

# THE ACORN

THE ROTARY CLUB OF FAIR OAKS

Rotary



**Giovanna Perricone**

**My Rotary Youth Exchange Year in Japan**

**August 17, 2015**



## The Rotary Club of Fair Oaks

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## Weekly Meetings

We Meet Almost Every Monday Evening

Social Time 6:15 - 7:00 PM

Dinner & Meeting 7:00 - 8:30 PM

Location: Fair Oaks Community Clubhouse

7997 California Avenue

Fair Oaks

Visitors are Welcome

# THE ACORN FOR AUGUST 10, 2015



**Giovanna (Gia) Perricone**  
Our 2014-15 outbound  
Rotary Youth Exchange  
student who spent the school  
year in Japan.



**Gia with Maggie Hoy**, the  
club's Youth Services  
Director



From the left, **Dean Henricks** of the Citrus Heights Rotary Club, **Stine Nikolajsen**, our 2015-16 RYE student from Denmark, **Gia**, and **Maggie Hoy**.

It was my great good fortune to have had the opportunity to listen to Ms. Gia Perricone, our club's Rotary Youth Exchange (RYE) student from last year. She shared about her year-long stay in Japan. The fact of her academic excellence (she finished first in her class of about 425 students at Del Campo) paled in comparison to the joy, enthusiasm, openness, spontaneity and love that she emanated during her presentation. At the end of her talk, she graced us with her musical talent by accompanying herself with an electronic keyboard as she sang a beautiful and wistful song, which directly conveyed her affection for all her new Japanese friends and simultaneously her gratitude to our club members for having sponsored her. I choked up and was deeply touched by the emotions she conveyed in her beautiful song.

She returned from Japan on July 31, having stayed in the northern part of the main island of Japan. This region is predominately agricultural and is famous for growing rice. Although the farming techniques are modern and mechanized, she visited an area where she harvested the rice in the old way and judging by the look on her face, the activity suited her. She arrived in the Fall and found that the Japanese honored and enjoyed the different seasons. Her first host family was multigenerational and also deeply engaged with its neighbors, so that she was immediately immersed in a friendly, welcoming culture. Some of the members of her family brewed sake in a building behind the actual residence and also ran a small store where they sold it. She was the only female in her host Rotary club and so as to not miss school she only attended meetings about once a month. They were welcoming and supportive and enhanced her visit. She attended a relatively new school (only 10 years old) where students ranging from middle school to high school attended. Students were divided into "homeroms" and the teachers were the ones who moved from classroom to classroom. She took five different classes.

About two weeks after her arrival, there was a school festival including musical presentations and plays and "she jumped right in". She discovered her passion for various Japanese foods including Oden and Sukiyaki and others that would definitely be an acquired taste, unless you are already fond of raw chicken eggs and fish eggs. At least they looked pretty. Toward the end of her stay with her first host family it began to snow. Her Japanese friends groaned about it, but having lived in Sacramento, Gia was entranced by the beauty of the silent snowfall. Because her host home lacked good insulation, she directly felt the onset of winter.

Before she left the United States, our RYE committee coached her about feeling homesick for her family in California, and she was surprised by also feeling homesick about leaving her first host family in Japan. Nevertheless, her second host family was wonderful in a completely differently way. Gia learned that her new host father was the best medical doctor in the region and his clinic comprised the bottom floor of her new home.

It was a smaller family which allowed for much more one-on-one time. Her new host father was an intelligent, giving, and reserved man, but his personality was radically transformed while singing karaoke, a passion of all the family members. Sometimes he couldn't restrain himself as he sang a while standing on a tabletop. Gia became a karaoke expert at singing "Let It Go". Her host father also worked at what seemed to be a retirement home where Gia did some volunteer work.

Her second host family bought her ski equipment and some private ski lessons and she mastered the "green circle" ski slopes. They also plan to send her new ski equipment back to California for her. She tried a larger ski area on a foggy Winter day (which was a little freaky) and put her invention of "butt skiing" to good use. She also attended the Kamakura winter festival. Among other things the Japanese created ice and snow sculptures, including some houses hosted by various children. Again, Gia jumped right into the cultural diversity to which she was exposed.

At first she was a little disappointed that her school created a special schedule for her, because she wanted to experience the same things as her fellow Japanese students. However, the special schedule turned out to be a blessing in disguise. Her classes included music, physical education, and art, and she also spent a lot of time as an English teacher. She taught students of various ages and also some teachers, thereby getting to know them a lot better. She became a private tutor for the male architecture teacher, who wanted to learn by chatting. She abandoned her lesson plan approach as he wanted to discuss questions like, "Why are Americans so interested in politics?" She also hung out at the library a lot, which initially she thought might be a drag, but which morphed into a wonderful relationship with the librarian and with the students who frequented the library.

Spring brought beautiful cherry blossoms and she attended a three day camp with other exchange students, which turned out to be her only contact with these other RYE students. All of them were even more enthusiastic about karaoke. Back home at school she joined a calligraphy club and she acquired a taste for it and she plans to pursue it in California. Some of the students were very good at calligraphy.

Then came the summer, which was very humid, and buggy. Her school was not air-conditioned and during assemblies the occasional student actually fainted. The teachers and students were fairly nonplussed about it and merely fanned the student where she lay on the floor. Classroom temperatures were above 80°F and she was developing some of the samurai spirit. There was a summer school sports festival. Gia works out a lot and she was the only girl on a tug-of-war team. Her team won. Baseball is very popular in Japan and also in her region, and the students created colorful T-shirts to support their team. Cheering among the various groups turned into kind of a friendly competition. Finally, Gia became homesick again for the fifth time as her wonderful experience in Japan drew to a close.

All of us in the audience felt lucky to have been graced and touched, first by Gia's "way of being" and also by her wonderful presentation. Many of her family members were present and I could see by the looks on their faces, that they all admire, love, and enjoy her, like we do.

Reporter: Cliff Straehley



Gia, with her second host family



Gia was the only woman to compete in the tug of war. Her team won.



Staying warm in an ice cave – this Gia and friends at the Yokote Kamakura Snow Festival

# MEETING HIGHLIGHTS



On August 24th, **District Governor Glenn Fong** and his wife, **Elise**, will be attending our meeting. Elise is supporting Project Favela, which works to bring joy into the lives of the children in the slums of Brazil.

Please bring chalk, drawing supplies, jewelry, flip flops and similar items to the next meeting. **Anne Browning** is heading up our club's efforts to help support this cause and is asking that club members donate items (she suggests shopping at the Dollar Tree or similar stores) throughout the year but would like to have a box full of items to present to Elise Fong at the meeting on August 24th.



**Cliff Straehley** is the new Senior Editor for the club's various publications. We need Acorn reporters immediately. Your help is needed. Without Acorn reporters, we will not be able to include articles on the speakers and possibly other aspects of each meeting.



**Bonnie McClain** has tickets for Fair Oaks Uncorked. We must start selling them. Get your tickets from Bonnie.



This is **Alice Rowe**, who just might be the best Membership Director on the planet. August is membership month so bring a guest to a meeting this month and help Alice cement her reputation as the world's best Membership Director.

Alice announced the formation of a new club within the club: The Honeymooners (she is open to suggestions for a better name). This group will be for new members with less than one year of time in Rotary. It won't have formal meetings, just monthly socials.

## More Announcements

**Saint Francis Episcopal Church** is now holding a Senior Produce Market every Tuesday morning, from 10:00 – 11:00 am. Their primary goal is bring produce of outstanding quality at reasonable prices. The market is open to all and is no income test. They welcome special orders. Saint Francis is located at 11430 Fair Oaks Blvd.

The **annual club photo** will be taken at the August 31 meeting. Please attend and arrive early. We want as many members as possible in attendance for the photo.

More info on the **District RI Foundation Dinner**:

Date: November 7, 2015 from 6:00 – 9:30 PM

Location: Doubletree Hotel at 2001 Point West Way in Sacramento

Details: Event Chair Jack Arney promises, "This won't be your father's Foundation Dinner."

# GUESTS



**Kyle Thompson** with Marlow Simonetto



**Justin Frei**



**Jeanne Maloney** with guests **Ben, Cameron and Melanie Cleland**

## BIRTHDAYS, WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES & ROTARY ANNIVERSARIES AUGUST, 2015

NAME	DATE	YEARS
<b><u>Birthdays</u></b>		
Damir Besirevic	Aug. 11	
Kristin Kaminski	Aug. 11	
Steve Hoverman	Aug. 19	
<b><u>Wedding Anniversaries:</u></b>		
Bruce & Nelita Vincent	Aug. 5, 1988	27 years
Jim & Diana Cralle	Aug. 14, 1966	49 years
Carsen Smith & Mehdi Tazi	Aug. 17, 2014	1 year
<b><u>Joined Rotary</u></b>		
Dawn Abatemarco	Aug. 4, 2014	1 year
Alice Rowe	Aug. 2, 2010	5 years
Rick Change	Aug. 11, 2008	7 years

# BEER & THE BARD PHOTOS





