

# Twenty-Five Years with Cedar Rapids-West Rotary Club

May 14, 1980 – May 14, 2005



“The Cedar Rapids-West Rotary Club operates on a firm foundation. As Rotarians, we know who we are by understanding what we do. We make a difference.”

— *William C. Jacobson,*  
*Charter Member*

# Introduction

On Saturday evening, May 14, 2005, members of Cedar Rapids-West Rotary Club will gather at the Touch of Class Banquet and Convention Center to celebrate the club's Silver Anniversary.

Under the capable leadership of Wayne Josifek as general chairman, the 25th Anniversary Committee coordinated activities celebrating this great occasion. The committee first met in July, 2003, and determined there were two components for this celebration: the creation of an historic record of the club's first 25 years and a special evening to celebrate the club's accomplishments. Kathy Kaiser assumed leadership of the historic record committee, and Rhonda McCombs led the celebration event committee.

This book is the culmination of the work of the historic record committee. Many people contributed photos, reminiscences, and written material for this book. Though we were somewhat concerned at the beginning about the small amount of historical material available, by fall the information and photos began to pour in from the members. Ultimately, we had much more than we could use, but we are extremely grateful to all who provided such rich resources for our record. Whenever possible, we have credited those who made contributions.

Cedar Rapids-West Rotary Club has a notable record of "service above self." It is a club that is known for community leadership, for devoted members, for international outreach, and for having a good time. As Tom Ecker, our first president, put it, from the very beginning, "the meetings were always fun with humor an integral part of the format."

We hope that this book captures and honors the spirit of the Cedar Rapids-West Rotary Club as well as chronicling its activities. And we fervently hope that all who read it will enjoy and remember!

## THE HISTORY BOOK COMMITTEE:

*Kathy Kaiser, Chair*  
*George Branstetter*  
*Lyle Hanson*  
*Marilyn Lefebure*

*Kay Graber, Editor*  
*Don Melichar*  
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# Twenty-Five Years with Cedar Rapids-West Rotary Club

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- Biographies of Past Presidents
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# Rotary Roots

## Chartering of the Club

In 1980, the birth of a new Rotary club in Cedar Rapids was an idea whose time had come. The idea originated from an ad hoc committee made up of three members of the Cedar Rapids Rotary Club, who were charged with determining ways to limit the growth of the downtown club. In 1977, the Cedar Rapids Rotary Club had nearly 300 members and there was concern that the club was becoming too large. On May 26, 1977, Leo Nussbaum, chairman of the ad hoc committee, submitted a report to Cedar Rapids Rotary Club president, Tom Ecker, stating that they had considered several options including the establishment of a new Rotary club in southwest Cedar Rapids. It was noted that the economic growth of the west side of the city was stimulated by the development of Westdale Mall and other businesses in the area.

On September 2, 1979, Jack Laugen, president of the Cedar Rapids Rotary Club, and his Board of Directors passed a unanimous resolution "to pursue the project of sponsoring a Cedar Rapids Rotary club that would meet in the Westdale Mall."

It was decided that members of the new club would include a few downtown Rotarians who would transfer their membership, as well as new members who would be proposed by the downtown club. The goal was to recruit members on the west side of the city.

Early on the morning of February 1, 1980, a group of men met at York Steak House in the Westdale Mall for the first provisional meeting of what was soon to become the Cedar Rapids-West Rotary Club. Dale Sawyer, special representative and organizer from the downtown Rotary Club, called the meeting to order at 30 seconds after midnight. This unusual time was selected so that the new club would be the first club to organize in Rotary's 75th Anniversary Year, which began on February 1. At midnight that evening, the temperature was one degree below zero, and several yawns were noticed among the assembled Rotarians and their guests.

Twenty-three dedicated Rotarians attended that initial meeting, including the following officers from the Cedar Rapids Rotary Club: President Jack Laugen, President-elect Dale Sawyer, and Secretary Clyde Lindsley.

A constitution and bylaws, almost identical to those of the Cedar Rapids Rotary Club, were adopted and the new club voted to meet on Wednesdays at York Steak House in Westdale Mall. Gathering time was set for 11:45 a.m., with the meeting and program to run from 12:15-1:00 p.m.

Elected to the Cedar Rapids-West Board of Directors that evening were Tom Ecker, Harry Whitehead, Craig McCormick, Bob Meskimen, Randy Larson, and Bill Jacobson.

The first board meeting was held at 11 a.m. on February 6, 1980. At this meeting, it was decided that board members would serve three-year terms, and that the club would elect two board members each year. An election of officers was held, and two nominations were received for the club's official name. They were Cedar Rapids-West Rotary Club and Cedar Rapids Too Rotary Club. Cedar Rapids-West Rotary Club was the name chosen.

On March 26, 1980, the new Cedar Rapids-West Rotary Club was officially chartered by Rotary International. To celebrate the occasion, a "Charter Night" was held in the ballroom of the Stouffer's Five Seasons Hotel on May 14, 1980. Members of both Rotary clubs and their spouses attended, along with District Governor Bill Edwards who initiated the 50th club into District 5970. After dinner, the 22 charter members of the new club were inducted into Rotary and the Cedar Rapids-West Rotary Club was officially born.

## Charter Members and Officers

### Officers

At the initial board meeting on February 6, 1980, the following officers were elected:

Thomas R. Ecker	President
Harry J. Whitehead	President-Elect/International Service Committee Chair
Robert C. Meskimen	Vice President/Club Service Committee Chair
Randy D. Larson	Secretary/Treasurer
Craig G. McCormick	Club Activities Committee Chair
William C. Jacobson	Vocational/Community Service Committee Chair

### Other Charter Members

Michael E. Ament	Raymond H. Blakeman
Craig M. Byers	Mohamed R. El-Dieb
John B. Foens	Robert J. Holley
George Justice	Charles R. Kirby
Gerald T. Knox	Matthias L. Kriz
LaMarr E. Lucas	Donald J. Melichar
Donald L. Peters	Richard F. Salat
Michael D. Stallman	Richard H. Waggoner





Cedar Rapids-West Rotary's first president, Tom Ecker, receives the club's charter certificate from District Governor Bill Edwards. Also present were Cedar Rapids Downtown Rotary President Jack Laugen and President-elect Dale Sawyer.

## Connections with Rotary International

Cedar Rapids-West Rotary had several initial challenges and because resources were limited, the early officers supported many of the club's activities out of their own pockets. Yet the club leadership has been committed to its alignment with Rotary International from the very beginning, and has taken many steps over the years to emphasize the importance of the international connection to the members. Some of those steps included the active exchange and display of banners from clubs in other countries, as well as the flags that are displayed on the president's table every week.

Since 1980 Cedar Rapids-West has participated in the international student exchange program, has supported the campaign to eradicate polio worldwide, and has provided funds for wheel chairs for persons with disabilities in third-world countries. By supporting these and other Rotary International humanitarian efforts, club members have been able to reach out in the spirit of international friendship and offer "Service Above Self."

Each year the club has been committed to sending the incoming president to the International Rotary Convention. Upon their return, these individuals have shared with club members the fascinating stories of their experiences. Don Melichar found the 1991 Rotary International Convention in Mexico City "to be very interesting and informative aside from the civil unrest that was going on in the country at the time."



Cedar Rapids-West Rotary Pres. Kathy Toborg with Rotary International Pres. Frank Devlyn and Pres.-Elect Christine Harstad, at the 2001 Rotary International Convention in San Antonio.

In sharing her experiences at the 2000 International Convention in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Kathy Toborg reported, "We loved every moment of our Argentinean experience—the great workshops, informative plenary sessions, interesting guest speakers, the Paul Harris Fellow Luncheon, the exhibition of club and district projects and, perhaps most of all, our tango lessons! All in all, it was the trip of a lifetime. I also feel fortunate to have had the opportunity to attend two international conventions in the U.S.—one in Indianapolis and the other in San Antonio. They were equally inspiring and enjoyable."

**CONTRIBUTORS:** *Marilyn Lefebure, Writer*  
*Tom Ecker, Photo and Memories*  
*Kathy Toborg, Photo and Memories*



# Officers and Organization

## Current Board of Directors

Though most Rotary clubs are organized and function in the same way, there are options in terms of committees and projects that the organization selects for a focus.

The Cedar Rapids-West Rotary Club operates with four officers and a Board of Directors that meets monthly. For 2005, the officers are President Dave Baker, First Vice-President Annette Brightwell, Second Vice-President Steve Havlik, and Treasurer Dennis McGivern.

The six Directors are the general chairpersons for the various committees and serve rotating terms. Those Directors include John Mack, Laurel Day, John Negro, Mary Schneekloth, Don Fuller and Kathy Kaiser.

All members are encouraged to join a committee and are surveyed once a year on their preferences. At the current time, the committees are as follows:

Membership Directory	New Member Orientation
Fundraising	World Fellowship
Vocational Service	International Youth
Environmental Service	Community Service
Newsletter	Program
Fun and Frolic	Music
Attendance	Inter-Club Activities
Social	Public Relations
News	Club Service
Donations/Scholarships	Membership/Classification
Computer Technology	Rotary Foundation
Sergeant-at-Arms	Interact
25th Anniversary Celebration	

## Membership

In the past few years, Cedar Rapids-West Rotary membership has fluctuated between 130-140 members. Each member goes through an orientation conducted by Jerry Springston at his home. When Kathy Toborg was president, she initiated a mentor program for new members. Some would say she carried out her program to the ultimate. While personally introducing a potential new member, Ben Halupnik, she announced, "In an effort to make Ben feel welcome and comfortable in our club, I've agreed to marry him next month." The club erupted. Mike Klappholz came to the mic and said, "We'll do anything to attract new members!"

The club first admitted women in 1987, and the first woman president was Darla Peterson. Since then, in spite of some good natured and humorous barbs between Bill Jacobson and Theresa Anderson during Fun and Frolic, men and women have served equally and shared responsibilities for everything the club does, from building Habitat houses and playground equipment to being president and organizing youth exchanges.

Darla Peterson tells the story of when she became president in 1995. She eagerly told her father, also a Rotarian, about her new office, and invited him to come visit the club. "My father looked at me in shock and said, 'President! How can this be? Women can't even join this club!'" She quickly adds that he did come to a meeting and was very proud that his daughter was in Rotary.

She also recounts what a new experience her first meeting was...the surprise of all the things that happen "behind the scenes" and the time needed to get everything included at the podium. She echoed what many of us wonder: What would we do without Denny?!

The presidents of our club through the years have each contributed greatly with their own talents and style of leadership. An appendix to this book includes photos and biographies of our 25 former presidents.



2005 Board members and officers: (back) John Mack, Don Fuller, Pres. Dave Baker, John Negro, and Secy. Denny McGivern; (front) 1st Vice-Pres. Annette Brightwell, 2nd Vice-Pres. Steve Havlik, and Mary Schneekloth. (Not present: Laurel Day and Kathy Kaiser)

**CONTRIBUTORS:** *Kathy Toborg, Memories*  
*Darla Peterson, Memories*



# Tales to Tell

## Fun and Frolic

Cedar Rapids-West Rotary was founded on the premise of having a good time. As business and professional people gather for lunch each week, it was felt that a Rotary meeting should be light and fun for those in attendance. Ample evidence exists that laughter is good for the body, mind and soul.

Tom Ecker, our first president, used his effective sense of humor to set the tone. He didn't let anyone take things too seriously. His imprint on the club made humor a part of the club activity for the next 25 years. Each succeeding president brought his or her style to the lighter side of the meetings, but not all presidents were comfortable in this role. Thus was born the "Fun and Frolic Committee."

The first Fun and Frolic chair was John Thornton, a local dentist with a strong Southern drawl. Others stepped forward to carry on the tradition. Who among us will ever forget Kim Kudej's famous story about her Mother's Day present, which to this day we are not sure was truth or fiction!

On days when time permits, three to five minutes is set aside for jokes, humorous activities and different perspectives on situations. As Fun and Frolic time evolved, it also became a way to raise money for the club. Committee members began to fine the audience, usually no more than a dollar, for some infraction of a "Fun and Frolic Law." These laws are situational with functional rather than legal authority. Getting your name or picture in the paper is a sure way to be fined! The club has earned approximately one thousand dollars a year from these fines, which goes for service projects.

Humor can get out of hand. The Fun and Frolic Committee maintains a set of standards and expectations on the appropriateness of jokes and jabs. The emphasis is on laughing with and not at individuals in the club. Of course, when Mike Klappholz is the focus of the humor, everything is fair game!

## Friendships and Social Outings: Fishing and Bowling

Many friendships are formed and a lot of "tales" are told by Cedar Rapids-West Rotarians who get together outside of club meetings. Such were the fishing trips organized by Gary Pribyl.

According to Morris Greenfield, known affectionately as Greenie, the fishing trips evolved when he and Gary Pribyl fished and attended a dinner and talk from a DNR representative set up by the Dubuque Clubs near Bellevue. The representative explained where the fish go during different times of the year, but they already had that figured out...they were hiding!



Florian Goedken proves that not all the fish are hiding!

From that experience and the fun they had, Gary came up with the idea to organize a trip to Many Point Lake in northwest Minnesota. Gary organized all the food, lodging, and boats. They had nice dock-side cabins, good boats and motors, though some of the fishermen pulled their own rigs for the trip.

According to Greenie, the fishing was great fun, but even better were the great friendships and the stories that came out of each trip! They'll never forget John Thornton falling out of his

boat and soaking all of his cold weather gear along with everything else. Larry Frahm and Greenie were fishing



Gary Pribyl was the organizer of the fishing trips.

together when Larry caught a 15 lb. fish and didn't know what it was. Greenie told him it was a King Salmon, and he wanted to go back and show the guys his great catch! The laughter is still echoing through the trees up north as he proudly held up his 15 lb. carp!

There were four fishing trips in all, and Greenie credits Gary with putting them together and making them work. That's what Rotarians are all about!

Another small group of Rotarians formed a bowling team and get together every Monday night (32 weeks a year) to compete against other service clubs. Actually, Rotary clubs in Cedar Rapids have participated in the service club league since 1958, which used to include Rotary, Kiwanis, Sertoma, Lions, Optimists, and the Civitan clubs. They used to bowl at Tropic Lanes, which no longer exists, but then moved to Lancer Lanes. Cedar Rapids-West Rotary team joined the group approximately twelve years ago.

Over the years, the Cedar Rapids-West bowling team has always included a club president or past president. The current bowling team roster includes Don Melichar, Dave Baker, Wayne Josifek, Ben Halupnik, Frank Stevens III, Crystal Usher, John Negro, Jay Melichar and Joseph Collins.

The team frequently reports its scores at club meetings. It is reported that Don Melichar first demonstrated his amazing balancing capabilities at a bowling league get-together.

**CONTRIBUTORS:** *Morris Greenfield,  
Memories and Photos  
Crystal Usher, Writer  
Gary Pribyl, Photos*



# Activities

Besides the club meetings and small-group social outings, Cedar Rapids-West Rotary Club members have joined together to raise money and awareness for causes that are important to them.

Most notable among these has been the annual Gourmet Pancake Breakfast, held in mid-March at Jefferson High School. Proceeds from this dinner go for scholarships for Kirkwood Community College students and for various charitable groups in the community. The first Gourmet Pancake Breakfast was held in 1987. By now, the proceeds have reached more than \$12,000 annually, and nearly 1,000 people attend.

For the past six years, the Environmental Education Committee, led by Reid Zehrbach, has sponsored an

Environmental Media Contest for students throughout the community. Students at all grade levels submit posters, videos and multi-media presentations depicting environmental concerns. Club members serve as judges and the winning submissions are displayed for the club. The winners at each level are awarded a tree for planting at their school.

Since 2001, ten members of Cedar Rapids-West Rotary have consistently read to first graders at Van Buren School as "Rock and Readers" and touched the lives of over 400 children. These are "at risk" children who ask "Where is the big man in the suit?" on Rock-and-Read Day because the suit, that symbol of a professional person, is alien to the life they know. Their time with their Rotary Rock-and-Reader may be the only time any adult has read just to them. Martha Aldrich has organized this activity.



Reid Zehrbach joins the winning student at Jefferson High School in planting a tree as a reward for the Environmental Media Contest.



Rotary members also formed a bowling team for the Bowl-a-thon to benefit the Boys and Girls Club in July, 2004.



Mary Jen Bear, Carol Lensing, and Kay Graber serve pancakes and fruit while Bob McMahon and Bruce Hamous replenish the eggs at the 2000 Pancake Breakfast.



Bill Jacobson, Steve Graham and Tammy Heitt are great pancake flippers.



Darla Peterson and Gary Pribyl are supposed to be working!



Greenie gets ready to raffle off donated items to those with the lucky numbers.



# Results and Accomplishments

## Two District Governors

The strength of any organization is in its members, and two of Cedar Rapids-West Rotary's members certainly demonstrate that strength by becoming District Governors.

Jerry Springston was the first District Governor from our club, serving in 1992-93. The theme that year was "Real Happiness is Helping Others!" Jerry credits as highlights of his term in office the citation from Rotary International President Clifford Dochterman for our club, the founding of a new Rotary Club at Bancroft, a Group Study Exchange team sent to France, five Rotary Foundation Ambassadorial Scholarships, and district membership reaching an all-time high of 3,300.

By the time Don Melichar served as District Governor in 2002-2003, the number of clubs had reached 56. The theme that year was "Sow the Seeds of Love" which Don and Cedar Rapids-West Rotary President Larry Johnson affirmed through pins given to various members of the club for memorable accomplishments. Don's emphasis during his term and throughout his years in Rotary was to increase giving to the Rotary Foundation and Polio Plus. During his term, the district contributed a record amount, with every club in the district contributing. He also started a new club, Cedar Rapids-Hiawatha Metro North.

## Group Study Exchange

Cedar Rapids-West Rotary Club has emphasized its international connections in many ways, not the least of which has been the participation in the Group Study Exchange Program. The club has both sent and received groups of young busi-



Members of the GSE team from Sao Paulo, Brazil, visit Diamond V in 2004.



Don Melichar presents a Paul Harris Fellowship to Lynn Kehm, on behalf of his son, Mike Kehm.



Rotarians often give Paul Harris Fellowships in honor of family members. Pres. Larry Johnson presented a Paul Harris Fellowship to his wife.

nesspersons from other countries, organizing home stays and visits to businesses, training opportunities and manufacturing in the community.

## Three New Clubs

Rotary is too fine an experience not to be shared, and Cedar Rapids-West Rotary has shared in the ultimate way by starting three new clubs: Sunrise, Daybreak and Ely-Gateway.

Between paperwork and footwork, the process of starting a new club takes the better part of a year. It begins with soliciting other clubs in the area to share their territory with the proposed club. A survey of the community and potential member classifications is then conducted. If the survey shows justification for a new club, a meeting place, day and hour are selected, officers chosen, and weekly meetings begin. A new club cannot be chartered until a minimum of



25 persons have been certified by classification and paid their dues.

The Cedar Rapids-Sunrise Rotary club was chartered in 1990 at Collins Plaza Hotel with 32 members. Today the club has more than 50 members and meets at Elmcrest Country Club.

The Cedar Rapids-Daybreak Rotary Club was chartered in 1995 with 38 members.

Today, they have more than 100 members and also meet at Elmcrest Country Club. A member of Daybreak, Ken Kolek, will be District Governor in 2006-2007.

The Ely-Gateway Rotary Club was founded in 2001. It is designated a "new model club" with only the obligations of paying international dues and supporting the objectives of Rotary. It does not meet weekly and is not bound to rules of classification and attendance.

Cedar Rapids-West Rotary is extremely proud to have launched these new clubs and introduced the traditions and values of Rotary to so many new members.

## Interact Club

The newest and possibly the most far-reaching accomplishment is the beginning of an Interact Club at Washington High School in Cedar Rapids. The club was formed in September, 2004, and officially chartered in November with 62 members under the leadership of President Matthew Jarvey. Two members of Cedar Rapids-West Rotary, Laura Vint and Chris Kubicek, formed the club, assisted by Bill Jacobson, Don Melichar, Larry Johnson, Mary Schneekloth and Jaye Kennedy.

In a short time the Interact Club has accomplished amazing things. Members recite the Four-Way Pledge at the beginning of every meeting to help them focus on the goals of Rotary. Their Service Committee is committed to performing one service a month. In October, they assisted Four Oaks, Inc. with their PumpkinFest by picking acres of pumpkins. In November, they sponsored a food drive for Foundation II.

The Social Committee sponsored an information event that brought in forty parents to learn more about Rotary. The Public Relations Committee has set up a display case in the entrance of the high school to promote Rotary and service opportunities. They have established a web site, plan to issue bi-monthly newsletters and are developing a Power Point presentation on the club.

The Internal Communications Committee sends out e-mails and reminders to club members and is developing a parents' e-mail directory. The Membership Committee launched a

successful membership drive and brought in twenty new members. They are committed to supporting two Washington High School students who are currently in Belgium and Germany as Rotary Exchange students, as well as the Rotary Exchange student from Mexico currently attending WHS.

And the Logistics Committee recently identified 120 non-profit 501c3 corporations in the WHS attendance boundaries, and sent letters to them announcing the Interact Club and inviting them to share volunteer needs with the group. All of this in only four short months!



Chris Kubicek introduces Interact Pres. Matt Jarvey to club members.

**CONTRIBUTIONS:** *Wayne Josifek, Writer*  
*Jerry Springston, Writer*  
*Don Melichar, Writer*  
*Laura Vint, Writer*  
*LeJeune Chadima, Photos*



# Youth Exchange Program

Bill Jacobson remembers the desire of Cedar Rapids-West Rotary members from the very beginning to build awareness of the international connections of the organization. Their commitment to participation in the International Youth Exchange Program attests to that desire.

## The International Youth Committee

Cedar Rapids-West Rotary's International Youth Committee, chaired by Tom Wilkinson, is involved with both outbound and inbound exchange students and also with the World Affairs Seminar through the University of Wisconsin at Whitewater. The World Affairs Seminar is a program to introduce high school students to world affairs. It is offered each year in June, lasts about six days and consists of lectures, discussion sessions, recreational and social activities. Our club generally sends two students, selected by the faculty, from Prairie, Jefferson or Kennedy high schools.

*Inbound* students come to our club through our district coordinator. Generally a club from a foreign country initiates a request to send a student to another country. Our District 5970 is given a list of student names and the district coordinator places the students in different clubs throughout the district. Our club has a standing request with the district for inbound exchange students, but we are not always given the opportunity to select one. The club always has the right to reject a student.

*Outbound* students are selected in our district on the basis of merit. A committee, consisting of representatives of each of the local clubs first reviews the applications made by local students. The committee selects students on the basis of a predetermined set of qualities that the committee feels are necessary for the student to have in order to be a successful candidate. If a student is selected, his or her name is forwarded to a committee that reviews the applications and interviews them at the district level. Students who meet the criteria for selections at the district level are approved and classified as outbound students. We usually don't have many applying to become outbound students, but this year six students applied.

John Negro and his family have experienced the program from both aspects. More than ten years ago, they picked up their first student, a young girl from Paraguay, from the airport and "fell in love with her! To this day, we are still in contact with her and her family and her new husband and baby."

In 1998, John's daughter, Beth, became an outbound Rotary exchange student to Argentina. Beth writes, "I had no idea what I was about to embark upon. My world was turned upside down within the course of a few days. One moment I was sitting at the dinner table with my family in Iowa and the next I was in another country, listening to another language I did not understand and looking at people I had never seen before. I will never forget those first few days and the new sights, tastes, and smells that I experienced...It has been over six years since my beloved experience and every day that passes by, I remember at least one thing from that year."

The International Youth Committee has compiled extremely interesting information about many of the inbound and outbound students that our club has sponsored, including names and year of exchange, their country, the school they attended while here, the names of host families, comments about the student by host families, comments by the students themselves and family photos. The students are listed here, and the more complete information is available in an addendum to this book.

If you have been thinking of hosting a student, the comments from the students and their host families will surely inspire you to do so right away!

### **Inbound Students:**

<b>Alexandre Pecoits</b> Hosts: George Justice Family, Tom Wilkinson Family	1987-88	Parana, Brazil
<b>Katarina "Katka" Kubovcakova</b> Hosts: Gary Pribyl Family, Peter Teahen Family	1991-92	Bratislava, Slovakia
<b>Anna Fredmar</b> Hosts: Ellis Smith Family, Darla Petersen Family	1995-96	Sweden
<b>Oliver Profant</b> Hosts: Don Sturgeon Family, Bryan Stolba Family	1996-97	Bratislava, Slovakia
<b>Ana Belen Scigolini</b> Hosts: Chuck Bruggeman Family	1997-98	Buenos Aires, Argentina
<b>Alessandra Dias Scalao</b> Hosts: Theresa Anderson Family, Crystal Usher Family	1998-99	Sao Paulo, Brazil
<b>Martijn M. DeHaan</b> Hosts: Kevin Miller Family, Denny McGivern Family	1999-00	Emmen, The Netherlands
<b>Katrin Plundke</b> Hosts: Bill Dusing Family, Rick Jansen Family	2002-03	Brandenburg, Germany
<b>Linda Sommer</b> Hosts: Theresa Anderson Family, Tony Schubert Family	2003-04	Lauscha, Germany
<b>Andrea Zegarra</b> Hosts: Crystal Usher Family	2004-05	Arequipa, Peru

### **Outbound Students:**

<b>Beth Negro</b>	1998-99	Argentina
<b>Jenny Douglas</b>	1998-99	Germany
<b>Ryne Quelle</b>	2004	Germany



# Weekly Meetings

## The Four Homes of Rotary West

When Cedar Rapids-West Rotary was chartered with 22 members in 1980, it was with the idea that the club would be represented by members who lived or worked on the west side of the Cedar River. Former club president and district governor Don Melichar reports that while most of the early members were new to Rotary, several of them had broken away from the Cedar Rapids "Downtown" Club, and believed they would generate fresh enthusiasm for Rotary participation if a new club was launched on the west side.

Bill Jacobson was one of those charter members. He looks back at the early meetings, presided over by first president Tom Ecker and held at Westdale Mall's *York Steak House*. "The restaurant had recently opened, and offered just enough room for our members," he recalls. "We had difficulty accommodating any visitors." George Branstetter adds, "We had a little meeting room off to the side, and we filled that up rather quickly. We just became too big for the room we had, and soon had to move."

With every move through the years came a committee formed to examine the options. Says George, "We still wanted to hold our meetings on the west side—it wasn't a mandate, but a suggestion." The membership soon found a new home not far away at the *Sheraton Hotel* (now called the *Clarion Hotel*). While the location offered a similar west-side orientation for the group, the members soon noted that there were pluses and minuses to the new arrangement.

Mike Klappholz recalls being moved from room to room each week based upon other events at the hotel. "I do remember meeting in the bar for a few meetings," he says. Ellis Smith adds, "Some of the rooms were not conducive to slide shows, and the temperature was hard to control in the summer." After several years, the club had substantially increased its membership but was ready for a change.

The *Five Seasons Hotel*—under its various monikers such as *Stouffers*, *Wyndham* and *Crowne Plaza*—was the longest-standing venue to date for the Cedar Rapids-West Rotary Club. The decision to move back across the river was controversial—mainly because it meant dropping the objective to remain a "west side" club. But overall there were positive feelings among the members

"That decision really paid off," notes Bill Jacobson. "The thing that happened was that we became the *"Wednesday Rotary Club"* rather than the *"West Side" club*—it added a

whole different dimension in the Rotary pool. We had grown to more than 120 members by the time we left there."

Darla Petersen, who served as president from 1995 to 1996, says some of her fondest Rotary memories are of our days at the *Crowne Plaza*. "Gary Pribyl brought me in (during his presidency) in 1989. We went to the very first meeting and the officers were up on a platform—there were six or seven spots. Gary had me come up there and sit on the end. I remember thinking, "Whoa! They're probably looking up at me and wondering, 'Who the heck is that person? I'll bet they think I'm the speaker.'" Darla adds that the next meeting, when she was inducted, she "got to sit out with the group—such a relief!"

Mike Klappholz says he recalls that the food was "OK" at the hotel—"but we used to joke that we'd get the leftovers from other events and their Sunday brunch." Most memorable, note both Mike and Darla, were the attentive hotel employees who took care of the club's needs. "The best part of the location was the very friendly staff who checked us in and served us," recalls Mike. "I know when we moved, how sad it was to say goodbye to those who had served us for years." Darla adds that the hotel was spacious enough to accommodate any type of program, and was particularly nice for performances. "We had a group of children from the Suzuki class at the Symphony, and our Christmas performances...it was nice to have lots of room to move around."

Overall the membership was pleased with the downtown hotel accommodations through the years. Unfortunately, in the year 2000, new hotel management sounded the death knell for two of the three service organizations that called *Crowne Plaza* "home." Kathy Toborg was serving as president that year.

"We knew we were in trouble when the hotel began cutting back services, food offerings and attention to our audiovisual needs," she recalls. "Then the new manager called a meeting with our officers to announce that our rates would be raised to a level that would negatively impact our membership. A plan was outlined that would even penalize members who came to the meeting but chose not to eat. We were devastated, because all this meant either a huge financial assessment or we were going to have to move away from a place that had worked well for us for a very long time."

The board sought out other possible meeting venues, and weighed the pros and cons of each. They surveyed the membership and spelled out the alternatives—including the



option of substantially raising the meal assessment for members. In the end, the vast majority of the club supported a cost-effective move to the *Czech & Slovak National Museum & Library*—back to our roots, on the west side of town.

The irony, recalls Kathy, was that on the very day of the move to the new site, "our heavy-handed hotel manager lost his job with the chain...I could hardly deal with that little piece of information!"

Overall the club has been very pleased with its present venue. Complaints are few, and camaraderie is high. Dostal Catering has been such a hit as a food provider that members often joke that the meeting room is overflowing with guests and visitors who desire the "best Rotary meal in town." Says Florian Goedken, who joined Rotary West in its first year of existence, served as Secretary for ten years and has been a part of all of the club's meeting places: "I like where we are right now. We have great meals and a room that is *full*—it looks so much better than a big room that's only half full."

But even now, the winds of change are beginning to stir again for Rotary West.

Says Bill Jacobson: "We're still growing, and have made inroads and are creating a club character that is different from other clubs, with a different demeanor." However, he adds, "We'll soon outgrow the Czech Museum. I see the Scottish Rite Temple as another possibility...I believe that will be our next place."

What goes around comes around, it seems. And so Cedar Rapids-West Rotary may indeed, in its next incarnation, cross the Cedar River once again.

CONTRIBUTOR: *Kathy Toborg, Writer*



Several times each year Rotary West members are treated to special events, which often includes a meeting at the Science Station, viewing the latest IMAX movie.



No matter where Rotary West members meet, the display of the Rotary banner, the 4-Way Test and of flags collected from Rotary guests or by Rotary West members through visiting other clubs are always a part of the meeting ritual.



## Events

The Social Committee for Cedar Rapids-West Rotary Club has organized many events to give members opportunities to know each other and their families in social settings.

Such events have included reduced price loge seats at the Cedar Rapids Symphony Holiday Pops concert preceded by a reception at Dave Baker's home, a summer picnic and a great evening at a Kernels game, performances at CSPS Theatre, and many others.

These times together in a social setting contribute greatly to the comraderie among the members. It's no wonder Rotarians from other clubs often chose Cedar Rapids-West Rotary for their makeup attendance, saying "This is the friendliest club we know...you all have so much fun!"



Annette Brightwell and her family enjoyed the Cedar Rapids-West Rotary night at the Kernels Game in July, 2004.

# Service Above Self

No matter how much fun Cedar Rapids-West Rotary members have with each other both in and outside their meetings, they know the club exists mainly for service to others.

This club has had a sterling record of service projects in its 25 years of existence. Here are only a few of those projects.

## Kirkwood Scholarships

Since 1983, Cedar Rapids-West Rotary has been giving scholarships to students who will be attending Kirkwood Community College. At times these were non-traditional students, such as single mothers with small children. Most recently, two students are selected by each high school in the Cedar Rapids-Marion area to be the recipients. Their teachers introduce them and give a brief biography of each. Funds for these scholarships come from the annual Gourmet Pancake Breakfast.

## Giving to Charities

Funds from the Gourmet Pancake Breakfast also are gifted to local charities and presented to representatives at a late May meeting. Charities submit letters of request, indicating what the money will be used for and the amount requested. A committee selects around 12 charities annually to receive the Rotary donations which most recently have been about \$400 for each charity.



Dick Manson from the Brain Injury Assn. of East Central Iowa receives a check from Craig Anderson, chair of the Scholarships and Donations Committee.

Washington Elementary in Marion over a nine-year period of time. The equipment was purchased through a \$15,000 allocation to each school and raised by each club member giving \$25 to the project.

As each playground was completed, there was a noon-hour celebration at the school with a special speaker, some of whom were Chad Hennings from the Dallas Cowboys, Cary Bender from the Buffalo Bills, Jess Settles, Sam Alford and Steve Alford from the University of Iowa.

The five Rotary clubs received a lot of personal joy and recognition from this project and were featured in *The Rotarian*. A high point was a visit from the International President of Rotary to laud our success and encourage us to continue. Paul Phelan was the driving force behind the project.



"Service Above Self" awards are made monthly by Chief of Police Klappholz and Fire Chief Havlik for those in their departments who have provided outstanding service to the community.

## Rotary Washer-Dryer Project

The floods of 1993 in eastern Iowa will long be remembered. Some victims were flooded as many as three times. Cedar Rapids-West Rotary member Gary Pribyl received a call from Jerry Springston, then District Governor, telling him that a group of Canadian Rotary clubs were raising money for Iowa flood victims and wanted to bring the money to us personally to help out.

## Gearing Up for Kids

Joining with all the other Cedar Rapids-Marion Rotary clubs, members purchased and installed new playground equipment at Taylor, Polk, Harrison, Grant Wood, Kenwood, Johnson, Monroe and Wilson elementary schools in Cedar Rapids and



Gary immediately began to investigate the best uses of the funds. After checking with other local agencies and organizations, he learned there was one need that would not be met by any of the federal or local funds: washers and dryers would not be replaced. So Gary asked for the names of low income citizens, citizens with disabilities, or senior citizens who had lost their washers and dryers in the flood, and developed a list of 70-80 recipients.

He also went to Amana Refrigeration and Iltens and they agreed to provide and install new units as well as dispose of ruined ones for about \$600 per family. The plan was now in place.

When our Canadian friends arrived, they quickly went to work renovating basements damaged by the floods for the families on the list. Each family received a new washer and dryer. District 5970 and other organizations added funds to the \$4,000 brought by the Canadians, making approximately \$30,000 available for this project. Cedar Rapids-West Rotarian Mary Jen Bear gave a check for \$10,280 from the sale of P. Buckley Moss prints at Peppertree Studios. Each print sold for \$80; \$20 from the studio and \$20 from the artist went to the washer-dryer project.

When the project ended, 96 households in Cedar Rapids had been helped. The Canadians gave a report to their club in Neepawa, Canada, describing their welcome in Cedar Rapids and the emotions of their experiences as families thanked them with tears of joy.

## Rotary Beds Project

When Gary Pribyl realized there were reserve funds left from the Washer-Dryer Project, he met with the Grant Wood chapter of the American Red Cross and learned of a need to supply beds to disaster victims. He obtained permission from the District 5970 Board of Directors to divert the funds for this use, and fifty families in the Northern Rotary District received new bed frames and mattresses as a result.

## Rotary Orphanage Project

In 1999, Gary Pribyl and his wife Linda had the opportunity to travel to Kazakhstan, which had newly gained its freedom from the Soviet Union. One of the places they visited was Orphanage #8. The director prepared a "needs list" in Russian, which they had translated. The list included clothing, shoes, school and medical supplies as well as a used bus for transportation. All 304 names of the children were on it.

After the list was prioritized and converted to US dollars, Gary arranged for Cedar Rapids-West Rotary and District 5970 to receive a matching grant from Rotary International for the full amount needed, \$35,638. Linda and Gary met with the only Rotary Club in Kazakhstan, establishing the club as the disperser of the funds. Purchases were made and all the needs were met. All in three weeks time! Gary says "It really made us proud to be connected with Rotary!"



Gary and Linda Pribyl found it hard to say goodbye to the 304 children at Orphanage #8 in Almaty, Kazakhstan. Through the efforts of our club, District 5970 and a matching grant from Rotary International, supplies, food and a bus were provided for the orphanage.



Jerry Springston joined other Cedar Rapids-West Rotary Club members in regularly clearing trash from Iowa roadways.

CONTRIBUTOR: Gary Pribyl,  
Writer and Photos



# Tribute

Rotary International is and Cedar Rapids-West Rotarians are people who believe and practice, "Service Above Self." This anniversary book captures the club's efforts to live the Rotary motto, "People Profit Most Who Serve the Rest" during its first twenty-five years.

The charter members who founded Rotary West in 1980 had a vision for a Rotary Club on the west side of Cedar Rapids. That vision was to bring Rotary to citizens who had not yet experienced its magic formula for Rotary success that improves the quality of life for humans throughout the world.

That formula includes the successful incorporation of four avenues of service. The first is *community service*. A Rotary Club can have a profound impact on the quality of life in a community. Next is *club service*. It fulfills a human need for fellowship and sharing common purposes. Then we practice *vocational service*. It focuses on understanding the contributions made to others by an individual's vocation. Finally, there is *international service*. It promotes world-wide understanding. We have illustrated some of these service efforts in this book. They highlight the critical attributes of service exemplified during the first twenty-five years of the Cedar Rapids-West Rotary Club.

Every Rotary Club goes through a developmental process. The club's early leaders accepted the challenge of taking the club to higher levels of service. New members, different meeting places and the impact of different leaders helped Cedar Rapids-West become an effective Rotary Club. We are what we have been.

The club extends Rotary principles through the impact of its activities. There is always a task, project, or community problem needing attention. We have addressed many of these during the first twenty-five years, and will identify more in the future. Serving others is what Rotarians do.

The best way to predict the future is to create it. We look forward from a firm foundation of service. The next twenty-five years will be created by the decisions of present and future club leaders. They can effectively meet that challenge by remembering the rich history of Cedar Rapids-West Rotary. This book was written to capture that history for present and future generations.

In a world that often reflects hate, Rotarians demonstrate love. In a world short on the fulfillment of promises, Rotarians give service without any selfish motive or gain. In a world of observable differences, Rotarians practice a sense of unity. Surrounded by takers, Rotarians give of themselves

with an intention of making things better. Improving the quality of the lives of others is Rotary's primary goal.

Becoming a Rotarian is ultimately a state of mind. We come to serve because of who and what we are. We serve with our hearts, our heads and our hands. Our theology is simple and observable. We do unto others, as we want them to do unto us.

A Rotarian comes to understand his or her place in the world. We are different, yet similar. The Dalai Lama observed, "It is within that we resemble each other." The goal of Cedar Rapids-West Rotary has been to connect its members to each other through the common bond of service. Through that bond we develop fellowship through a common purpose. It works well for all concerned.

Cedar Rapids-West Rotary operates on a firm foundation. We look forward to the future. There will be more opportunities for the club's Rotarians to place service above self. As Rotarians, we know who we are by understanding what we do. We make a difference.

**CONTRIBUTOR:** *William C. Jacobson*  
*Charter Member*



# Biographies of Past Presidents

1980-2005



**1980**

**Tom Ecker** is credited with being the founding president of the Cedar Rapids-West Rotary Club and probably is most responsible for setting a tone of "fun and frolic" for the club. At the time, he was also the president of the Downtown Rotary Club. Tom came to Cedar Rapids in 1967 from Stockholm, Sweden, where he was one of Sweden's three Olympic track and field coaches. Formerly a designer for Nissen Corporation and an administrator with the Cedar Rapids School District, Tom is now a world traveler, has written 18 books and is the famous Tom Underwood, creator of the Wuzzles in *The Gazette*.



**1980-81**

**Harry Whitehead** worked in the insurance business for 53 years, completing that time with Millhiser-Smith. As the club's first president, he was committed to seeing it thrive, and was one of the original members of the Cedar Rapids-West Rotary bowling team. The Rotary motto that year was "Take Time to Serve." He also was a well-known storyteller and really enjoyed a good laugh. He loved playing golf and often represented the club at District 5970 golf outings. Harry died in 2002.



**1981-82**

**Bob Meskimen** is currently living in Des Moines and is president of the Northwest Division of Martin Marietta. He recalls that membership growth and good speakers were particularly important when he was president. He says the Rotary Four-Way Test has been a guiding force in his career, adding "If there is a better way to live your life, I haven't found it."



**1982-83**

**Bill Jacobson** grew up on a farm and served forty years as a teacher and school administrator. The club was still new when he was president so membership growth, interesting meetings and a workable service project were club goals. They also needed someone to play the piano! That year the Pancake Breakfast was developed as the principal service project. Bill has fond memories of the midnight chartering meeting (in spite of trouble staying awake), and he is proud of the club's service through the years. He too values the role of humor in club meetings; "When someone feels good enough about you to poke fun at what you do, that is one of life's greatest compliments."



**1983-84**

**George Branstetter** moved to Cedar Rapids in 1950 and spent 34 years as a project engineer for the R. W. Rinderknecht Co. He was pleased to be president at a time when the PolioPlus Campaign was first being launched. A local goal was to maintain a club attendance of at least seventy percent. He recalls attending the International Rotary Convention in Toronto and hearing the national president tell the story of his club's thirty-plus years of perfect attendance, which came about because no one wanted to break the perfect record! No wonder George is honored every year for perfect attendance!





**1984-85**

**Mike Ament** came to Cedar Rapids in 1973 as a highway engineer and started his own consulting engineering company, Ament, Inc. in 1983. In March of 2003, he and his daughter opened Aura Salon and Day Spa in Scottsdale, Arizona; he says the salon staff "is a lot prettier than all those engineers I'd been working with, but they are also much more difficult to manage." Mike was present at the Rotary International meeting in Birmingham, England, when the PolioPlus campaign was launched with Dr. Jonas Salk present. At that same meeting, Rotary International first voted on allowing women as members. There were about 25,000 votes cast, and the count was 24,999 "no" votes and one "yes" vote. Mike takes credit for the "yes" vote. Mike left our club to become the first president of the Daybreak Club. (He gave us extra photos in case anyone wants one for his/her wallet!)



**1985-86**

**Michael Stallman** says when he was president, the club was a lot smaller and he was a lot younger. George Branstetter brought in at least half of all the new members each year. Memorable among the speakers that year was Bishop Desmond Tutu from Africa who shared the human suffering he witnessed in his country. Mike's goal was to work within the committee structure and let the committees do their jobs.



**1986-87**

**Dick Salat** was our seventh Cedar Rapids-West Rotary president. He died in 1995. At the time, he was vice-president of Norwest Bank. His wife, Diane, says Dick would have liked to be remembered as an individual who cared about his God, his family and community. Described as truly a gentlemen who lived by the Golden Rule of treating others as he would like to be treated, he believed in the Rotary theme for 1986-87 of "Rotary Brings Hope."





**1987-88**

**Pat Stepanek** was the Chief Financial Officer of Securities Inc. of Iowa at the time he was president. He too remembers promoting the PolioPlus Campaign, and thinks the first woman member came in during his presidency. His most memorable meeting was hosting the then Governor of Iowa, Terry Branstad.



**1988-89**

**Gary Pribyl** believes in service, without a doubt! Gary is credited with starting the fishing outing in 1990, organizing the first Salvation Army Christmas Bell Ringing in 1989, and in 1994, organizing the flood relief program which sent over 100 washers and dryers to those with no flood insurance and used the excess flood funds to provide mattresses, box springs and bed frames to 65 fire victims. During his presidency, he initiated the perfect attendance awards, a Vocational Service Handbook for high school students, and organized the first Paul Harris Fellows breakfast with other Cedar Rapids Rotary clubs. Attending the International Convention in Philadelphia when the PolioPlus Campaign was pledged was a highlight. He remembers when the last country, the USA, announced its pledge, thousands of balloons were released from the ceiling. People were crying and hugging each other.

**1989-90**

**Steve Sprague** (no information available)





**1990-91**

**Jim Debth** was vice-president of Interactive Media Inc. (Gazette Communications) at the time of his presidency. His major goals were to grow the membership, to develop youth projects and to make a significant contribution to the Foundation and PolioPlus. He is proud of the scholarship program for Kirkwood College students and for the Outstanding High School Student program which brought students to Rotary as guests of their principals. He remembers vividly the poignant Kirkwood stories like that of the single mother with two children. A highlight of his presidency was attending the Rotary International Convention in Portland when the clubs in Czechoslovakia and Russia were reinstated. He thinks he may most be remembered for his famous "Words of Wisdom" at the end of the meetings.



**1991-92**

**Don Melichar** worked in the banking industry for 33 years and then became a stockbroker with Heartland Investment Associates. Don has been particularly noted for his promotion of the Rotary Foundation. He remembers ringing the bell for the Salvation Army when it was 10 degrees and snowing and enjoying the bowling team. He is very proud of the pancake breakfast which helped with scholarships for Kirkwood students and with the Vocational Service Awards. During his presidency, Cedar Rapids hosted a successful conference in Cedar Rapids. Don served as District Governor in 2002-2003.

**1992-93**

**Mike Klappholz** is the Cedar Rapids Chief of Police and also a Colonel in the Iowa Army National Guard. He served as project manager for construction of the new police station in 1997, and has been an active volunteer in the community. Mike says he remembers having a great deal of difficulty controlling the agenda at Rotary meetings, and "unfortunately, this trait has not been corrected as I have advanced in age." He wants to be remembered as "someone who took my responsibilities seriously, but not myself." He has been instrumental in keeping the monthly "Service Above Self" Awards going. We all appreciate his good-natured sparring with Fire Chief Havlik!



**1993-94**

**Ken Steine** was the principal at Prairie High School in the College Community School District at the time he was president, but he and his Harley have since moved to Bettendorf. Ken's major goal was to promote Rotary in Cedar Rapids and in Iowa. He remembers well the good times at all the meetings and working at the pancake breakfasts. Meetings that particularly stand out include the last meeting at the Sheraton and the first meeting when women became members, not guests!



**1994-95**

**Ken Kolek** wanted to promote a new Rotary Club that would target "exuberant, aggressive and active individuals" and would preferably meet in the morning. Thus, he was instrumental in starting the Daybreak Club and became president of that club as well as the 15th president of Cedar Rapids-West Rotary. He also initiated the "Service Above Self" Awards, including Metro High School students among those honored, and promoted the Youth Exchange Program. His most memorable meeting was hosting Gov. Branstad who was late, and Ken had to improvise to keep the meeting going until the Governor arrived! He also sadly remembers the meeting during the time of the Oklahoma City bombing, and the silent recognition of those who died when no one really yet knew how many it would ultimately be. Ken will be District Governor in 2006-07.



## 1995-96

**Darla Petersen** was not only the sixteenth president but the first woman to hold the office. She is Project Manager on the Community Development Team at Shive-Hattery, Inc. Her major goals as president were to increase the membership, fulfill the Presidential Citation requirements, meet new friends and have fun. She is particularly proud of sponsoring a new well in India and promoting Rotary members as volunteer interviewers for Prairie High School students who were developing their portfolios. She remembers being surprised at all that went on "behind the scenes" at Rotary meetings, and asks "What would a president do without Denny!?" She thanks Gary Pribyl for sponsoring her and introducing her to such a wonderful experience.

## 1996-97

**Dana Fritz** was only able to serve as president for six months as she and her husband moved to Estes Park, Colorado. In spite of her short tenure, she made an indelible mark on the club with her great effort to interview a member before each meeting and "introduced" him or her to the club, eventually honoring all. No surprise that she was vice-president of community relations at Mercy Hospital! It was during her term that the Gearing Up for Kids project was begun.

## 1997-98

**Gary Bartlett** was president of First National Bank at the time of his presidency. When Dana had to leave without finishing her term, Gary stepped in and organized other past presidents who took turns chairing every other meeting. It was great for everyone except Denny who had to corral a different president each week! One of Gary's highlights was attending the International Convention in Glasgow, Scotland, with its wonderful mix of colors, cultures and people from around the world with a common bond of Rotary. He also presided over the beginning stages of Gearing Up for Kids, the reviving of the Foreign Student Exchange program, and promotion of the GSE program. He has fond memories of his own GSE experience in Germany in 1980.

**1998-99**

**Bruce Hamous** is an architect with OPN Architects in Cedar Rapids. He spends most of his professional time designing libraries all over the upper Midwest, and his personal time with his family and the Boy Scouts. Bruce joined Rotary at the urging of his father-in-law and club member, Mike Martin. Bruce is known for his "Membership Olympics" that divided the club into teams to compete for prizes by suggesting the most new members. His most memorable Rotary moment was presiding over the meeting of all Cedar Rapids Rotary Clubs when Rotary International President, James Lacy, came to honor our work on the Gearing Up for Kids project.

**1999-00**

**Terry Bergen** is Business Development Manager of the *Gazette*. Most memorable for him as president was the involvement of club members in the playground installations, the Junior Golf Tournament, bell-ringing for the Salvation Army, and fund-raising for non-profit groups. As president, he tried to encourage more participation on committees and make members aware of the important work of Rotary around the world. He is particularly proud of the "comfortable, welcoming nature of all our meetings and the outstanding participation of our members." He figures members will probably most remember all the years he led the group in singing.



**2000-01**

**Kathy Toborg** comes from a "Rotary family" and credits Rotary for "being among the most meaningful activities of my life." Her major goals were to form a new Rotary Club in Ely, to bring the newsletter online, to reinforce the sixty percent attendance and increase membership, to qualify for the Presidential Citation, to establish a mentor program for new members, and to engage members through recognition of birthdays, club anniversaries, and committee-of-the-week reports. She particularly remembers the meeting when the "drug dog spent most of the hour at the table with his head on my lap!" She loved attending the International Convention in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Through Kathy's leadership, the club received the District Governor Citation in 2001. Kathy is now the vice-president for development at Mount Mercy College.



**2001-02**

**Christine Harstad** lived the Rotary motto of "Mankind Is Our Business" during her year as president. Membership grew by 28 members, and she credits the members "who helped make the year a very special Rotary year for all of us, our community and for me personally." She also recognizes Denny McGivern for his tremendous commitment and leadership for the club... "If it hadn't been for Denny, who knows what our weekly meetings would have looked like!" Christine is the executive director of Junior Achievement.



**2002-03**

**Wayne Josifek** works at Abra Auto Body and served for several years as chair of the Gourmet Pancake Breakfast. His major goals as president were to maintain the reputation of the club as a fun club, to be sure each meeting wasn't "just another meeting," and to help Don Melichar organize a successful District Conference. He is particularly proud of the Wheelchair Foundation and PolioPlus Foundation projects. He was thrilled to present a Paul Harris Fellow Award to Denny in memory of his daughter Kristin. Elizabeth Mulbah from Liberia was the most memorable speaker. He knows Denny had many laughs because Wayne often didn't know who or what the program was or if there were too many speakers or no speaker at all.

**2003-04**

**Larry Johnson**, Rotary-West president in 2003-2004, found the Rotary International theme, "Lend a Hand", tied closely to his work at Farmer's State Bank. He was pleased to have a part in the formation of the InterClub President's Council consisting of all the Rotary clubs in the community, and to be president at a time when our club's giving for the Rotary Foundation reached a new per capita level. He is very grateful for all the members who cared about Rotary by inviting others to join and who attended to all the details of holding a weekly meeting, especially for high-energy Ann King who "gave her all" in planning each meeting's programs. He also credits Wayne Josifek and Lijun Chadima for spearheading such a successful fund-raising effort for the Wheel Chair Foundation, and Dave Baker for leading the InterClub Rotary Centennial Committee. On a lighter note, he also remembers how tough it was to pronounce some of the members' names, and hopes Kim Kudej and Carolyn Haase will forgive him!

# **CEDAR RAPIDS WEST ROTARY INTERNATIONAL YOUTH COMMITTEE**

**COMPILED AND EDITED BY THOMAS J. WILKINSON, JR.—CHAIRMAN**

The International Youth Committee is involved with both outbound and inbound exchange students and is also involved with the World Affairs Seminar through the University of Wisconsin at Whitewater. The World Affairs Seminar is a program to introduce high school students to world affairs. It is offered each year in June, lasts about six days and consists of lectures, discussion sessions, recreational and social activities. Our club generally sends two students, selected by the faculty, from Prairie, Jefferson or Kennedy.

Inbound students come to our club through our district coordinator. Generally a club from a foreign country initiates a request to send a student to another country. Our district 5970 is given a list of student names and the District Coordinator places the students in different clubs throughout the district. Our club has a standing request with the Rotary District for inbound exchange students, but we are not always given the opportunity to select one. The club always has the right to reject a student.

Outbound students are selected in our district on the basis of merit. A committee, consisting of representatives of each of the local clubs first reviews the applications made by local students. The committee selects students on the basis of a predetermined listing of qualities that the committee feels are necessary for the student to have in order to be a successful candidate. If a student is selected, his or her name is forwarded to a committee that reviews the applications and interviews them at the district level. Students who meet the criteria for selection at the district level, are approved and are classified as outbound students. We usually don't have many applying to become outbound students, but this year six students applied.

Our committee has compiled available information about many of the inbound and outbound students that our club has sponsored. The information consists of the names of the students, the year they were a foreign exchange student, the country they were from, the school that they attended here, the names of the host families, comments about the students by a member or members of the host family in regard to his or her experience, comments by the students themselves and family photos. Their biographies follow some comments, by member John Negro, regarding hosting foreign exchange students. The listing of the students is in chronological order, first the inbound students and then the outbound students.

## **John Negro—On Being a Host Family for a Foreign Exchange Student**

Our experience with exchange students began over ten years ago in January when we picked up our first student from the airport in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. She was a quiet young girl from Paraguay. She stayed with us for over five months and we fell in love with her. To this day, we are still in contact with her and her family and her new husband and baby.

Because of that first great experience, we have opened our home to others. We've had the most pleasant of times and have learned about so many others' cultures. It has been very rewarding.



And, too, because of our chance at hosting foreign exchange students, our middle child decided to become an exchange student herself. Her trip took her to Argentina when she was 16 years old and a junior in high school. She stayed with two Rotary host families, attended high school in Garin with Spanish speaking students who encouraged her to learn the language and, after 10 months, didn't want to return home. Her experience was most memorable as we had a chance to join her in Argentina. We spent two weeks there and when we arrived we were welcomed with open arms and had a wonderful time. We could understand why she didn't want to come home.

We encourage anyone to host an exchange student. Yes, not everyone has the opportunity or the time to be a host family. But even a month or two housing and caring for an exchange student can be a most rewarding experience or having your own child become an exchange student can benefit that child for a lifetime. Living a new culture can open their eyes and expand their horizons for years to come.

# Cedar Rapids Rotary West Inbound Exchange Students

Date: 1987-1988  
Student: Alexandre Pecoits  
Age: 17 years  
Town, Country: Parana, Brazil

School Attended: Washington High School

Host Families: George M. Justice  
2 Sylvan Lane SE  
Cedar Rapids, IA 52403

Tom & Alice Wilkinson  
3220 Tama St. SE  
Cedar Rapids, IA 52403

## Comments by Tom and Alice Wilkinson:

Alexandre was indeed a delight to have in our home. He was always a very special person who took time to see to the needs of others. He became a brother to our sons and mediated differences that occurred between them. Girls seemed to flock around Alexandre. Perhaps it was due in part to his good looks but in addition to that, he had a very fine personality and he was sensitive to the wants and needs of others around him. When he first came to our house his English was very limited, but in time it improved and he was able to get along quite well in school in his course work. He had a keen interest in mathematics and computer science. In sports, he excelled in soccer. When he returned to Brazil, he finished high school and then went on to college where he worked on a degree in computer engineering. He is now married with two children.

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Date: 1991-1992  
Student: Katarina "Katka" Kubovcakova  
Age: 15 years  
Town, Country: Bratislava, Slovakia

School Attended: Kennedy High School

Host Families: Gary Pribyl  
1515 Arizona Ct. NE  
Cedar Rapids, IA 52402

Peter Teahen  
4100 Wyndham Dr. NE  
Cedar Rapids, IA 52402



### **Comments by Tom Wilkinson:**

Katarina was the first student to come to our club through a Rotary Exchange Program from Slovakia after the Velvet Revolution. No one knew the protocol for arranging for a student exchange with Slovakia, but Katarina's father, a lawyer, was determined that his daughter was going to go come to the United States as an exchange student. Tom Wilkinson, who was vice-chairman of our International Youth Community at the time, worked hard in order to accomplish the result and by going through the Rotary of Austria and working with interpreters, who could work out the communication difficulties, Katarina's father and Mr. Wilkinson were finally able to accomplish their goal. Katarina was the oldest of three siblings, was very bright, and had excelled in her own school. Katarina was good about sharing information about her country, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic. Her father was able to provide a good deal of information to the Czech Slovak Museum about Slovakia and as a result the museum benefited from this exchange. Katarina got along very well with both of her host families and participated in family life like a member of the family. When she returned home she completed high school, went on to college and after college graduation went on to law school. She has now joined her father in the practice of law in Bratislava. Last year she returned to Cedar Rapids to participate in the Christkindmarkt and as part of that program she fulfills a vital role in providing students in the Cedar Rapids Community School District with information concerning the history of both the Czech and Slovak Republics. Last year she attended a Cedar Rapids Rotary West meeting. She will return again this year to participate in the program.

### **Comments by Katarina "Katka" Kubovcakova:**

Writing about my one-year stay in the US after 13 years is kind of strange. I try to remember what my feelings were at the time I got home from Iowa. I was young, full of energy and I believed the world belongs to me. Well after all, I had experienced being an exchange student.

Today, I look at it differently. Those 10 months changed my life. I came to the United States as a girl and left as a formed independent young lady that knew what she wanted and where she wanted and where she was heading. I met so many interesting and new people within those months.

I had the possibility to experience new culture. Totally new to someone who lived in the former east block... I was very grateful to my host families for the possibility to stay with them and to experience life in a different family. They became my family after a while and I truly loved and respected them. Especially Wilkinson's and Teahen's influenced me a lot. They taught me to stand up for my rights and opinions and defend them. Also I learned to take consequences for my actions. Honesty, truth, modesty, kindness and love. Passion for life. Those were the values I brought back to Europe with me and they are still part of my life.

I guess, what is the most important thing about youth exchange is experiencing a different culture. The need to adapt to different circumstances. The ability to listen to other people in their own language. To communicate. To bring a message to the other side in a way others will understand it and will want to know more about it. No matter what the issue is. The possibility to study, to learn, to find out more information.

I am really thankful to Rotary and especially to Tom Wilkinson and my father (who is a Rotarian as well) that they made the effort to make my stay in Iowa possible. I am happy I have met people who were nice to me and always as I look back, I consider my stay in Cedar Rapids as very pleasant. I realized how important education and communication between people is. Thank you Rotarians. I hope I will be in a situation one day to provide the kind of service to my children as was provided to me.



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Date: 1995-1996  
Student: Anna Fredmar  
Age: 16 years  
Town, Country: Sweden

School Attended: Washington High School

Host Families: Ellis S. Smith  
301 Marshek Court  
Solon, IA 52333

Darla Petersen  
1721 Whitters Way NW  
Cedar Rapids, IA 52405

This young lady came from Sweden and was very ambitious to learn all about the United States. She came with a positive attitude toward life. She had a continuing interest to learn about our country, not only by trying to understand our people, but also by trying to understand the culture and style of living of the people in the United States. Her father is Swedish and her mother is Sri Lankain. She was fluent in English and French. She was an excellent student overall and was enjoyed by her host families.

**Comments by Darla, Gregg and Andy Petersen:**

In August of 1995 Anna Fredmar, Rotary Youth Exchange Student from Kvidinge Sweden, Rotary Club of Klippan District 2400, came to Cedar Rapids. Anna was living with the Ellis Smith family for her first few months. We offered to take Anna on a weekend trip to my sister's farm in southern Iowa to give her another U.S. experience. Anna was 17 and our son Andy was 4. Andy's cousins' ages ranged from 3 to 11. Needless to say Anna had a great time playing with the kids and they all fell in love with her. We were fortunate to have Anna join our family in October 1995.

Anna was attending Kennedy High School so we were able to be part of her learning experience in an American school. We learned about the culture of Sweden, the holidays they celebrate, and the food and sports they enjoy. Anna loved to make us her "Pannkakas" and she was an excellent soccer player. Anna's mother was from Sri Lanka so we were exposed to another language and culture besides the other three languages she spoke. We enjoyed having Anna as part of our family and our son told everyone she was his sister and still refers to her today as such.

While in the states, Anna took a Rotary sponsored trip to California, visited an Aunt in New York, and traveled to Minnesota, Nebraska and Colorado with our family. She was always favorably impressed with the kindness and warmth with which she was treated in our country and we were equally impressed with her warm, kind and loving nature she showed to friends, family members and us. We were constantly learning new things and having fun experiencing a new way to look at our beautiful country through her eyes.

Anna became a big part of our family and it was extremely difficult when the school year was over and it was time for her to return home. Anna has kept in touch with our family via emails and phone calls. She is currently living in Stockholm and starting her own family. We will always stay connected to Anna and plan to visit Sweden within the next few years. The Rotary Youth Exchange program has been a priceless experience for our family.



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Date: 1996-1997  
Student: Oliver Profant  
Age: 15 years  
City, Country: Bratislava, Slovakia

School Attended: Prairie High School

Host Families: Don and Julie Sturgeon  
110 Merryhill Lane  
Ely, Iowa

Bryan and Lisa Stolba  
5311 Bove Ct. SW  
Cedar Rapids, IA 52404

**Comments by Tom Wilkinson:**

Oliver came to our club from Slovakia. He was our second student from Bratislava, Slovakia. Oliver was a very bright young man. His first travel experience in the United States was accompanying the Wilkinsons on a family trip to Rocky Mountain National Park. The high point of the trip for him was when the family went White Water Rafting. He scared everyone including himself when he fell off the raft and into the water while going over the rapids. The rest of the year for him was a little less foreboding. Upon his return home he completed high school, then went to college and then to medical school. He is now practicing medicine in Bratislava, Slovakia.

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Date: 1997-1998  
Student: Ana Belen Scigolini  
Age: 16 years  
Town, Country: Buenos Aires, Argentina

School Attended: Xavier High School

Host Families: Chuck and Joyce Bruggeman  
602 Carroll Dr. SE  
Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52403

**Comments by Joyce Bruggeman:**

What an experience it was having a foreign exchange student! Our eyes were first opened to the idea when we hosted three teenage young men from around the world for a weekend. My son was a young teenager at the time and was so impressed with getting a glimpse into their lives and cultures. The three were each so different from each other. One young man was from Denmark and very fluent in English and very outgoing and very handsome. One was from Peru, more quiet and shy and humble. The third young man was from Germany and very mature and respectful of us, his hosts. It was such a good experience that when we were asked to host a student for a longer period of time, it didn't take us long to say yes. We received Anna from Buenos Aires Argentina. Oh my... her English was VERY limited and she had lived a very sheltered life in a home with only women, as her father died when she was very young. We found ourselves "playing charades" and writing our early communications, as writing has no accent. She was very quiet and shy. She hated her school here and begged to skip most days. She eventually made a good friend with another non-Rotary exchange student from Argentina. I wish she had attended C.R. Washington High School, as

they have many more culturally diverse students and I believe she would have felt more at home. Also I believe they would have benefited from what she had to offer more than the school she attended took advantage of. She was from a strongly Catholic culture and her family wanted her to attend a Catholic school. We also played lots of cards and games and she enjoyed learning to cook and making a few of her native dishes for us. We laughed a lot. She stayed with us longer than the expected time and we were sad to see her eventually move to a family with no children. We knew it was best for her to experience U.S. life from another family's perspective. One of the things she found strangest about life here in CR was that the kids didn't stay out at dance clubs almost all night on the weekends. She missed that. We have heard from her several times since she returned home to Argentina. She is going to University there and was also teaching English. I know her English improved drastically while she was here and she became more outgoing, more self-reliant, and more mature from her experience of leaving the security of her home and culture.

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Date: 1998-1999  
Student: Alessandra Dias Scalao  
Age: 18 years  
Town, Country: Santo Anstácio São Paulo, Brazil

School Attended: Kennedy High School

Host Families: Theresa Anderson  
7011 Iowa Trace NE  
Cedar Rapids, IA 52411

Crystal Usher  
1945 31st St.  
Marion, IA 52302

#### **Comments by Theresa Anderson:**

Alessandra came from São Paulo, Brazil. She was a very good student and excelled in Biology, Physics and chemistry. Alessandra was sponsored by Rotary West in 1998-99. She was hosted by Theresa Anderson's family from August 1998 to February 1999 and moved to live with Crystal Usher's family for the remainder of her stay. Alessandra attended Kennedy High School as a senior and graduated with the Class of '99.

Ale, as we came to call her, was a very introspective young lady and great addition to our family. It was great fun to watch her experience her first winter ever. She had a hard time choosing a winter coat, because she didn't know what she would do with it in Brazil. Because we had a lot of snow that winter, Ale had many funny snow stories to take home.

Because of her love for dancing, she tried out for cheerleading at Kennedy and was selected to join the cheer squad for girl's basketball. I remember her comment that the other cheerleaders didn't really have a clue about life and what was really important. She found it hard to fit in, but stayed with it for the duration of the season. Ale also participated in volleyball and soccer at Kennedy.

Ale was a great "daughter" and "sister." She really appreciated her experience here and the opportunity to experience different families. Since returning home, she has been in college and running an English school, teaching English to elementary age children. In December, she will finish her college and receive her law degree.

Her family in Brazil consists of her mother and father, a sister, Aline, who is now 20 years old. Ale was a member of Interact Club of Alvares Machado. Her town has a population of about 25,000.



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Date: 1999-2000  
Student: Martijn M. De Haan  
Age: 18 years  
Town, Country: Emmen, Netherlands

School Attended: Prairie High School

Host Families: Kevin and Kathy Miller  
7680 32nd Ave  
Norway, IA 52318

Denny and Joyce McGivern  
6050 Beverly Rd.  
Cedar Rapids, IA 52404

**Comments made by Kathy Miller:**

Martijn embraced everything he came into contact with. He loved being involved in everything at school. He was very active in the Ambassador Band and Marching Band. He was an accomplished pianist. Martijn is fluent in 4 languages. The hardest thing for Martijn to get used to was how fast paced the United States was compared to Holland. He liked to just spend time in the evenings talking over the events of the day, as that was customary in Holland. He attended many of the Rotary district's weekend trips and even went to New York City over New Years. Now that Martijn is back in Holland he is attending the University of Holland and is studying to be a civil engineer. He is very involved with the Rotary in Holland in helping to arrange for students to come to the United States as a foreign exchange student. Martijn's experience in Iowa was wonderful and the Millers enjoyed him to the fullest.

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Date: 2002-2003  
Student: Katrin Plundke  
Age: 19 years  
Town, Country: Brandenburg, Germany

School Attended: Jefferson High School  
e-mail: katrin\_plundke@web.de

Host Families: Mr. & Mrs. Dusing  
418 Stoney Point Rd. NW  
Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52405

Rick and Julia Jansen  
3945 Johnson Ave. SW  
Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52405

She is a lovely young lady and is presently pursuing a career in law. She is the most gracious young lady and fit in very well by assuming her role a member of the Jansen family and taking her fair share of household duties. Upon her return to Germany she completed her high school work and then went on to college where she is studying law.



### **Comments by Julia Jansen:**

Two days after Thanksgiving in November 1990 Katrin (Kati) Plundke came to live with the Jansen family. The decision to have Kati live with us was made very quickly and Kati arrived in a flurry of activity as we readied a room ready for her. Kati moved into our hearts as quickly as she moved into our home.

Kati proved to be a loving, caring ball of energy. Thanks to Instant Messenger, Kati kept in constant touch with the Rotary Exchange students in her group. A couple of the students were not as happy as Kati thought they should be so she was constantly trying to boost their spirits. Kati was sure food from their homeland would help and so she invited one particularly homesick student home for a meal. The student almost cried he was so happy.

Kati thought she had enough winter clothes to carry her through an Iowa winter. She was sure it would not be any colder in Iowa than in Brandenburg, Germany. After the first deep snow, one of many that winter, Kati agreed she needed a warmer coat. She must have tried on every coat in Cedar Rapids and Iowa City twice before finally settling on a coat that she could pack easily when it came time to return home.

Our granddaughter was fifteen months old when Kati came to live with us. Kati quickly became one of her favorite people. Kati would share her care packages of German chocolate with her. Soon Kati's mother and grandparents were including KinderEggs specifically for her in the care packages.

Kati was able to go on all the Rotary sponsored trips while she was here. She wanted to experience as much of America as she could.

As a Senior at Jefferson High School, Kati maintained a better than 4.0 grade average. Kati loved math, science and foreign languages. She arrived here speaking German, English, and French. She took Spanish while at Jefferson. When Kati returned home she was able to use her foreign language knowledge as a tutor. She is continuing her work as a tutor while attending law school at the Universitat Trier (University of Trier, Trier, Germany.)

We have maintained contact with Kati, though we do not talk as often as we did shortly after she returned home. Kati will always be our daughter.

### **Comments made by Katrin Plundke:**

I really had a great year with Rotary and both of my families were fantastic. Especially the Jansen family inspired me a lot. They had lived in Germany for five years, very close to Trier where I am studying now. They always told me how they loved the area of Trier and Luxemburg and that is probably why I chose to move from Brandenburg (very close Berlin) to Trier, which is a perfect place to study and to visit France, Luxembourg and Belgium frequently. I was not the only person inspired: My best friend from C.R. is going to move to London in October after I have told her about Europe.

Another major part concerning my future career was influenced by Mr. Tom Wilkinson. He took me to his attorney's office a few times and thus inspired me to go into law. Last but not least my exchange year underlined my international interest. So that I am now studying German law as well as French, British and American law, which I am quite fond of.

Awaiting the start off of my plane from Berlin to Frankfurt on August to then take the final step right across the Atlantic Ocean I was not quite aware of what would happen to me in the future year. Not only was I excited but also very nervous. When I landed in Cedar Rapids, after a rush on the O'Hare Airport—where I was especially grateful for the support of Rotary helpers that guided the disoriented inbounds, I met my first host family: The Dusings. Karen, my host mom, had a daisy in her hand so that we would not have any difficulties finding each other. We had a very exciting time together, not less to the fact that Karen and Bill had three sons and although I have a little brother it was a total new experience for all of us, which at the same time should not always be too easy. Michael, their youngest son, attended Jefferson High School as a senior that year and so did I. He had introduced me to all of his friends when school started so that I felt almost home by then. When my school year as a senior began I had the chance to meet many more students, which was just great. Everybody was very curious to get to know me and to hear where I was from. On top of that I enjoyed the different school system. It was such a pleasure to choose the



classes myself. My favorite classes were Spanish, Chemistry and AP US History. I had very interesting teachers and my classes turned out to be a lot fresher than their German equivalents. Problems finding an after-school activity. I was not quite fond of cheerleading and also not into music, which most of my new friends could not quite understand first. Having attended an art school in Brandenburg, I decided to go further into that. First I joined the drama crew to help creating the different sets but then I also started acting. Before that I had never thought I could do that but in the end it was a big pleasure. I even went to the Thespian Days and took part in different acting workshops and finally even received an award for my plays. In fall Karen and Bill took me to Phoenix with them to meet their son and his girlfriend that were studying the Arizona State University. I could even stay on campus over night, which was quite exciting. Besides we all enjoyed the hot weather and the pools since it was already cold in Cedar Rapids by then.

At the end of November I changed families. Since I felt home at the Dusings' house this was a difficult step. Although I was looking forward to experience another family I was a bit nervous again. The first time I met the Jansen family they had bought German "Milka chocolate" for me, which is my favorite one, which I found very sweet of them. When I moved to their house there were great changes again. They did not only have three daughters but also a grand child, Reid, who was only two by then. Before living with them I always felt quite uncomfortable around small children. But Reid managed to change that. Living with the Jansen family was amazing. Rich and July, whom I actually just called mom and dad and still do, were very interested in getting to know my friends and always supported me as much as possible. I enjoyed staying with them. Another great thing to remember is Christmas in the U.S. I do not remember ever having received that many presents before. We had a wonderful Christmas with the whole family. After all I will never forget how cold it was. Mom and I had to buy extra winter shoes and a jacket so I would not freeze. I had not seen the Jansens' back or front yard at that time because it was covered with two meters of snow and I should not get to see it until April. Christmas was also the first time I met Mr. Tom Wilkinson from Rotary who invited me to a "Christkindlmarkt" that he helped to organize. From now on he and his wife Alice often invited me for dinner or he took me to the rotary meetings, which were always a great lunch. I also helped him with translating several old German texts about the area where his German ancestors used to live, which was very interesting for both of us. Besides the drama club I have a lot of other fantastic memories linked with school. In February AP US History students could apply for the "Magical History Tour", luckily I was chosen. Our teacher took us, 20 students, on a trip all the way to Jamestown in two vans. We visited all kinds of Civil War sights and also went sight-seeing in Washington D.C. It was amazing. In March my family took me to the Mall of America to Minneapolis. The super sized shopping place was overwhelming. We also visited relatives there and went to the Carl Schultz (Snoopy) Museum. Additionally we went to a very impressive flower exhibition incorporating a Monet painting. In spring my grandpa came to visit me for two weeks. At first I showed him Cedar Rapids and Jefferson High. Because I was in school in the morning, mom used to take my grandpa everywhere, which turned out to be funny most of the time since both of them spoke either very broken English or German. Afterwards grandpa and I went to Chicago for a week. As my grandpa loves jazz we visited to different blues concerts. Fortunately I had been to Chicago before with the family of one of my friends and also for a wedding with my two sisters, so I could show my grandpa around. Back in C.R. I gave my final presentation of my time in Iowa for Rotary and took my grandpa there too, which he enjoyed a lot. After that the graduation ceremony took place. I had already been enthusiastic about all the different graduation parties and last but at least my own party that my family organized for me and that all my friends and even teachers attended. However the ceremony was very exotic to me. I appreciated the festive atmosphere. All in all my grandpa had a great time in the U.S., especially when we took him on a steam boat ride on the Mississippi, which always used to be one of his dreams. After grandpa left, the school year came to its end. Everyone was very excited about prom. Already having experienced homecoming in fall, I could imagine how enormous prom was going to be. My family suffered with me during that time, not only when it came to finding a dress for me... In the end prom was amazing. The great final of my exchange year was going to be the Rotary trip, starting from Iowa with 60 students from all over the world. We went to the Rocky Mountains, saw Las Vegas, L.A., San Diego, New Orleans, Miami, Chicago, Washington D.C. and New York. Surprisingly we arrived in San Antonio when the International Rotary Convention was held there. After we had experienced both the west and east coast, as well as a huge part of the land in the middle of the country and the remarkable differences between the northern and the southern part with its strong Hispanic influence on our adventurous trip with great guardians, it was difficult to say goodbye. I had an amazing time and a round-up view on the U.S. thanks to Rotary and all the members that helped making this trip possible. Summing up my year as an exchange student, I had a fantastic experience and learned a lot, not only about the American people, their life and culture, but also about myself. In the end this was a great chance and I am glad



that I could take it. Rotary supported me during all that time and I am very thankful for that, especially for the support of Rotary West, Cedar Rapids.

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Date: 2003–2004  
Student: Linda Sommer  
Age: 16 years  
Town, Country: Lauscha, Germany

School Attended: Kennedy High School

Host Families: Theresa Anderson/Schatzle  
7011 Kiowa Trace NE  
Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52411

Tony Schubert  
2600 Lancelot Lane NW  
Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52405

Linda Sommer is a very mature young lady. Her career interest is in graphic design/advertising. The town that she is from is in the former East Germany. Major industry in the town of Lauscha, Germany is the manufacturing of glass products. The products range from glass Christmas and Easter ornaments to glass panels for doors. The Wilkinson's discovered Linda while on a buying trip for the Christkindlmarkt. They visited her grandfather and stayed in their home in Lauscha. Her grandfather is the visiting glass blower at the Christkindlmarkt, an annual event in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Here is Linda's story about her year in the United States:

#### **Comments by Linda Sommer:**

My name is Linda Sommer and I am from a small town in Germany. My town is called Lauscha and is situated in the middle of Germany, about four hours from Berlin and four hours from Munich. I want to write about my Rotary exchange year in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

Everything started on August 20th 2003. On that day I was so excited to go to the US for one whole year. I went on the plane in Munich after I said goodbye to my family, which was not easy. After a nine-hour flight I arrived at the Chicago Airport. It took over four hours to get through the immigration. After that I missed my flight to Cedar Rapids and I had to spend the night in a hotel in Chicago. This was my first adventure I had in the United States, which was scary at the first moment. The next day I finally arrived in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. My new host family was already waiting for me at the airport. My family was the Anderson/Schatzle family. The first new thing for me was that I had two host sisters, Maggie and Claire.

Soon after that my first day of school started. I was so excited when I went into Kennedy High School. This school was way bigger than my school in Germany and the first couple days I always got lost in the building. But soon I got to meet the other Exchange Students and so we could talk a little bit about our first experiences. The teachers started to turn out helpful and they really tried to get me involved in class. What really surprised me in school was the school spirit. For example, on football games everybody was wearing their school colors and was cheering: "Let's go Cougars!"

My host family helped me a lot to get used to their "American way of life", which was different than at home of course. After the months passed by my English got better and better and I felt more comfortable to talk to people.

Later I also found some new friends here, which helped me a lot too. Lots of people wonder about homesickness.



The first time I was homesick was at Christmas time. It was hard that you can't celebrate Christmas with your own family at home, but my host family tried their best, so I got over it. This time was also interesting for me, to learn how you celebrate Christmas in the US.

In January it was time to move to my second host family, the Schubert family. In this family I had two sisters and two brothers. From this point on I didn't have any problems with my English anymore. For Spring Break the Schubert family took me skiing in Colorado. This was another new experience for me.

The time here went so fast and the school year was almost over again. I made a lot of new friends here, I liked both of my host families—they couldn't be better and also my grades were better than in Germany, which really surprised me.

After the school year was over I went with Rotary on a big US trip. I traveled with 50 other Rotary Exchange Students around the whole United States. This trip was very interesting for me and a lot of fun, too. Now I can imagine how big the United States is, because we used to drive a lot of hours in the bus.

After this four-week trip I went again with my host family to South Dakota to see Mount Rushmore. I had a lot of fun with my family to go hiking or just to enjoy the nature there. As soon as we came from South Dakota I had to think about packing. It was time to go back to Germany because the year was already over. To say goodbye to everybody was really hard for me and I still think about my time in Iowa a lot.

The year as an Exchange Student was the best time of my life. I learned how different Americans are from Germans. Also I learned that school was different, which I really liked. I made friends that I think I will have my whole life and I will never forget. Also my English got way better than before and now I can understand a lot more when people talk to me in English.

I will never forget this year in Iowa and I want to say thank you to everybody, who made my exchange year possible. I also want to thank you my Rotary Club. I really enjoyed being at the weekly meetings. For me it was a lot of fun to help at the pancake breakfast, this club was like a big family to me.

Now I'm back in Germany and have two more years of school before I can graduate. The first days back home were weird, because I had to get used to all the things again. My family and friends were happy to have me back after a whole year of waiting. Now I know that a lot of things can change in only one year. After school I would like to go to University and study Graphic Design or do something else in advertising or I also can imagine coming back to the United States and maybe starting a new life there.

#### **Comments by Theresa Anderson:**

Linda came to stay with our family (Andersons) in August of 2003. Our family was very excited to host another exchange student. Since Linda had been to Cedar Rapids, she was somewhat familiar with life here, yet had a lot to see and learn. In January, Linda moved to Tony Schubert's family and had a great time for the remainder of her stay.

Linda attended Kennedy High School, which she wasn't very happy about to begin with! She had hoped to attend Washington because she had spent a day there in her visit to Iowa in 2002. As the year moved along, Linda began to get settled in Kennedy and made a lot of friends. Two other exchange students at Kennedy were from Germany, so she had some familiarity.

Linda worked hard at school and made the honor roll for two trimesters. Her English was very good, yet she had headaches for the first two months from translating all day long at school.

One of the biggest differences she would talk about is the fact that Americans drive everywhere: to the store, school, church, etc. In her town in Germany, she would walk or ride her bike to school or to meet friends. Because of our roads and no sidewalks, biking and walking to a destination were more difficult.

Linda taught us some German language, customs, and recipes. We like to make "Linda's Potato Soup" and try our hand at German gingerbread during the holidays. Our dog loved having Linda around because she (Linda) played with the dog every day.



**Comments by Tony and Laurie Schubert:**

Linda Sommer arrived at our home in January 2004 and warmed our hearts immediately. She is a very well mannered hard working girl, who comfortably found her place with our family. We accepted her as a daughter and sibling giving her chores and allowance just like the other children. She was very receptive to the freedom and responsibility that was given and expected of an elder child. Her host brother and sister found her companionship and experience their treasure. Laurie and I could not have imagined hosting a more well behaved, studious, and lovely person as Linda. Our family learned a lot about Germany and have gained a valued friendship for the rest of our lives. We are looking forward to a family vacation to Germany in July, where we plan to spend a week with Linda and her folks in southern Bavaria.

**Comments by Jennie Schubert:**

I believe that Linda was one of the most wonderful experience in my life. She was a very fun and nice person to hang around. She comforted me when I was sad and laughed at my stupidest jokes; we were just like sisters. At first it was kind of weird having another person in the house but then we got really close. It was like being sisters cut the occasional sibling rivalry. Just before she left I remember we made a quote book of all our funny little sayings.

I, at age eleven, think it is really important to know your heritage, our family having German roots found it incredibly interesting to have Linda around. It was kind of funny really, she came to learn more of the English language and American ways; and here I think she taught us a lot more than we taught her. Not enough things can be said about such a wonderful person in only two paragraphs, so to keep it simple Linda was a wonderful person with a strong spirit in which I care about very much and will remember her for the rest of my life.

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Date: 2004-2005  
Student: Andrea Zegarra  
Age: 17 years  
Town, Country: Arequipa, Peru  
School Attended: Linn-Mar High School  
Host Families: Crystal L. Usher  
1945 31st St.  
Marion, Iowa 52302

Andrea is a most enthusiastic young lady. She likes art and singing as well as people. She loves the beauty of nature and the high point of her visit so far has been seeing the fall colors here in Cedar Rapids. She was invited to visit the Alliant Energy International Group where she had an opportunity to speak Spanish with the Director and became friends with the Assistant Director, Jamie Toledo. She loves cooking and is interested in becoming a chef and/or managing a resort. She is a real asset to our club.



# Cedar Rapids Rotary West Outbound Exchange Students

Date: 1998-1999

Student: Elizabeth "Beth" Negro  
816 - 30th St. Dr. SE  
Cedar Rapids, IA 52403

Birth date: 9/11/81

Parents: John and Donna Negro

Country: Argentina

She went to Argentina when she was 16 years old and a junior in high school. In Argentina, she attended school in Garin with Spanish speaking students. Her parents spent two weeks in Argentina while she was an exchange student. Beth loved her stay. She graduated from Marquette in May 2004 with a major in International Business, Marketing and Spanish.

## Comments by Beth Negro:

In the summer of 1998 I was given the opportunity to become an International Rotary Exchange Student through the Cedar Rapids Rotary West. At that time, I had no idea what I was about to embark upon. My world was turned upside down within the course of a few days. One moment I was sitting at the dinner table with my family in Iowa and the next I was in another country, listening to another language I did not understand and looking at people that I had never seen before. I will never forget those first few days and the new sights, tastes, and smells that I experienced. I never thought that the scent of a certain flower, the scent of a grill, or even the smell of cigar smoke could bring back so many happy memories. It has been over six years since my beloved experience and everyday that passes by, I remember at least one thing from that year. I will never forget what that year gave me. It allowed me to grow as an individual, a student, and as a professional.

Through my year in Argentina I had the opportunity to travel not just around the country, but also to neighboring countries including Chile, Brazil, and Paraguay. South America is nothing like Europe in the sense that travel is easy. On the contrary, travel is fairly difficult and expensive for those that live there. I had the opportunity to travel for two weeks to the southern regions of the country and see the Andes Mountains, La Patagonia, and the most amazing place on earth, Tierra del Fuego (Land of Fire) which marks the southern most point of the Americas. This trip included other Rotary Exchange students and a charter bus. There were many long hours spent on the bus traveling, but the most memorable moments were spent learning another culture or getting to know my fellow companions from all over the world. Our common language was Spanish, due to us living in Argentina and so most of the trip was spent learning more of the language that I have come to adore. Other than this trip to the south, I was able to go to the north as well with the retired members of the Rotary Club of Garin. It was an interesting trip and I learned even more about the culture being with those people. My travels outside of the country were not done with a group from Rotary, but with my very own parents. After about seven months living with host families, my parents came to visit me and experienced two weeks of what I had lived. It was wonderful to show them all that I had learned and

experienced in such a short period of time. Luckily by that point I was fully fluent in the language, so my parents had their very own translator.

A requirement to my sponsorship was that I attend each Rotary dinner every month and be involved with the other Rotary clubs in the area. This allowed me to meet businessmen and women in the town I lived in as well as surrounding cities, in addition to spending time with other exchange students from the area. The particular club that I was part of had two exchange students at the time, myself and Thea who was from New York. The club was also sponsoring two Argentine students that were in Germany, one of which ended up being my host sister for seven of my twelve months. Through my year I lived with two different families that lived different lifestyles. The first family lived in a country club and owned a car dealership in the capitol city, while the second family lived in the center of town in a small house and the father worked as a roofer. This allowed me to experience the multiple lifestyles and cultures of the country.

Like I said before, this experience has helped me to grow as an individual, as a student, and as a professional. As an individual I grew because I learned a different culture, saw things I never thought I would see, and lived a year alone without my family. As a student I grew because I learned another history and politics as well as learn another language. This aided in my search for a University as well as a major. I eventually chose to go to Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and study Business Administration with majors in International Business, Marketing, and Spanish. Through this experience I was able to grow as a professional in that my cultural understanding and language skills have helped me to advance my career in business. The goals I have for my future were established soon after I arrived in the United States in July of 1999. I knew at that time that I wanted to work in Business either in South America or Europe. I have had the opportunity to work in internships that involved communicating and working with companies and dealers in Latin America as well as Europe, and in my current position I frequently work with a manufacturing plant in Mexico. My language skills have improved through the past six years due to the fact that I enjoy speaking the language and that I adore practicing. Ever since my year in Argentina, I have been able to travel worldwide to countries like Colombia, Belgium, England, France, and Germany.

I would like to thank the Rotary West Club of Cedar Rapids for the opportunity. I would hope that the club continues to present this experience to other High School students in the future.

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Date:	1998-1999
Student:	Jennifer "Jenny" Douglas 171 Abbotsford Rd. Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52403
Birth date:	3/28/83
Parents:	William and Deborah Douglas
School:	Washington High School
County:	Germany

She went to Bremen, Germany for a year in high school. Her father visited her while she was there. She loved her experience in Germany. Upon her return she finished high school in May 2001. She visited Japan and upon her return she went to UNI and is scheduled to graduate in the Spring of 2005 after completing her practical teaching. She wants to be a teacher when she finishes college.



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Date: 2004

Student: Ryne D. Quelle  
5835 Wells Lane  
Cedar Rapids, IA 52411

Birth date: 12/3/85

Parents: Steve and Nancy Quelle

School: Kennedy High School

Country: Germany

Address: Königstraße 73a  
32584 Löhne  
Germany

Website: WWW.RYNEQ.COM

**Comments by Tom Wilkinson:**

Ryne graduated from Kennedy High School in May, 2004. While in school he enjoyed working with students in his class on various projects, including installing wireless networks access for the school. He organized the Student Film Makers Club, as well. During his senior year he worked part time at Best Buy as a computer tech. His plan for the future includes going to Iowa State University to study engineering and foreign languages.

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