



# Rotary Youth Exchange District 7790-Maine Newsletter



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## Upcoming Events

**May 1**

Deadline for STEP  
Applications (see page 4  
for more information)

**May 27**

Penobscot Bay Sail on the  
American Eagle

Dear Friends in Youth Exchange,

**February 2016**

My tardiness in submitting this letter for Cheryl's design talents means that I will be writing about something entirely different than I'd originally intended.

A week ago Saturday at 4 am local time, there was a mighty earthquake in southwestern Taiwan. I was reminded immediately how very grateful I am for the family of Rotary, and how our circles of care grow exponentially through youth exchange. A quick look at Facebook showed our students reaching out to each other, and to host families. "Are you safe?" "Is there anything we can do for you?" "You are in

my thoughts." And from Taiwan - very quickly via the Rotary network - "All students and host families are safe." Including designer Cheryl's second "exchange son", David Chen, who is Taiwanese - and whose family was unaffected, thank goodness.

The problem with exchange is that our hearts are so much more vulnerable. More people to care about; more people for whom we are concerned. But the great joy of youth exchange is that it enables the expansion of so many hearts. Here's to love!

Yours in Service and Peace,

*Su*

Su Wood, D7790-Maine Youth Exchange Chair

## COME ON AN ADVENTURE

*Join Inbound and Outbound students for a life-changing sail on the Penobscot Bay aboard the American Eagle. Hoist sails, sit back and provide "support", or if you're feeling crazy, take a flying leap off the bowsprit into the "cool" water below (OK, "frigid" might be more accurate). Leaving the dock in Rockland at 8am, Friday, May 27, returning Saturday 11 am.*

*Call Su Wood 338-6116 for details.*

**\*\*Space is limited! Sign up early!\*\***

## YE Committee

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ROTARY INTERNATIONAL

## \*HELP WANTED\*

Would you like to share your leadership skills with one of Rotary's **GREATEST** programs? Do you like teenagers? Do you like **ADVENTURE**?

Our District Youth Exchange team is looking for more teammates.

Please call Su Wood (207-338-6116) or Heidi Karod (207-975-3588) for details.

## A Busy Season for Inbounds

*Like all Americans, inbounds* were especially busy during November and December. It was a time for many new cultural experiences and foods, bonding with friends and family, shopping and surprises. We held our own early Thanksgiving dinner together at Heidi's house, talking about holiday traditions and enjoying turkey with all the trimmings.



Prior to the meal, we volunteered at Hospitality House, the county's family homeless shelter. The students painted radiators in the house and planted hundreds of daffodils outside. Afterwards, we enjoyed sharing hot chocolate with children living in the home and answered their many questions about airplane travel and foreign lands.

In one marathon day in December, district chair Su Wood and Inbound Coordinator Heidi Karod spent a day with 7790's 5 inbounds, joined by one 7780 inbound. We shopped in the Freeport outlet stores and visited the world's largest revolving globe, called Eartha, at DeLorme in Yarmouth. Next, we surprised our Polish inbound, Ewelina, with a visit to a Polish deli and restaurant in Portland, where we enjoyed a Polish lunch buffet. Next, it was off to a fantastic Christmas extravaganza by the Portland Symphony, featuring acrobats from the Cirque de Soleil, a chorus, and a tap dancing Santa. This was followed by shopping and dinner at the Maine Mall, topped off by a Portland Pirates hockey game won in the last second of overtime.



January is a real turning point for students as they transition to new host families and settle into the second half of their exchanges. Many have already noticed big changes in language comprehension and are working on the harder, more culturally significant and subtle idiosyncrasies of language. Most are lamenting that exchanges are already half over and are trying to figure out how to cram everything into that last half. You know what we say in youth exchange:

**"It's not a year in a life; it's a life in a year!"**



## Outbounds: A Love Letter from Ruby in Argentina

*"I'll start with the way I go to bed. Invariably, it is in a room full of pink (compliments of my exchange sister who is currently in Illinois), with a full stomach, and carrying exhausted limbs that betray my want to go do something else. Dinner is at around 10, and by the end, I'm so weary that I'm in a deep, dreamless sleep by 11. I love it.*

*Everything is different that there is to be different. The city feels small; almost everywhere you can walk, take a cab for cheap (the locals don't often), or take a bus for dirt cheap (30 to 80 cents in USD). It's weird, this place, because of the very organized structure of it (impossible to get lost in the ordered grid), and the contrast.*

*Every day I see gorgeous old buildings with beautiful moldings and the regal palm trees and parks, right with the little boys peeing on trees in the streets at 12 pm and the doodled, multicolored graffiti on everything. The streets*

*are cracked, and if, like me, you're a pseudo tourist and still mesmerized by the city's sights, you'll end up tripping on the sudden 3-inch rise in pavement because you can't stop looking at the new flowers on the heavenly smelling trees.*

*I fit here, with the fruit vendors who have wooden crates full of oranges and apples on the street, with the weird little shops that sell candy, microchips, bus tickets, phone services, and cigarettes (omnipresent with one every two blocks), and the looming cathedral that still takes my breath away every day that I go after school to read and bask in the sun. I fit because the habits, the customs, fit with me. The kiss on the cheek hello and goodbye, the friendliness, the passion for soccer and life, and the slightly offbeat type of humor and patriotism.*



### *Our Outbounds work very hard*

for about 8 months getting ready for their exchange year. They work on language, culture, public speaking, current events, learning about their future and current homes, and much, much more. The 16-17 member group (a small group this year with only 1 from Belfast and 2 from Camden), will begin work in earnest this month.

One of their assignments while away is to send a monthly update about their exchange. Here's an example of the type of monthly letters we get. Some of these students are truly gifted writers such as Ruby from Camden who succeeded in transporting us to the streets of La Plata, Argentina with her words and observations last October. As you can image, we always look forward to the arrival of these letters!

*Every time I'm surprised and unaccustomed, I fall a little bit more in love, undoubtedly the reason this reads like a love letter. It might as well be, for I have given my heart to my new friends and their smiles and welcoming, and to the way I feel when I take a bus by myself (very new feeling).*

*If I went home tomorrow, already I would be taking home knowledge and confidence and the love of my new surrogate families here, and leaving love and*

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*hopefully a better understanding of the differences in culture. To my classmates, I leave tales of prom, lockers, and cheerleading. Everyone asked (twice). I don't plan to leave tomorrow, or until it is absolutely necessary, because I've found that the good vastly outweighs whatever is bad. Bad is the first week, when I could barely understand a word said to me. Now it's okay, because I can say nearly everything I need to (if not with perfect grammar) and understand people in conversation and reading. Bad was the first week, when I was dying for a 2-minute hug from my mother, or someone. Now, these beautiful people who have adopted my transplanted self give me all the hugs I need.*

*The last big problem is missing my dogs. That one doesn't go away so easily, but the myriad street dogs always looking to be pet helps a little bit. I am surviving, thriving, and growing, and 3 hours from now (7:52 pm Bs. As. time), I will be soundly sleeping, waiting to be rested so I can be very tired again the next night."*

### *Short-Term Exchange: A Summer to Remember*

High school students are starting to dream about summer, and those who go on Rotary's short-term, family-to-family exchange program (STEP) will experience unforgettable adventures – both as travelers and as hosts.

Several students throughout the district have expressed interest in STEP this year are in the process of applying.

Once students and their families have completed the necessary paperwork, members of local Rotary International Youth Exchange committees visit their homes to ensure everything is in order before applications are sent to ESSEX for processing. Then the magic begins – the identification of a potential match for each student in a country that he or she would like to visit. Once students agree on a match, they and their families are free to get in touch with each other and start making travel plans. They can schedule three-to-six week visits in each country. The details are entirely up to the families.

The STEP program is a terrific introduction to international travel for students 15 to 18 ½ years of age. Some students enjoy it so much that they later opt for a long-term exchange or a second summer of STEP – and everyone who takes part learns a great deal about themselves and about life in a different country. As one participant said, "This program has helped me become more independent and mature. I love the fact that it's not just a fun vacation but also a great learning experience."

The ESSEX application deadline for STEP is May 1, 2016 – but the sooner applications are sent in, the more likely it is that students will be placed in their top-choice countries. Local deadlines should be no later than March 31 to allow plenty of time for processing applications for the May deadline.

For details about short-term exchange, visit [www.exchangestudent.org/APShortTerm.cfm](http://www.exchangestudent.org/APShortTerm.cfm) or contact Joan Phaup, [joanphaup@yahoo.com](mailto:joanphaup@yahoo.com).

