***ROTARY YOUTH LEADERSHIP AWARD (RYLA & YOUNG RYLA)***

Every summer the Rotary Club of Golden sends area students to an incredible life changing experience called RYLA (Rotary Youth Leadership Award program). This week-long opportunity is designed to help teens better understand themselves, their core values and their talents/abilities. Participants come from all walks of life, yet through the program, they all go home having experienced the RYLA “magic”.

Rocky Mountain RYLA, a nonprofit organization serving youth in Rotary Districts 5450 and 5440, offers two week-long summer leadership camps for high school students known as RYLA and two week-long summer leadership camps for middle school youth aged 13 known as Young RYLA . These four leadership camps support approximately 488 participants. Each year, the Rotary Club of Golden interviews, selects and sponsors 5-6 high school students for one of the two RYLA camps and 5-6 middle schoolers aged 13 for one of the two Young RYLA camps. Program goals are to train youth ages 13-19 in character, leadership, personal development and good citizenship.

While participating in RYLA/Young RYLA, participants are in structured teams, guided by junior counselors who have previously been through the program and who went through an intensive selection and training process. The junior counselors lead the curriculum, growing their own skills further, supported by senior counselors, drawn from Rotarians in their respective district. Daily group work, speakers, and debriefing provide the structure for the week. Challenging activities get participants working together, bonding and using new skills that they develop while at RYLA or Young RYLA.

Esther Phenna, past president of the Golden High School Rotary Interact Club, participated in RYLA prior to her junior year and was so inspired by the experience, that she returned as a junior counselor for the last two summers. She explains that RYLA helped her reach deep down and change as a person. She left with an overall sense of happiness and an internal source of joy. She has developed confidence and excitement for what lies ahead in life, honed her goal setting skills and knows what steps to take to achieve her dreams. Many participants also use their newly developed leadership skills by joining Interact or becoming peer leaders in other school and community activities.

These youth leadership development camps allow these youth to find their leadership style, learn tools to work effectively as a team members, and forever find their path to serving others, following the motto of Rotary: Service Above Self.