were the most difficult by far.

Leaving At End Of Exchange Year

Leave My American Friends to go back home.

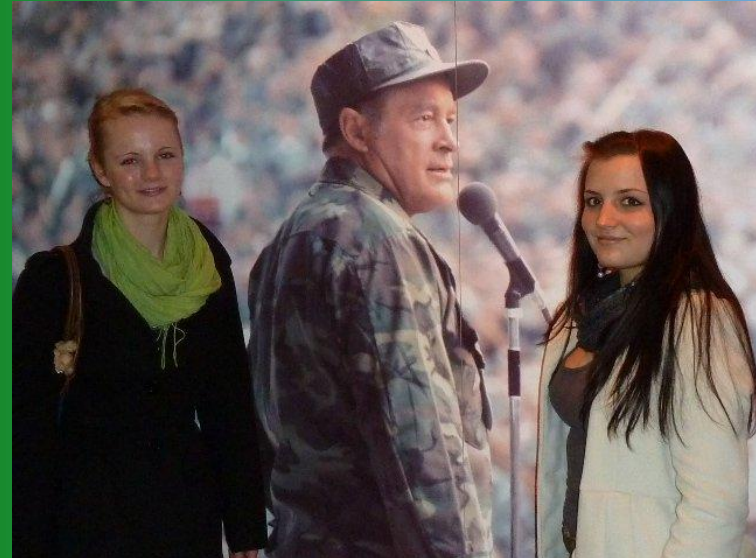
Leaving was the most difficult thing I had to do.

Saying good bye in the end of my stay.

Other

I did not have any difficulties.

The problem with my leg, but my host family, Rotary and friends were here to help me through every step.

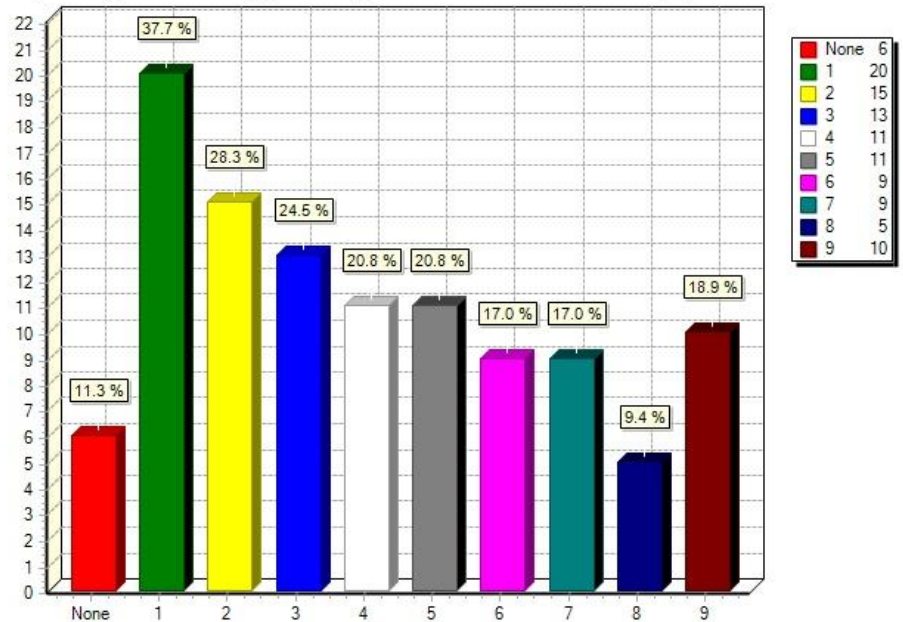


Months Most Challenging

For more than one-third of the students, the first month was the hardest (38%), followed by the second month (28%), and the third (25%). As their exchange progressed, each month showed decreasing numbers who indicated this was one of their hardest months. Almost one in five found the last month the hardest, primarily because their Exchange was coming to an end.

- **Changing to new host families** can be stressful, yet it often provides a good change from the previous host family situation. Students appear to find three host families a good balance, giving them broader experiences and family relationships.
- There are other times that are more difficult such as holidays and when there is not enough to do.
- On the following pages, students explained what made these months hard.

6) Thinking the months during your Exchange Year, which months were most challenging?



4th to 6th Month (Nov. – Jan.) (cont'd)

something that I feel I needed to handle on my own.

I think these months were the most challenging for me because I lived with my second host family then. I just did not get along with them as well as my first and third host families. They were still nice, but they just made me feel more like a guest than a part of the family. I didn't click with them as well as the other two.

January was a little difficult for me. Probably because I just had had a lot of spare time and I didn't have too much to do because people were on holidays. That was the only part of the year when I actually felt homesick. I should have moved to my second host family then. That would have helped for sure and I wouldn't have been feeling homesick at all. I know!

Month 5 was around Christmas time. That was of course a hard time because Christmas is a time for getting together with your family. My family was halfway across the world and my host family's only child was in Argentina. They were missing her and I was missing my family. After 3 month I was the most homesick.

The fifth month, January, was the time of the family switch and this was hard. I missed my old family and had a hard time getting to know my new family because they all worked or had school or went out without even telling me where. I had vacations, too, so I was often home alone, bored and depressed. I didn't yet know the family rules for going out and it took some time to adjust. I just wish my new family had taken off even a just a day to get to know me, instead of plunking me into the middle of their busy routine. Around March or April the vacations were still going on, but I was running out of fun things to do and places to go and my city had lost a lot of its novelty since I had been living there more than half a year. I think this is inevitable, but it would have been nice to have had more Rotary gatherings or projects, since we weren't in school yet so there were no school activities.

These two months were difficult because I was not in a good host family, and I didn't know how to deal with it. It was also during the winter so there weren't any activities and few of my friends wanted to venture out into the cold. I think it could have been made better if I'd told someone earlier about the problems I was having with my host family. It might not have made the problems go away, but at least I may have been able to switch families sooner.



Winter in Ohio was a little bit too long this year. But nobody cannot do anything for that.

On March 1st, I changed host families and started school again. Coming back to school was hard after a long, fun summer break and getting used to a new host family at the same time made it even harder. It would have probably been better not to do it all at the same time.

7th to 9th Month (May – July)

Around my 7th month I changed families. The first family was better for me, and leaving them for a much different family was difficult.

The last month was difficult because I really felt like my time was running out. It was sad to say goodbye to all of my friends in my host country, as well as my exchange student friends going back to their own countries. I felt like I had to rush in lots of things at the end, because I would be going home soon. I don't think Rotary could do anything to make this an easier time; it's just a difficult time.

7th to 9th Month (May – July) (cont'd)

The last month was hard because it was the last month. It was full of goodbyes and "this is the last time I'm ever's." It wasn't the easiest month definitely.

The last month was hard simply because the emotions of leaving and wanting to stay were at their high.

The last month was most difficult because it was hard to end the year.

The last month was the hardest cause it was all about saying bye to everybody and to realize that after having left, it was never gonna be the same again.

The last month, that I wanted to stay because of all my friends

Those 2 months were most challenging cause you realize that the end of the year is close and some people around you don't realize it the same way you do.



What Could Have Helped

Students indicated they would welcome greater support from Rotary clubs/counselors (e.g., organizing more group activities for exchange students, helping with transitions.

Rotary Support

Better organization and guidance would have made my exchange better.

During these months I was accused by my host Rotary district of lying about and skipping school when I had been told they were personally solving my school problems that had been going on for months. Besides just the school issues they told all of the Rotary district that I was a liar and they shouldn't listen to a word I said as well as to my host families and this caused me a lot of anxiety and was never fully resolved. The assistance I received from my sponsor district was wonderful and very quick and even though it was ignored by my host district I greatly appreciate the effort.

I found myself not with a huge amount of friends, wondering exactly what I should be doing with my time, and myself. It would have helped to have someone there for me, in my host family, or a local friend.

I had little difficulties with my host family that is why I started missing my family. If I could meet my counselor more frequently it would have helped me.

I think Rotary in my host country setting up opportunities to meet other exchange kids in the country would have helped a big deal!

I would have liked to have had more Rotary meetings among the exchange students.

If my host club gave me a family and actually worked at helping me with my family problems.

Not having the same host family and the fact that I did not have a host counselor and my host father was the president of my club. Made it very difficult for me to resolve issues.

Spend time with people who can understand and relate to you (i.e.: other exchange students). It helps a lot.

Talking more about my problems.

Preparation

Explaining to the host family that you need them more than ever

Homesickness, and really homesickness is inevitable and it's something you just have to grow out of my keeping yourself busy and having experiences were you are.

If I would have expected the homesickness, it would have been easier to cope with.

If my English was better when i came, maybe it would have been easier to communicate.

When I arrived, I had only just made contact with my host family. I had no idea who they were, or where I was going. It would have been easier had I known more about my host family, and contacted them sooner.

Host Family/Homesickness

I could have not been sick... I had mono for a whole month and was not able to speak, eat or drink and was forced to stay in my room sleeping all day to get healthy.

I was comparing my exchange to everyone else. My family didn't get to do as much because my host sister had to study all the time and my host father was busy with work. I also felt like I didn't have real friends at school. Though looking back on it now, I think this was just all stress. After month 4 it was almost smooth sailing, but then my grandfather died and my host sister in America was having issues. Looking back on it now, I really did have a good time though.

Once i spoke fluently and was a part of the family i realized how little they trusted me and we collided....a lot.

Handling Key Challenges

Overall, students felt they managed well in dealing with typical challenges they faced, from having access to a computer, following host country customs and dealing with homesickness to attending Rotary meetings and everyday getting around.

Students felt they had someone available from Rotary if needed, having enough money, making friends, learning the language and changing host families.

Comments:

Changing host families was hard, but only because I loved every single one of mine, and never really wanted to leave!

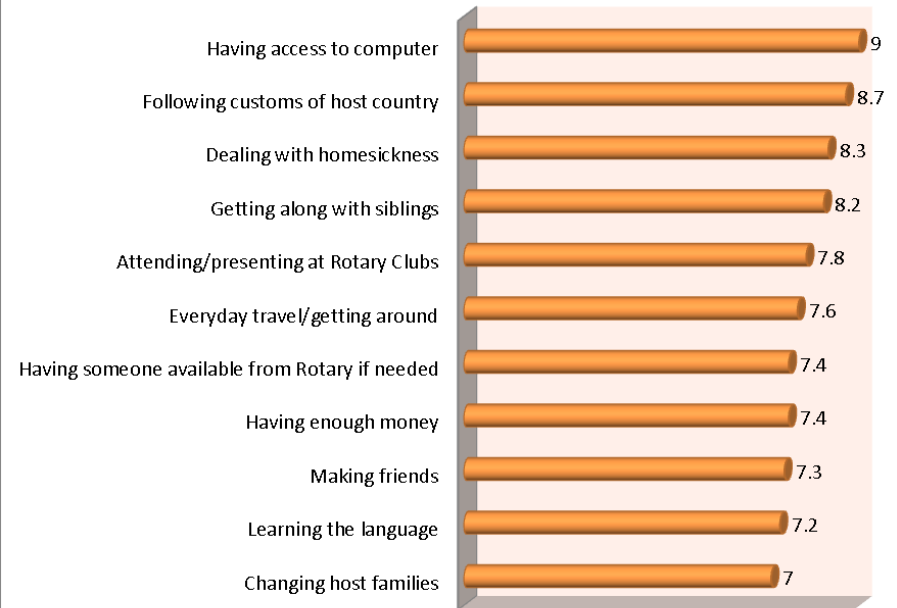
Changing people with who I was used to be was hard.. but everybody was great.

Ask about handling situations like natural disasters.



Rating of Rotary Youth Exchange Year

(Means: 1=Very hard, 5=Managed OK, 10=Very easy)





Rotary Youth Exchange Program Elements Recommend



Elements Recommend

Students particularly valued the opportunity to get together with other international students, through their districts, and participate in Rotary multi-district trips and club events. Those who had the benefit of language training and visiting with inbound or Rotex students found this extremely useful.

Overall Program

I think that the program was pretty much perfect; I'd recommend to leave it exactly like this.

I thought it was very good and everybody tried their best

If you are deciding with what kind of a program you would like to go, Rotary is probably the safest program in the world. You possibly cannot have a bad experience. You have to follow the rules, but the Rotarians are really nice and so are the host families, usually. They are most likely willing to help you with any problems you have. No one is going to abuse you or attack you; the host families are seriously really cool.

The whole program is great!

Visiting new country, learning new language, making new friends

I really loved changing families. My first two host families I didn't really have a problem with, but we didn't really mesh very well. We got along, but I didn't feel comfortable talking to them. And I got the feeling I was unwanted sometimes. I felt it wasn't reason enough to request a change, but I was glad to change. families.

Price

The price is a great aspect.

This is something you do every year, but the cost and effectiveness was very nice. Many other programs cost ten times more for the same experience.

Rotary Events

All of the gatherings with exchange students .

I definitely thought that the events organized throughout the year by my host district for all the inbounds were great. They were really great opportunities to talk and have fun with the other exchange students, and I hope my district continues, and that any districts that don't have some sort of program start one.

I loved the meetings before we all left, those are the kids that helped me through the hardest moments and gave their support and understanding.

I think that regular Rotary meetings are very important, something that I actually did not experience during my exchange, in part because I was in such a small city.

More exchange student get together. I love my exchange friends and due to the no traveling rule; it was hard to see all of them through the year.

More meetings with the other students, in the same state even if it's from different district

More Rotary Youth Exchange meeting with the Exchange crew.

More travel with the exchange students on weekends!

The baseball game.

The monthly Rotary weekends should be kept up!!! And trying to do different programs.

The meetings help you a lot, because you can talk about the experience.

The outbound orientation was great and the binders our district put together for us were also very helpful. My sponsor district chair and counselor were always very quick to respond and very helpful.

Their Rotary made me be very impressed by my own Rotary so just keep doing what you are doing.

Rotary Events (cont'd)

I think everything was great! Keep doing what you are doing. My favorite parts of Rotary were having Rotex (past exchange students) to talk to, and all of the trips and culture classes I had. Also the Language classes in Taiwan REALLY were helpful.

More Rotary trips/camps and more chance of meeting other exchange students from different districts. Language programs. No less than 6 exchange students per district.

RYLA camp was amazing and a lot of fun! And also the Western Trip was the best trip of my life! I loved getting together with the exchange students of our district and hanging out together.

More time for the exchange students to get together on their own without the counselors.



I also got the opportunity to see what culture was and what just a family aspect was.

Rotary Trips

All the trips were incredible. I also really enjoyed any of the projects my host rotary club became involved in. For example, we gave medicine to the lower class children that were not receiving it at home, we helped construct wheelchairs for those of need, free-of-charge. These were not only good service projects, but opportunities for us, the exchange kids, to interact with all types of people and learn all kinds of things about the language, customs, and people of our host country.

Euro tour and all the other Rotary trips throughout the year

Euro Tour was one of my favorite parts of exchange.

Euro trip was awesome but waaaay too short in France. Germany's Euro trip is 22 days and much better from what it seems.

I absolutely love the Rotary trips offered when doing the exchange. I went on my Rotary trip to the south of Spain and to Portugal. It was the best trip of my life. The absolute best trip of my life. I would never have given it up. The only thing I wanted to see was the availability of a trip around all Europe, but I have no regrets.

I absolutely loved the Euro trip and wish that we could do more but since that is not really possible I would have liked to have more rotary weekends, because we helped each other through difficult times and were bonded by the understanding only somebody in that exact situation can have for somebody.

I love Rotary trips. I like being with Rotarians and other students.

I think more trips should be available for students in Spain. I very much enjoyed the one trip that was available to me.

I would recommend the organization of the bus trip. With my host rotary club, they made me an honorary member for the year. This was a great experience; I attended meetings, events, dinners. I made very good friends with the Rotarians, so I would recommend that they continue accepting students into the club.

Rotary trips were such an AWESOME experience. And monthly district meetings with other exchange students.

The bus trips!!

Rotary Trips (cont'd)

The Rotary trips were amazing! It was unbelievable to meet all of the other exchange students as well as see everything in our host country. Some people from our host country would tell us that we had seen way more of the country than they had! I also really enjoyed the service opportunities that Rotary had to offer. It was very good way to be an ambassador of our home countries.

The tours were wonderful.

The trips and more meetings with other exchange students in my district

The trips from Rotary, I know it is a lot of money but if the clubs could somehow help the exchange students to go in all the trips would be perfect, we have great time and meet a lot of people

The trips to many other countries and especially the tour of Europe. It was one of the best parts of the year.

The trips. One year is plenty of time to absorb a culture and it is important that students learn how diverse customs and such are even within their own new country. Without the trips the students would assume that their country is all just the way that one city they lived in was

Trips

Trips around the country- I think you should arrange more trips.

Trips around United States (western, eastern trip)

Western trip.





Rotary Youth Exchange Program Anything Missing



Anything Missing

When asked what, if anything, was missing, students would have welcomed more attention from and involvement of their host country Rotary clubs and counselors. They also like opportunities to get together with other Exchange students who are experiencing many of the same challenges they are. It appears the level of contact varies considerably across Ohio-Erie, with some districts covering wider geographical areas. Specifically:

Rotary Program

A solid organized program in Peru, there was a lot of fighting within the district.

I was not contacted by my Rotary Club or district AT ALL throughout the year. I had the feeling they just threw me out into another country and that I was being expected to handle everything on my own, without help or guidance or concern of any kind from home.

A better selection of Host parents

A relationship with my counselor.

Allowing us to travel without requiring rotary people to be with us.

I didn't find anything in particular missing, rather than an overall strengthening and unifying of the program.

I wish I have had 3 host families instead of 2, but both of them were awesome.

I wish my district had more exchange students. We had only four and I didn't really get to meet any other districts

I wish that in my city someone had taken the time to show us about it historically. I feel like I know the city, but that I missed a lot of the cool things that it had to offer such as museums, government buildings etc. I know the city from the perspective of a kid, not a tourist. I think that's good, but I would have liked to have had a little more of a balance between the two.

I would have liked that the Rotary organize exchange student events, or weekends. That way, the students would have been able to get to know each other, and see how different people from around the world handle their exchange year.

Less host families or better scheduled moving (spent same amount of time with every family)

More exchange students (at least 6-7) per districts please.

More involvement from my hosting club. I would have liked it if my club could have talked to them and made them realize that they were responsible for finding me families and taking care of the basics things I needed.

More meetings with the exchanges students of our district.

More trips with other exchange students.

No, maybe making more meeting with exchange students.

Rotary Rotary Rotary..... I missed out on all events.

The only thing I can think of is there being more activeness between the Rotary district clubs and their exchange students. My Rotary counselor was outstanding; however I had only been invited to my district club twice throughout the whole year. Once, to see a presentation my host father give and to give my end of year presentation. I think more interaction with the club would have been much better.

Try to talk to the exchanges, because most of the time we do not have somebody to talk.

Rotary Program (cont'd)

While abroad, it would have been nicer to have had more Rotary exchange student meet ups. (I know that the Rotary abroad is responsible for that, though).

More Rotary meetings with all exchange students in the district.

Training

I think it would be a good idea for Rotary to provide language lessons for students in their host country.

A language camp or something to help us ease into the year

Being able to travel more.

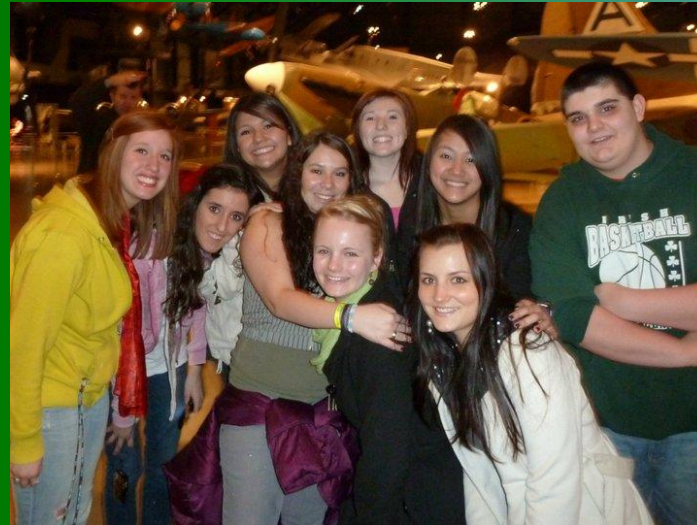
Great

Everything was really great.

There can always be little things done to make the year better, but I honestly enjoyed mine just the way it was!

As far as I'm concerned everything was amazing although if something could have made it better I couldn't tell you unless it happened.

I don't think I regret anything or missed anything that I shouldn't have.



Rotary Support

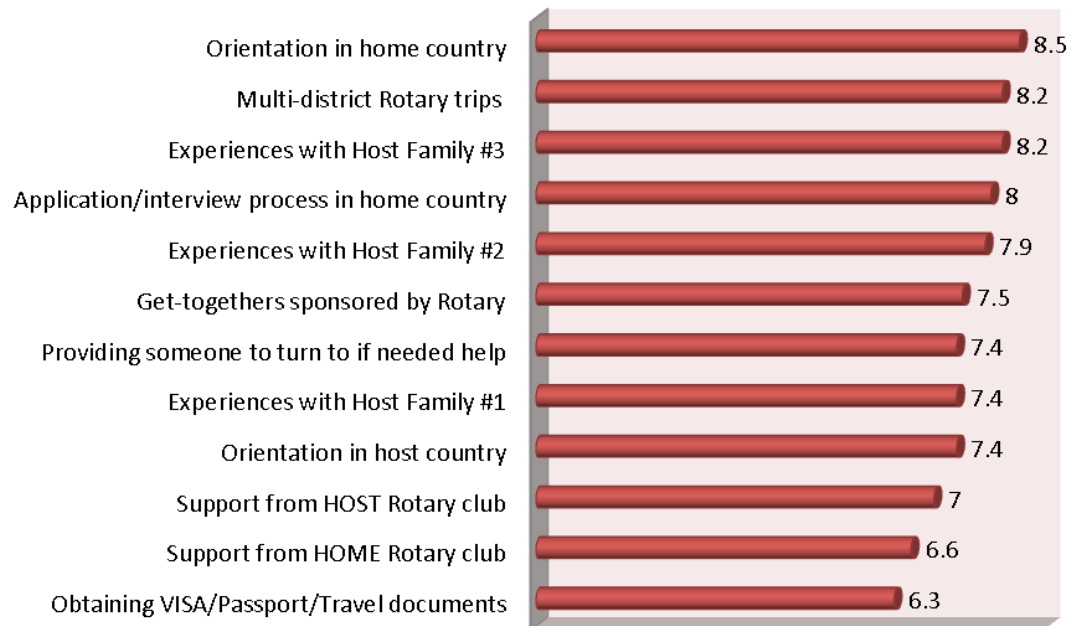
Students gave high marks to the orientation they received from their home country, multi-district Rotary trips, and the application process to become a Rotary Youth Exchange student.

Importantly, students rated their experience with their 3rd Host Family significantly higher than with their 1st family (8.3 vs. 7.4). This is not surprising, as the most difficult time for students is when they first arrive. Faced with their need to learn the customs of their host country, communicate in another language, and become part of a new family is stressful.

- **During the year, their satisfaction** with their families increases (7.9 for the 2nd family), a sign that they are adjusting, making friends, and integrating into their school.
- **Students gave their host and home Rotary clubs** above average, yet as open-end comments indicated, greater involvement might be good.

Ratings of Process Elements of Program

(1=Poor...5=Acceptable..10=Outstanding)



Untold Stories

We asked students if there were anything they had experienced that they might not yet have shared that Rotary should know about.

Broadly, they mentioned issues with host families and need for greater Rotary club/counselor support. Rotary counselors and officers can play a key role in helping students with their exchange. If unavailable or unsympathetic, the student may feel there is nowhere to turn. When there are problems in a host family, it may be difficult for the student to know if what they are experiencing is "normal," or not. Students are more likely to suffer in silence than complain.

Host Family Issues

I felt very isolated due to problems with my host club/family.

I had a dispute with my host mother. Being me, I am a go getter, and when things don't work out I try again. She was upset that kept pestering her to travel and to explore new things.

I had some difficulties with my second host mother thinking I had an inappropriate relationship with my 3 years younger host brother. I guess the fact that me and him were very close made her think that and it hurt me really bad at first because I wouldn't even think about anything like that. But then I kinda figured that in Germany, we have a different way to see relationships, and that in the US it wouldn't even be too weird if an 18 year old has a relationship with a 15 year old. So I told her and it took her some time to actually believe me, but in the end she did and so we just kinda dropped it. But that was another eye opening experience because it was a really big deal for her that I got along with him really well, in my culture nobody would ever think about it the way

she did, so I learned another thing about American way of thinking.

It depends totally about your host family but I got to travel a lot during my year and I'm very thankful of that. I were hoping that before I came to USA and I don't know anyone else who travelled that much in the country.

Just that my second host family was not very welcoming and made my exchange much less enjoyable, even though my host father was my host counselor.

Many people from my district had problems with their first host family. And no problems with the others

I was placed in a family that was struggling through a separation and quite possibly divorce and this wasn't explained to me nor could I have prepared myself for it in any way, I feel, but I know this is part of the exchange, living with the family and their way of life. Still, I feel that if it can be avoided, it'd be preferable to put an exchange student in a comfortable home, since the family in the host country is the one place a student should really be able to feel comfortable and welcome in.

Sometimes the host families are not happy having an exchange, or sometimes the host parents want an exchange but the siblings do not want an exchange and it's really hard for get along.

Rotary Role/Support

I think most of what I experienced I've already told. However I really would like to stress how important it is for the host club to play a role in the student's exchange. It can really add so many different opportunities and experiences.



Rotary Role/Support (cont'd)

That I didn't have a real counselor. I met my counselor 2 times and it was in September. He didn't care about me entire year but it's okay he was probably busy but I felt kind of sorry because my exchange friends were talking how good friendships they had with their counselors and I didn't. But if i would really need help from my rotary club my first two host dads are Rotary members so that wouldn't be a problem. And also I didn't get to go to a lot club meetings because their meetings were during school so i couldn't go but I went during summer time and when we had day off in school.

Country Issues

I have already said this, but that earthquake was devastating for me. At the point in my exchange when everything is going smoothly for me, I had friends, I could go and have fun, I could laugh with the Rotarians, my language skills were improving at a fast pace and my walls had finally come down. It all ended with that earthquake. I think about Japan all the time. I feel that I did not appreciate it as much.

I had a grumpy face for too long. I was finally free of all that stress that was holding me down! I look back now and wish I had hung out with my school friends more and spent less time on the computer and more time watching the news with my host father, even if I always fell asleep watching it. I wish I didn't get sick at my going away party so I could really express how much I loved every single Rotarian there. I loved it there so much. Though at first I compared my exchange to everyone else and thought theirs was better, but really I could not have asked for better people to be surrounded by.

I think that you should not send kids to a country where there is no organized Rotary. We are with their program, they should support us.

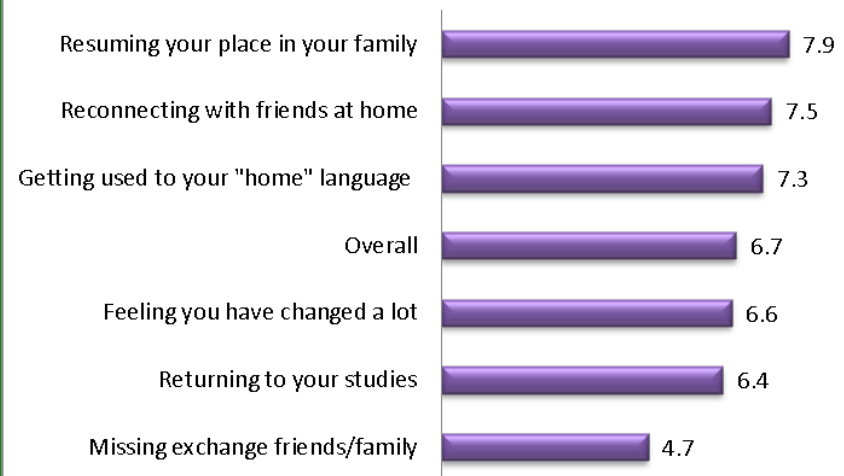
Rebound Ratings

We asked how students are doing since they returned home. At the time of the interview, most had been home for roughly 2 months or less.

- **On the whole, students** are doing well with resuming their place in their family, reconnecting with friends and speaking their home language.
- **They mostly feel they are managing** with respect to feeling they have changed a lot, resuming to their studies.
- **The hardest part** about their return is missing their exchange friends and family.



Rebound: Since You've Been Home
(1=Very hard...5=Managing OK...10=Very easy)



Marketing Messaging

There are many uses for the phrases and ideas that follow. These are “direct quotes” from Rotary Youth Exchangers. They represent a powerful endorsement and can be used in promotional materials.

- **Students talk about the transformative impact** of Youth Exchange....that it was “the best year of their life,” “life changing.” They urge students to “try it,” “take the chance on themselves,” yet they do affirm that you need to be “mentally ready” to take on the responsibilities, distance from family, and openness to new things.



Life-changing

A year abroad is one of the most amazing and most challenging experiences you can offer yourself at this age. Most teenagers are worried about what to wear the next day and how to finish those 20 biology questions on the bus before school. Whereas I was concerned about fitting in to a new culture, learning their traditions and trying to learn another language so I could communicate with classmates and host families. During this year abroad I have matured and changed in ways that I haven't noticed yet, but I know that when I look back on all the amazing things I have accomplished, people I've met and places I've discovered I know that even though I may have “lost” a year . I have gained so much. With Rotary I have friends all around the world, from Russia to Argentina, Taiwan to Alaska and so many countries in-between. If I am ever travelling I know that they'll always have a bed open for me as I have one ready for them. I may lose contact with these friends over the years, but with the things we have experienced together there will always be a bond between us. In the beginning of the application process I was worried about missing my friends, prom, and everything that goes with my last year of high school, I only wanted to go abroad for about 6 months and was honestly on the fence about whether I should really through with this. Now I just came back from extending my exchange from ten months to an entire year minus ten days, and if I could I'd go back. So if you aren't 100% sure you are ready to leave, to miss out on important things, think instead of all the amazing things that are sure to come with this year. Make the jump and relish in the fantastic things you'll accomplish and the things you'll find out about yourself. There is honestly no better way to spend this time.

Best year of your life. Don't miss out cause this chance only comes once.

Do it, do it, do it, do it. It is the best decision I have made in my life. When I look back at my year, I only think about how great it was that I went through it. There are some hard times too, but you get through those and you only realize that those only helped you grow so much more.

I can't promise you that your exchange would be "the best time" of your life or that you'll even like it, but one thing is for sure, if you stick through it, it's a life changing journey.

I recommend it. It was one of the most worth-while years of my life.



Promoting Rotary Youth Exchange Marketing Messaging



Life-changing (cont'd)

I would say just do it. Don't worry about whether or not it will help you or hurt you in the future. Because the experience is unforgettable. My mom's biggest concern about me going on exchange was missing a year of school and how colleges would look at that. But after going on exchange, I've realized it doesn't matter to be how a college sees it. I've had the most amazing year of my life, I've learned so much and grown so much as a person. And if that's not acceptable for a college then that college isn't right for me. Exchange is something that will bring you so many benefits, it'll give you a completely different outlook on life, and it's something that you can't get any other way.

I would say that doing the exchange with Rotary is probably the best and safest way to go! People in Rotary are so open and so welcoming that it's almost impossible to have a bad time with them. Everyone wants to know more about you and take you places, it's a great experience.

I would tell him/her that it is the hardest, most difficult experience of his/her life, but had I the choice, I would not hesitate for a second to do it all again. Youth Exchange introduces us to so many things. Independence, hardships, friendships, culture, language. My year spent in France was the most amazing time of my life, I made so many friends from all over the world, I now have a second family in France. I learned to speak French fluently, and understand and accept a different way of life. If you have the chance to do this, do it, do not miss out. You will never ever regret Youth Exchange.

I would tell the person that it's the best decision I ever made, that I made memories, experiences and friends that I never want to miss and that there's no better way to find yourself.

I would tell them it's an excellent opportunity to meet friends and learn a new culture and language."



I would tell them that it will be the most amazing year that they could have. They can learn so much more than is possible to be taught in school. They will meet the best people that they will ever meet in their life, and just have an awesome experience.

I would tell them to give it a try, even if they weren't the most outgoing person in the world. I know that when I left, I wasn't super outgoing so I wasn't completely sure how I'd handle things, but it all turned out just fine, and really helped me improve. I would also tell them that Rotary is one of the best exchange programs, in terms of cost and organization, among other things.

If you want to experience a great year, meet different country and new friends you should be an exchange student.

It is an experience for life, the things you learn about another place, people and yourself it is priceless.

It is an unforgettable, amazing experience in which you will learn so much about another culture, other people, and yourself.

It is the best bet for your money and is the best way to experience a bigger world view and culture.



Promoting Rotary Youth Exchange Marketing Messaging



Life-changing (cont'd)

It really is a life changing experience. The world is bigger than just where you live, and to know that you have to go out and see the world. You're young! Explore, Try new things, don't be afraid to make mistakes! If you don't do all of that while you're young you'll regret it. Chances are, you're still trying to find out who you are and who you really want to be. This past year on exchange I learned so much about myself, and about others that I could not have learned at home. This was the best year of my life, and I would trade anything to change any part of it.

It's the best thing you could possibly do at this age.

It's an incredible opportunity to travel and learn the customs and culture of people all over the world in a safe and well-constructed program. Kids in this program can benefit some much, learn so much about the world and themselves, develop confidence and diplomatic skills, as well as become fluent in another language. Rotary makes it affordable and safe, they take great care in all parts of the sending and receiving processes, and support the student throughout this life-changing experience.

It's gonna be the most unusual and full of adventures year in your life!

It's the best experience up until this point of any exchanger's life.

It's the best year of your life and you'll make tons of friends and love every minute of it.

Join every event you can. Even though it might sound old or boring, just go and try. I went square dancing with some retired folks and had blast! Also get yourself noticed at school, don't only attend the classes. Speak out loud there."

Just do it. You won't regret it!

That the experience is amazing, and i totally 100% think that doing an exchange year is something they shouldn't miss out on. It is one of the best years, but it is also very challenging. Even though it's challenging, it's worth it.

That this is a great experience and great opportunity to developed yourself.

The Youth Exchange program is such a great experience.

It will be a part of you for the rest of your life. You learn so much, not necessarily in the classroom, but things that are just as important if not more so. You make tons of friends not only from your host country but from all over the world. You learn another language, other culture limitless things. You would never regret the decision.

You definitely have to do it! It is an outstanding program that would change your life! I will visit new places and make so many friends!

You really should do it! It is an amazing year and you are really going to love it. You are going to meet so many amazing people, experience the culture, High school and so many other exchange students like you are! If you think you are going to be homesick - you will not, if you stay busy! There is always the opportunity to be not homesick! You just have to enjoy the year and not just waste the time there. Do something special every day, something unique, something different..."

You will meet awesome friends, see a totally different culture. HAVE THE BEST YEAR OF YOUR YOUTH.



Suggestions/Recommendations

Students offered a number of suggestions including involving students in orientations, communications between Home and Host clubs during their exchange year, continuing contact after students return, finding host families, improving Rotary operations, loosening some rules, and staying in touch with exchange students after their year all emerged as recommendations from students. Some of their specific ideas:

Rotary Program

I stayed for just 5 months because I did not like my exchange to France. Rotary does offer a great opportunity, but it did not work out for me. It would be great if there was a semester exchange program for high school students that would be much more manageable.

I think all of the exchange students should have 2-3 host families. It should be recommend to change the family if there were even tiny little problems. The counselors should tell that you didn't fail even though you changed families.

I think it would be very helpful if districts with students from each other kept in contact to minimize misunderstandings and to better prepare outbound students of their future sponsor districts policies and expectations.

I would say that the orientations should be run by real students and people who have actually been on exchange before. Because I received much information from the people who led my orientation but I still felt like I could've learned more.

I, along with several others, had some difficulties with the travel agent. She always took a long time to respond to messages with questions about the paperwork and she even spelled my name wrong on the ticket so I almost couldn't even take my flight! Exchange students from all other countries are able to buy their own flight tickets, which are much less expensive. If we have to have these particular tickets in order to come back within 24 hours, why don't RYE exchange students from other countries, (even the ones that come here) have to do that? I think that this would be a good thing to think about changing.

Loosen the rules. I didn't party much, but so strict is suffocating. Sometimes you have to trust that they will stay responsible. The best way of learning is through making mistakes.

No dating rule change.

Now that I'm back, I kind of feel like my Rotary Club forgot me. Almost as if they knew I would be mad at them for pulling me out. I'm not mad. I kind of wish they would e-mail me about speaking or something. Only kind of though, I still don't like speaking at Rotary meetings.



Promoting Rotary Youth Exchange Suggestions (cont'd)



Rotary Program (cont'd)

Rotary in America does an amazing job of getting students prepared and at hosting!! I love American Rotary!

Rotary is an amazing program. I'm so thankful that I've had this opportunity. Thank you to all involved. :)

The communication between the Rotarians and the travel agency really needs to be worked on. Also, between the host families and the host Club. I had to find my own second host family because my Rotary club said that it was the first family's responsibility to choose the other two, and when the family stated that they did not know this, no one did anything about it. Therefore, I had to find my second host family on my own, which was incredibly stressful.

Thanks

Great experience.

I am so glad I did this exchange!

I loved everything, please keep in touch. Exchange Student Year it is a wonderful experience

It was a great year and a good opportunity

I just want to thank Rotary for allowing me this exchange. I don't think I would've given it up for anything.

I would like to thank the Rotary for sending me on exchange. It was the most amazing year of my life, and the Rotary made it possible. So once again thank you. Continue to organize youth exchange!

I'm sad, I want to go back to America SO BAD!!!

I'm really thankful for this opportunity and experience and I want to recommend this to everybody who is ever going to get the chance to do it.

Keep doing a good job. I am very thankful to the Rotary for sending me (and now my sister) on an exchange and acting quickly when I was placed in an emergency situation.

Thanks: Thank to Rotary for great year. ~**Thank you** for everything :) ~**Thank you Rotary!:**) ~**Thank you, Rotary!** ~**Thanks for great year.** ~**Thank you.** Nothing else to add.

Thank you for this experience, this year was incredible and one I will always remember. It has helped shape me and let me forge connections with some of the most incredible people that I would never have met if it hadn't been for Rotary!!

The fact that Rotary sponsors exchange like this is amazing. You have no idea how thankful and privileged we all are for being a part of it. I can't imagine what my life would be like without having this.

This is an outstanding program for anyone who wishes to experience a different culture, and develop a better understanding of other people as well as themselves. I'm so glad I decided to take part in this exchange, and I hope that the Rotary Youth Exchange continues, to give other students a chance to experience one of the best years of their lives.

I think the exchange is a wonderful opportunity and would do it again gladly.

I would like to thank Rotary and the amazing people who were a part of making this fantastic year possible for me. Thank you so very much!

That is the great program! And you should continue to do it! This program can change people's life.



Objectives, Participants

Consistent with Department of State program evaluation

requirements, Ohio-Erie surveyed school counselors via a Web-based survey to obtain feedback on their experience with Rotary Youth Exchange.

Research Objectives

1. **Quantify experience in serving student needs and school Mission**
2. **Provide feedback on Rotary Representative Support**
3. **Determine if would accept Rotary student in future**
4. **Obtain recommendations to improve program**

Participation

A total of 24 school representatives participated including counselors, principals and coordinators.

High School Feedback Participants

Michigan	Dexter High School	Dexter, Michigan	Principal
Michigan	St. Joseph High School	St. Joseph	Counselor
North Carolina	Charles D. Owen High School	Black Mountain	Assistant Principal
Ohio	Findlay High School	Findlay	Guidance Dept. Chair
Ohio	Medina High School	Medina	Counselor
Ohio	William V. Fisher Catholic High School	Lancaster	Counselor
Ohio	Circleville High School	Circleville	Guidance Counselor
Ohio	Lakewood High School	Lakewood	Principal
Ohio	Lancaster High School	Lancaster	Guidance Department Coordinator
Ohio	Loudonville High School	Loudonville	HS Counselor
Ohio	Marion Harding High School	Marion	Guidance Counselor
Ohio	Maumee High School	Maumee	
Ohio	Perrysburg High School	Perrysburg	Counselor
Ohio	Ridgewood High School	West Lafayette	School Counselor
Ontario	Blenheim District High School	Blenheim	Head of Student Services
Ontario	John McGregor S.S.	Chatham	Guidance counselor
Ontario	Ridgetown District High School	Ridgetown	
Ontario	Wallaceburg District Secondary School	Wallaceburg	Principal
Tennessee	Rockwood High School	Rockwood	Principal
Tennessee	Cookeville High School	Cookeville	Counselor
Tennessee	Macon County High School	Lafayette	School Counselor
Tennessee	Seymour High School	Seymour	School Counselor
Tennessee	Webb School of Knoxville	Knoxville	Multi-cultural Coordinator

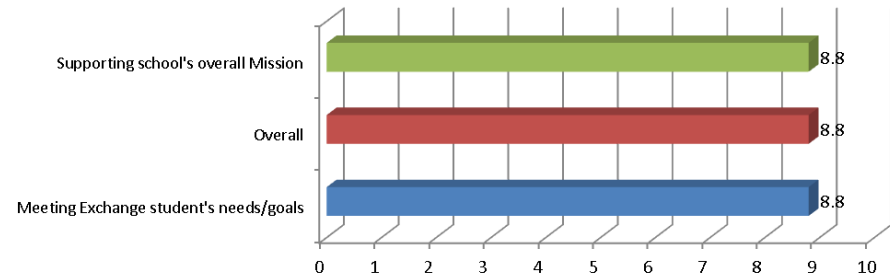
School Experience Ratings

The schools gave the program high marks overall, in meeting student needs, and supporting the school's Mission (8.8).

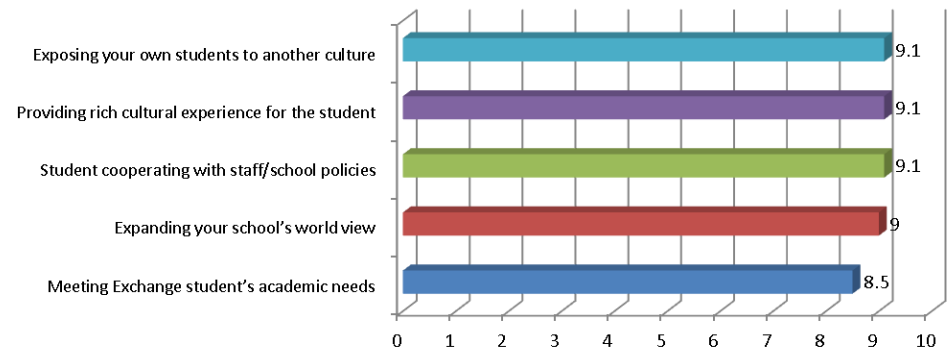
Schools also rated the experience high in student cooperating with staff/school policies, providing rich cultural experience for the student, meeting the Exchange student's academic needs, exposing their students to another culture and expanding their school's world view.



How would you rate your school's experience regarding the Rotary Youth Exchange program?



How would you rate your school's experience regarding the Rotary Youth Exchange program?





Explain Ratings

Feedback from high schools is very positive overall, giving favorable comments on the attitudes and quality of the exchange students themselves as well as the level of support offered by Rotary.

- Two high schools had negative feedback. One was very disappointed in Rotary's lack of academic focus, with student travel during the year resulting in significant student absences. With the student also selecting subsequent host families, the high school indicated they would not participate in the program again.
- Another indicated that their experience with an outbound student was completely unsatisfactory.

Positive Experience

Coordinators communicated well while working to meet the needs of the students.

Has been very positive and encourages our students to consider a similar experience for themselves

I love that the Exchange programs bring students who are prepared and enthusiastic about their American experience. I also like that they are placed with 2 separate families for additional experiences.

No problems Our exchange students last year were extremely self-reliant, positive, flexible, and appreciative.

Our Rotary student was a wonderful addition to the school. However, his social skills were stronger than his work ethic skills at school! He enriched the upper school environment in many ways.

Rotary keeps students very safe and provides them with tremendous opportunities

Rotary members were very helpful in providing information and support when necessary and easy to work with.

Rotary provides exchange students with mentors, travel opportunities, guidance and tremendous support.

Rotary youth have consistently been among our best foreign exchange experiences.



Overall Experience Explain Ratings (cont'd)



Positive Experience (cont'd)

Student had a positive attitude and was willing to join any team. She was a positive representative for different cultures.

Student seemed to fit in although he was not the best academic student. His English was VERY low at first, but did get better. We enjoyed having him here.

Student made many contacts and experienced travel through the school and those relationships. She was a graduate back in Spain.

The program seems to run smoothly, we have had no issues that I know of with the students, the local chapter does a good job with placement and it exposes our students to students of a different culture and background.

Things went very well.

We have a great connection with the Rotary coordinators and they work very well with the student and the school.

We have always had excellent exchange students thru the rotary and this student is no exception.

We work with Rotary every year. Host families are excellent, and students have been great.

Concern about Academics

Sometimes we cannot meet all the desires of the students/host families.

Student came here expecting to earn a diploma from our school, but we had trouble getting her records and translating her credits. We will not allow graduation in the future.

At orientation we were told that the Rotary Club did not emphasize grades and that they were not of importance. I knew from that point we had a problem. The student then missed over 15 days for travel on various field trips with the organization. Any regular student at our school who missed so many days would be turned over for truancy. If grades do not mean anything then why was it that the Brazilian student we hosted in our school just had to have an official transcript of his grades to take home with him. It was almost as if there were a set of double standards. The student was also allowed to pick and choose whom he wanted to stay with after the agenda had been set aside. Our school has hosted several exchange students from various organizations. This is the first and the last that we will host through the Rotary organization.

Our experience with a student who went to Brazil from here was totally unsatisfactory!

We are not always able to accommodate the student's first preferences for courses and sometimes have to adjust or compromise on levels and streams since we don't know curriculum from other countries.

Rotary Support

Rotary representatives received high marks in being engaged and interested, responsive and helpful in problem-solving as well as available to share information on Rotary.

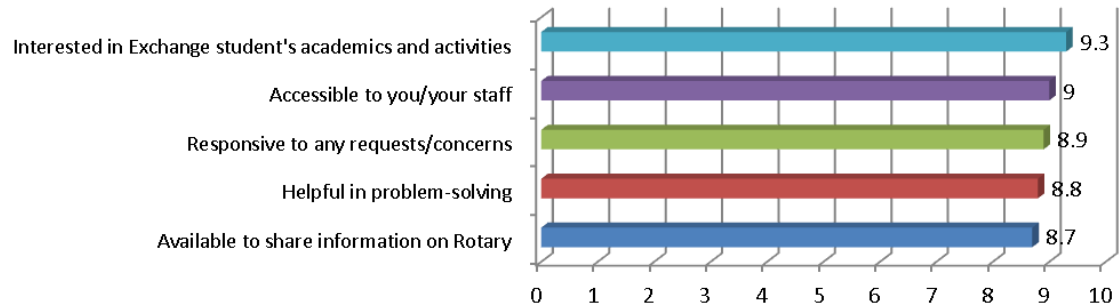
As is shown here, Rotarians had contact from roughly 3 to over 10 times during the student's exchange year.

Few comments:

Even though the Rotary Club representative was readily available, a member from another club tried to work with the student and he made decisions for the students without consulting the local Rotary Club Rep. **VERY UNPROFESSIONAL.**

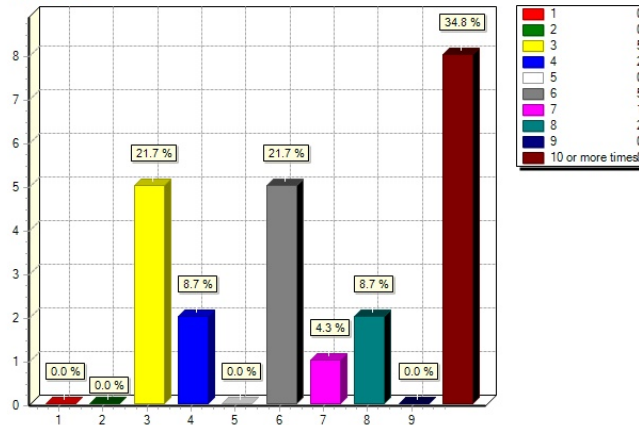
Never really asked for info, but they **WOULD** be helpful!

How would you rate the Rotary Club representative in terms of being...?



4) Local Rotary Club representative: how many times did you have contact?

Mean = 6.78



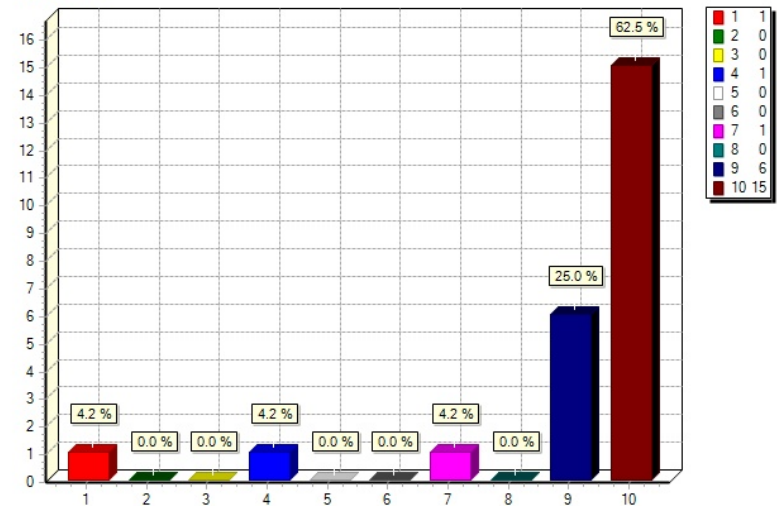
Recommend Program

Except for one school which had a bad experience, schools gave overwhelming endorsement of the program (9.0).



7.1.1) Likelihood to Recommend Rotary Youth Exchange

Mean = 9.00



Suggestions

When asked for suggestions and recommendations, schools indicated that they like the multiple host families and if local students were invited to participate in Rotary events, it might attract more into the program.

Suggestions

Make sure the records are in a form that we can use to better provide students with courses that will teach them something new. Emphasize that graduation may not be possible and to accept that when told.

Most important is an appropriate home placement. She seemed much happier in her second placement.

Rotary exchange students in our experience have been here more for the culture than the academics. Maybe stressing the need to be successful in academics more.

The experience at our school was not a pleasant one overall.

Favorable Comments

I am very pleased with the Rotary experience.

It is nice that students get to experience a variety of host families and settings while here. However, the majority of organizations have 1 host family for the school year and this appears to give the student and host family the chance to develop a strong relationship. We have had some placements that don't work out and have been able to find alternate placements for those students to help them complete their year in our school.

It's terrific already.

Just keep sending outstanding young people and wonderful/cooperative Rotarians.

Keep up the good work, great kids.

No, the process is established and working well!

Overall we've always been very happy with the program and the students who are placed with us.

Program is excellent as is!

Rotary exchange students in our experience have been here more for the culture than the academics. Maybe stressing the need to be successful in academics more.

She was a very diligent, motivated, and positive student to work with.

Thank you for Rotary's ongoing support of the Youth Exchange program. We see a big difference in the students over the course of a year and they always tell us it was the best experience of their lives. The best part is when they return to visit our school some years after returning to their home country. We love to keep those connections.

Thank you for running such a fantastic program for our youth.

Thank you for your patience, cooperation, and understanding.