

LAKE PLACID NEWS

ROTARY CLUB NEWS: Rotary Club of Lake Placid looks to start an international student exchange program

Rotary International Youth Exchange is a popular, well-run and low-cost program, through which over 8,000 students exchange annually to around 60 different countries.

Currently the only exchange program in the area is run through Keene Central School, but Rotarians in Lake Placid hope to start a program here in the next few years. LPCS Superintendent Roger Catania said, “We are always excited about providing our students with new intercultural experiences and opportunities.”

Ausable Valley Rotarian Hannah Smith and her husband Scott are Keene residents and parents of Elly, who exchanged to Spain last year and just graduated from Keene Central. In addition to raising their own two children, the Smiths have hosted five international students over the years through the International Student Program at Keene Central School.

New-to-Lake-Placid Rotarians Linda and Bill Flederbach hosted eight foreign exchange students in their former home in Pennsylvania, from

countries like Slovakia, France and Japan. The experience has given them long-term relationships with the students and their families, offering opportunities for travel and lifetime memories such as weddings and new babies.

Several years ago, Hannah Smith volunteered to start the Ausable Valley Rotary Club Youth Exchange program. The youth exchange program is a three-year commitment for the students and their families. In the first year, there are extensive applications and three orientations in Canada. Then the students exchange during the second year, having been awarded a \$35,000 scholarship. In the third year, they return home and are a local ambassador and mentor to younger exchange students.

Linda Flederbach notes, “There’s a lot of support thru Rotary including a counselor who meets with students on regular basis, support for host families, and monthly social activities for the district’s exchange students to get together and bond.”

Keene Central School currently hosts Rotary Youth Exchange student Mia-Sarah Pouet from France, who is trilingual in French, Spanish and English.

Mia said, “I live in a small town in the southwest of France between the Atlantic Ocean and the Pyrenees Mountains. I was really surprised by the cold in New York, which arrived really early, all the snow and the days being really short during winter. School is also really different from France. Days at school and periods are shorter, and here you can choose your assignments. I have met many students from all around the world which is really interesting and when I saw them, all together socially, trying to understand each other, having a lot of things in common and laughing, I thought it was beautiful and I really wanted to be part of this.” The Rotary Club of Ausable Valley is very grateful to the three host families and many other volunteers who have made this program possible.

For more information about Rotary’s exchange program, please visit www.district7040ye.com/faqs.

If you like helping other people, are curious about being a Rotary Youth Exchange host family or about sending your young person on an exchange, visit a Rotary Club of Lake Placid meeting any Thursdays at 7:20 a.m. at the Courtyard by Marriott.

Or you can find us on Facebook or at our website, www.rotarylakeplacid.com.
