



## Chris & Martin talk about the rewards of hosting a Rotary exchange student



*Chris, Harry, Molly & Martin with Exchange student Kevin from Germany*

There are many benefits to hosting an exchange student! We have hosted three students so far and each one has been very different and very rewarding.

The three students we hosted were at different levels of maturity, from different cultures and family backgrounds, each staying with us for a 3-4 months... which was perfect – it gave us time to get to know them really well and form a true connection as they integrated and became a key part of our family without feeling the time frame was too long. There was a real joy watching them grow and mature and become so much more self confident whilst they were staying with us. In

today's busy-ness, taking time out and spending time doing stuff with them actually meant we saw our home, town and country through their eyes and it really made us appreciate the amazing culture and country in which we live! To be honest – it also made us feel young again as we did some really cool things that we would not have done otherwise! Equally sharing their cultures with us was also very insightful, giving us a real view of their world and how, in reality, we are not really that different.

There is not a huge pressure to be busy all the time, but a willingness to spend time with them is important, as it helps improve their language and feel part of the family. We played board games, took them to the beach, took them on day outings and it was so much fun! Lots of laughs and fun times and connectedness and a whole new perspective on what's important and what is not!

If you are thinking of hosting and have a spare bed, an open heart and are willing to 'adopt' a new family member for a few months it's a truly rewarding experience

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## Why be a host mum & dad ?



It has been four years now since I first put my feet on New Zealand's ground to discover this wonderful country and its people as a Rotary exchange student. When I arrived there has been one group of people who picked me up from the airport with a big smile on their face welcoming me even though they did not know me back then at all. One year later the same group of people brought me, their "German daughter", back to the airport. We all had tears in our eyes. These people I now proudly call my family.

Host families as well as the counsellor are the first people to bond with as you do not know any other person in this foreign country on the other side of the world. I think this trust is incredibly important and only the foundation for so much more to build on. Looking back it still astonishes me how complete strangers invite you to their home and are willing to share their lives with you.

My exchange only became so diverse and colourful thanks to my beloved host families. They have been as different to each other as you can possibly imagine like their way of thinking and living, their hobbies and age. Still, there has always been something to connect with and we were always able to find common interests and have fun together. Sometimes I even surprised myself with what I became passionate about and gained value for me. So I absorbed and tried and learned new things. And this is not a one way street.

From my experience an exchange like this is absolutely inspiring and unique, opens new doors you did not know they exist and has so much more to offer than one originally expects.

So thanks to everyone who takes a chance to take part in this great youth programme. Paula Busse - Hosted by Papakura Club 2014/15

Message from a host mum: Our life was quite busy with operating our business and we were very social and way from home a lot. Would she want to live with just the two of us for 3 months? We might be too set in our ways, she might be bored. What about the company of people her own age? But I am so pleased we said yes! It was rewarding, it was easy, it was special, it was fun!



## Host Family Myths

Two of the great host family myths are "but we don't have any children at home" and "but we are too old" . We know these are myths because exchange students tell us so.

### **We don't have any children at home:**

Exchange students quickly make friends at school and also have the other exchange students in D9920 and neighbouring D9910. This will provide a network of people the same age. In fact with their busy schedule we are often told by students that there being no children at home can work well as they become the "centre of attention" and can be quite spoiled (in a special way). Being especially welcomed by a couple without children can lead to a very special exchange for the student and host Mum and Dad.

### **We are too old:**

The assumption here is, why would a young person enjoy being with older people like us? And that is the point. Older host parents can make an enormously positive contribution. An exchange is a voyage of discovery. An exchange student is at an age where they are forming their views of the world and their place in it. They enjoy the chance to engage with host parents who have life stories to tell and who can be as much mentors as a host family. So don't sell yourselves short.



## What is RYE ?

RYE is an international exchange programme for high school students who are between 15 and up to 18 years of age. An RYE student will spend 12 months in an overseas country, attending school while living with several host families.

A Rotary Exchange offers young people the opportunity of a lifetime - a chance to live in another country and see the world and themselves from a new perspective. Details & application forms are on our website

[www.youthexchange.org.nz](http://www.youthexchange.org.nz)