

RYLA 5550: Newsletter

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF RYLA DISTRICT 5550: INCLUDING STORIES AND ADVICE FROM CURRENT AND FORMER RYLA CAMPERS!



ABOUT OUR RYLA NEWSLETTER

This newsletter is a celebration of everything RYLA stands for - leadership, connection, growth, and service. Whether you are a past camper, a future attendee, a longtime member of Rotary, or someone cheering us on from afar, this is your glimpse into the powerful ripple effect of RYLA across our district and beyond.

Inside, you'll find camper stories, alumni spotlights, counsellor reflections, and real-life leadership journeys. It's a chance to reconnect with the heart of camp - the laughter, the courage, the friendships, and the unforgettable moments that stay with us long after the week is over.

Most of all, this newsletter is a reminder that RYLA doesn't end when camp does - the values, the confidence, and the community you build here go with you, wherever you lead next.



A MESSAGE FROM OUR EDITOR

Hi everyone!

Putting together the third issue of the RYLA newsletter feels especially meaningful this time of year. Spring is a season of new beginnings and a reminder that growth doesn't happen all at once but it small, powerful moments that build over time.

Just like the season, the RYLA community continues to grow. The stories in this issue reflect individuals stepping into new opportunities, taking what they learned at camp and turning it into action, and continuing to lead in ways that make a difference in their communities and beyond.

What's so special is that these stories are always evolving. There's always another chapter, another step forward, and another way the RYLA spirit shows up in someone's life.

This is only the beginning.

Sarah



A MESSAGE FROM OUR RYLA CHAIR

We are at that time of year where Rotary Clubs are looking for students to sponsor for RYLA. I cannot put into words the joy it brings me knowing that a new set of campers are getting ready for this amazing experience. I am a little sad that I won't be there this year to join in the fun, but I know that the rest of the counselling team and facilitator Scott know what they're doing.

Learning about your lives post-RYLA is another thing that makes me smile. Knowing that you are using the skills you developed at camp to make a difference in your home communities, and beyond, makes all of the time planning camp worth it. I am so proud of RYLA 5550 and what we've been able to accomplish in the last 14 years since I've been involved, and look forward to hearing about how all RYLArians create lasting impact in their communities, and in the world.

Huge thank you goes out to RYLA alumna Sarah Hogue for putting in the time to create this newsletter!

Yours in RYLA,

Jorrel

Leading Beyond The Game: Rayce's Story

Rayce Ramsay - Former RYLA Camper and Player Ambassador for Hockey Gives Blood



What years did you attend RYLA and what first brought you there?

I attended RYLA in 2013, 2014, 2015, and 2017. It all started when the Saskatoon Nutana Rotary Club offered to sponsor two students from my elementary school. I was lucky enough that my teacher reached out to ask if I'd be interested in one of those spots. I said yes, and the rest is history.

What are some of your favourite memories and what made you want to keep coming back?

It's hard to narrow down so many fond memories, but the major team activities like the Amazing Race and the night challenge always stood out to me. They were a lot of fun in the moment, but looking back now that I'm older, I realize how much they subconsciously helped me develop teamwork and problem-solving skills. Even the more casual times, like the laughs we had on the Saskatchewan bus to and from camp, are things I still think about.

The community and the environment for growth that RYLA fostered are what kept me coming back every year. As a first-year camper, you show up not knowing anyone, yet five days later, you're in tears saying goodbye to so many incredible individuals. RYLA always felt like a place where everyone was free to express themselves without fear of judgment and allowed campers to embrace who they truly were. I think that atmosphere did wonders for my emotional development and confidence.

What's something from RYLA that has stayed with you over time?

The biggest lesson RYLA taught me is the importance of having good mentors. When you're between 12 and 17, you are extremely impressionable; the people you look up to really shape the kind of person you become. I was fortunate to have some amazing counsellors who guided me through both good and bad times, even long after camp ended. Knowing how much that support changed me for the better makes me want to be a solid role model for the next generation, whatever form that might take.

How has your experience in sport helped shape the kind of leader you are?

Hockey has definitely defined my leadership style. I've learned that a team is like a metal chain, and you truly are only as strong as your weakest link. If one person isn't doing their job or playing their best, it pulls the whole team down. Because of that, I make it a point to support everyone, regardless of how "big" or "small" their role might seem.

Competitive sports also taught me that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to leadership. On a team of 30 people, where everyone comes from a different background and has unique life experiences, it isn't surprising that each person responds differently to certain leadership styles. For example, I've seen some players thrive when they're challenged with blunt feedback, while others just need to be heard and encouraged gently. Learning to adapt my communication to the needs of the individual has been a huge takeaway for me.



Leading Beyond The Game: Rayce's Story

Rayce Ramsay - Former RYLA Camper and Player Ambassador for Hockey Gives Blood

You're a Player Ambassador for Hockey Gives Blood, how did you get involved with this organization and what does this role mean to you?

I first got involved with Hockey Gives Blood back in 2020 while playing in Kamloops. Our team participated in a stem cell swabbing event that they hosted, and I signed up for Canada's stem cell registry that day. A few years later, co-founder Stu Middleton reached out to me. He was looking for more exposure in Ontario, and since I was playing for the University of Toronto at the time, he asked if I'd be an ambassador.

The idea actually scared me at first because I'd never donated blood before or was really one to organize events, but I'm so glad I agreed. It's incredibly rewarding to know I might be saving a life, either through my own donations or by encouraging others who might not have thought to donate on their own. Hockey Gives Blood was also founded after the 2018 Humboldt Broncos bus crash. Having played for that organization and knowing both survivors and those we lost, the cause is very personal to me. Being able to contribute something positive in the wake of such a tragedy means a lot.

Why do you feel that initiatives such as this are important in the hockey community? How are you using this role to make a positive difference?

As a competitive athlete, I think it's important to recognize that people are watching what you do and looking up to you, no matter what level you're playing at. You get to decide what to do with that platform, and your choices directly impact the people who see you as a role model. In a community as tight-knit as hockey, one positive choice can create a ripple effect that leads to meaningful change far beyond the original action. That is the core purpose of initiatives like Hockey Gives Blood and what I hope to achieve through my role. I feel a responsibility to use my platform to influence the younger generation and the broader community in the best way possible, and I encourage others in similar positions to do the same.



Leading Beyond The Game: Rayce's Story

Rayce Ramsay - Former RYLA Camper and Player Ambassador for Hockey Gives Blood

What lessons from hockey and RYLA overlap or connect for you?

The Rotary motto "Service Above Self" connects perfectly with the mindset I've learned to have in hockey. To me, it means that while you should never neglect your own well-being, there are times you have to sacrifice your personal wants for the greater good or common goal of the team. The best teams I've ever been on, both in terms of statistical success and overall culture, were full of people who left their egos at the door. Whether it's accepting a smaller role than expected or blocking a shot at the end of a game, special things happen when everyone commits to a cause greater than themselves.

What advice would you give to young people wanting to make a difference?

My best advice is that making a difference doesn't have to be a grand gesture; it's okay to start small. I think we (or at least I) sometimes view "making a difference" as this big, abstract, unattainable goal that requires massive change, but that isn't the case. For example, if you want to help end world hunger, you can't feed everyone tomorrow, but you can start by organizing the canned goods in your own pantry to donate to a food bank. That in itself is already a meaningful contribution. Once you have that experience, you might not find it as intimidating to talk to your teacher about organizing a classroom donation bin, which eventually could grow into a school-wide project, and then that could eventually grow into a district-wide project, etc. Rome wasn't built in a day, so start with small, attainable goals and use that momentum to build toward something bigger.



A World of Impact: Kino's Story

Karl (Kino) - Former RYLA Camper and World Traveller



You came to RYLA for only one year, what did that experience mean to you?

Going to RYLA was an experience I will always cherish. It was one of the most impactful weeks of my life, full of community, support, and personal growth. I was truly disappointed that I couldn't return the following year because the sense of connection and encouragement I experienced was unlike anything else. I made lifelong memories with new friends and learned valuable lessons that continue to shape how I approach things in my life now as an adult.

What are some of your favourite memories from camp?

Some of my favourite memories from camp were being woken up in the middle of the night to complete challenges and riddles while half asleep - it honestly felt like we were in a movie! I also loved the food; we were fed so well! I loved that I could never be bored because there were always people to talk to or play sports with. It felt like a big family, and we were all just having fun together. What I enjoyed most though, was being around so many positive people, getting to know them more deeply each day. Saying goodbye at the end of the week was one of the hardest things I've ever experienced. I still run into some of the campers at university, and it feels like no time has passed whenever we reconnect.

What's one lesson from that week that has stayed with you over the years since you attended camp?

The lesson that stood out the most from that week was winning the Amazing Race with the Blue Team! At the time, it was probably one of the hardest challenges I had ever faced. From kayaking to portaging, both mentally and physically, I really pushed myself and I was so proud that we finished at all, let alone first. It taught me to never give up, because even now, I can vividly remember how hard I was pushing myself to keep going. That experience has stayed with me long after camp, reminding me of my capabilities and the importance of perseverance, even when things get tough.

You've had the opportunity to travel and experience many different cultures, how did that journey begin?

Ever since I was a kid, I dreamed of travelling the world, and it's something I've always carried with me as I grew up. My journey really began when I visited NYC and LA with my brother at 16 and 17; it sparked my curiosity and excitement for new experiences. Then, at camp, Sarah Szell (Jessy K), gave her presentation when she went on Rotary Youth Exchange (RYE) and I was completely captivated by the idea. I got approved to go to Italy as part of it, but unfortunately, Covid prevented the trip from happening. Even so, that experience ignited a lasting desire to explore the world. Afterward, my best friend and I decided to plan our own adventure, and we backpacked through Peru for a month! It was such a full-circle moment because during the trip, we visited a village in the Amazon rainforest where Rotary had helped sponsor a hospital and water source. Seeing the impact of Rotary firsthand was incredible. It felt like one of those rare life moments where everything connects in a meaningful way.



A World of Impact: Kino's Story

Karl (Kino) - Former RYLA Camper and World Traveller

What has been one of the most eye-opening or meaningful experiences you have had while traveling?

The most eye-opening experience I've had while travelling was how it completely changed my perception of the world around me. I've backpacked through nine countries, some of which had reputations very different from what I experienced firsthand. One example is El Salvador. Before going, I received countless warnings and had preconceived notions about safety, and I had been told the country was extremely dangerous. Yet, when I arrived, the locals were some of the most hospitable and welcoming people I met during my entire three months of backpacking. Everywhere I went, I was greeted with smiles and waves; some even came up to me to say, "Thank you for visiting El Salvador." It was truly eye-opening because if I had listened to all the warnings, I would have missed the opportunity to experience such a beautiful country and meet such genuinely kind people!

How has RYLA influenced the way you connect with people in new places?

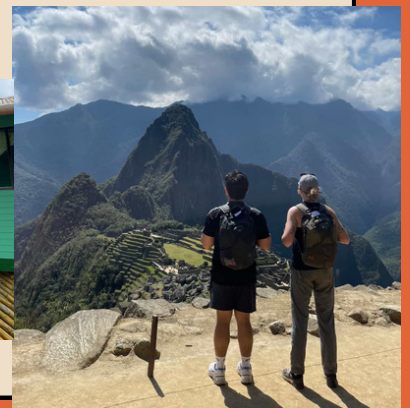
I feel like RYLA really helped me to get out of my shell. Not that I wasn't extroverted before, but sometimes I was hesitant to be the first to start a conversation with someone new. At RYLA, I learned that people are generally more welcoming than we expect. As a first-timer, not even a couple of hours into camp, I already had friends I felt were like family! That experience really shaped who I am today. Now, when I meet someone new, or if it's their first time in a group setting, I make a conscious effort to include them. A lot of my people skills come from RYLA, because after that week, I felt more confident, more open to new connections, and more willing to put myself out there. Like seeking opportunities, when I signed up for RYE without fear of rejection. RYLA taught me that stepping forward can lead to incredible growth and meaningful experiences.

How do you hope to continue growing through travel, leadership, and new experiences? What is next for you!

I hope to continue to expand my horizons and lead by example, showing that people are fundamentally good. I feel that RYLA has influenced the way I carry myself through school, jobs, and the outside world. I've become more confident in speaking up and taking initiative, and I often find myself naturally stepping up to lead and support others. After this spring, I will be graduating with a BSc in Biochemistry and solo backpacking South East Asia as a gift to myself for finishing school! Afterwards, I hope to do my Masters with the end goal of teaching at a university!

If you were to come back to RYLA and speak to current campers, what message would you want them to take away?

I wish I could come back to RYLA - I almost did as a counsellor but was not in the country when I was asked. I would tell campers to enjoy every moment and remember that every activity is designed with intention. Every lesson learned during the week is meant to help them grow as individuals and will be especially valuable during their formative years. I'd also encourage them to step out of their comfort zones, take initiative, and support one another - because the confidence and leadership skills they develop at RYLA can carry them far beyond camp.



Growing in Leadership Together: Aubrie and Jean's Story

Aubrie Clarke - Recent RYLA Senior Camper and High School President
Jean Arenas - Recent RYLA Senior Camper and High School Vice President

Describe your journey in how you both came to attend RYLA camp this past summer.

Aubrie: Attending RYLA was a milestone that came with both nerves and excitement. In order to be selected for this camp by our school, Jean and I first had to be elected as Student Council President and Vice President for the 2025–26 school year. Because of this, RYLA was something I knew about but wasn't sure would actually become a reality. I am so proud to say that after being elected Student Council President, I had an absolutely amazing time at camp, and RYLA truly became a highlight of my summer.

Jean: My journey to attending RYLA this past summer started with an interest in growing as a leader and taking on more responsibility within my school community, which led me to the opportunity. Going into the camp, I didn't know what to expect and didn't know many people, but that quickly changed. Throughout the week, I was able to build close relationships with people I had never met before, which was one of the most meaningful parts of the experience. Through team activities, group discussions, and shared challenges, we connected on a deeper level and supported each other in ways that made the experience unforgettable. By the end of the camp, it felt like I had known these people for much longer than just a week, and those connections made my RYLA journey even more impactful.



Was there any RYLA moment or activity that made you think differently about teamwork or leadership?

Aubrie: The Amazing Race was definitely a RYLA highlight, as it went far beyond physical challenges and included mental components that shifted my perspective on teamwork and leadership. The event didn't rely on one designated "leader." Instead, teams played to each person's individual strengths, allowing members to take turns guiding others through different challenges. This approach allowed everyone's unique abilities to shine and ultimately led our team, Team Red, to victory. It taught me that leadership doesn't always mean being in charge. It means creating space for others to contribute and recognizing what each person brings to the team.

Jean: An activity at RYLA that made me think differently about teamwork and leadership was working on our Unite projects as a group. Unlike team games, where the goal is clear and people often just follow a designated leader to win, these projects required a much more collaborative approach. There wasn't a single "right" answer, so success depended on everyone contributing ideas, actively listening, and building on each other's perspectives. I realized that effective leadership in this context wasn't about directing others, but about creating a discussion, encouraging quieter voices to speak up, and helping the group find common ground. This experience showed me that strong teamwork comes from mutual respect and open communication, and that leadership can be shared rather than held by just one person.

Growing in Leadership Together: Aubrie and Jean's Story

Aubrie Clarke - Recent RYLA Senior Camper and High School President
Jean Arenas - Recent RYLA Senior Camper and High School Vice President

You attended RYLA together. How did that shared experience strengthen your friendship and working relationship? How did it help prepare you for your leadership roles this year?

Aubrie: Attending RYLA with Jean was such a meaningful experience, as we were able to both branch out and build new friendships while ultimately strengthening our own. Being on the same team gave us a preview of the year ahead and allowed us to navigate challenges together in a supportive and fun environment, while learning about each other's leadership styles. As we stepped into our roles as Student Council Executives at Westwood Collegiate, we were able to build on that foundation and use our strong friendship to lead a connected council and work towards improving our school community.

Jean: Sharing the RYLA experience together really strengthened my friendship and working relationship with Aubrie, as it gave us a meaningful experience that we will both always look back on. Side by side, throughout the week, allowed us to better understand each other's strengths, communication styles, and approaches to challenges, which brought us closer and made it easier to work together effectively. It also built a stronger sense of trust and support between us, since we were constantly encouraging one another and reflecting on what we were learning. Experiencing RYLA together helped prepare us for our leadership roles this year as President and Vice President by reinforcing important skills like collaboration, adaptability, and active listening. It showed us the value of leading as a team rather than individually, and gave us a shared foundation and mindset that we can carry into our school leadership roles.



After leaving RYLA, what leadership lessons have you brought with you? What do you apply in your everyday life?

Aubrie: After leaving RYLA, my outlook on leadership completely changed, especially after seeing how approachable and supportive the camp leaders were with campers. It broke down the idea of a divide between leaders and others...inspiring me to build strong, approachable relationships within our Student Council team. I have made it a priority to ensure people feel comfortable coming to me, not as someone above them, but as someone working alongside them toward a shared goal. This mindset carries into my everyday life as well, where I make an effort to greet others, smile, and spread positivity to create a more welcoming environment.

Jean: One of the most important leadership lessons I took away from RYLA is the importance of keeping an open mind. Throughout the week, whether we were participating in team activities or group discussions, there were always perspectives and ideas that I hadn't considered before. This showed me that leadership isn't about having all the answers, but about being willing to listen, learn, and adapt based on the input of others. I've continued to apply this in my everyday life by making a conscious effort to be more open to different viewpoints, especially when working in groups or making decisions. It has helped me become a better listener, more collaborative, and more thoughtful in how I approach challenges.



Growing in Leadership Together: Aubrie and Jean's Story

Aubrie Clarke - Recent RYLA Senior Camper and High School President
Jean Arenas - Recent RYLA Senior Camper and High School Vice President

How are you using your position to make your school a more positive, inclusive, or connected community?

Aubrie: As Student Council President, I have worked to create a more positive, inclusive, fun, and connected school community by dedicating time and effort to planning a wide variety of events, from introducing new ideas like Grade Wars to organizing multiple fundraisers. The confidence and leadership skills I gained at RYLA helped turn mine and Jean's goals into reality, and we have both made an effort to ensure that all students feel heard by incorporating polls, voting systems, and weekly council meetings. This has allowed us to gather input, address concerns, and plan events that reflect a wide range of interests, helping build one unified school community.

Jean: As Vice President of my school, I'm using my position to help create a more inclusive, positive, and connected community by making sure all students feel heard and represented. I focus on encouraging open communication between students and leadership, whether that's through gathering feedback, having conversations, or creating opportunities for students to share their ideas. I also work on planning events and initiatives that bring different groups of students together, so people feel more connected rather than separated into cliques. Inclusivity is important to me, so I try to ensure that activities reflect a wide range of interests and backgrounds, allowing more students to feel like they belong. Overall, I aim to lead in a way that is approachable and supportive, helping build a school environment where everyone feels valued and comfortable participating.

What are some of the goals or projects you are most excited to lead this year?

Aubrie: This year, Jean and I have worked hard to lead our school in 27 events so far, with 7 more still to come before the school year ends. These have included fundraisers such as raising over \$1,100 for the Terry Fox Foundation, \$325 for United Way through our Kernel's Popcorn fundraiser, and over \$100 for Santa for a Senior. We have also supported our community through donations to the Winnipeg Pet Rescue Shelter and Holiday Hampers, while building school spirit with events like an Earth Day cleanup, Movie Night, Spirit Weeks, Pep Rallies, school dances, and many more. I was especially excited about the Pep Rallies because they allowed me to combine my love of dance and performing with leadership, all while seeing the entire school come together in laughter and smiles to support our school community and sports teams.

Jean: One project I'm especially excited to lead this year is introducing our "Goodbye" candy grams, which will take place as one of our final events. While our school already has a traditional Valentine's candy gram, we wanted to create something similar that focuses on closing the year in a meaningful way. The idea is to give students the opportunity to send a small token of appreciation to friends, classmates, or staff members—whether it's for someone who is graduating, moving to a different school, or simply someone who made a positive impact on their year. I'm excited about this initiative because it encourages kindness, reflection, and connection within our school community, helping students end the year on a positive and memorable note. It also allows us, as student leaders, to create an inclusive space where everyone feels recognized and appreciated.



Growing in Leadership Together: Aubrie and Jean's Story

Aubrie Clarke - Recent RYLA Senior Camper and High School President
Jean Arenas - Recent RYLA Senior Camper and High School Vice President

What advice would you give to other students who want to get involved in leadership but don't know where to start?

Aubrie: Getting started in leadership can feel overwhelming, but the best place to begin is within your own community and school through Student Council, Student Services, or local volunteer opportunities. These experiences help you meet like-minded people and take your first steps into leadership. If you feel that there is not something available that interests you, reach out to some friends or teachers and try starting a club in an area that you are passionate about. Chances are, there are others within your school and community who love to do similar things to you. Even small initiatives, like organizing a community cleanup, can open doors to bigger opportunities. The most important thing is to take that first step and just go for it!

Jean: One piece of advice I would give to students who want to get involved in leadership but don't know where to start is to begin by joining a school club or group. This allows them to observe how leaders operate, gain experience, and gradually take on responsibilities in a supportive environment. It's a great way to build confidence and understand what effective leadership looks like. I would also emphasize the importance of not being afraid to ask for help or ask questions. There's often a misconception that once you're in a leadership role, you have to figure everything out on your own, but that's not true. I believe strong leaders are not only good at communication and active listening, but are also honest, open, and willing to learn from others. Being able to seek guidance and collaborate with your peers ultimately makes you a more effective and approachable leader.

How will you continue to connect with Rotary and RYLA after you graduate?

As a graduated RYLA camper, I would love to return to RYLA one day as a counsellor to help create the same welcoming and inspiring environment that I experienced on my first time. To stay connected with Rotary, I plan to continue my involvement in student leadership at the university level and use the skills I have developed to organize events and fundraisers that reflect Rotary's value of "Service Above Self."

Jean: After I graduate, I plan to stay connected with Rotary and RYLA by keeping in touch with the people and mentors I met through camp and looking for opportunities to stay involved in local Rotary initiatives. I'm interested in possibly joining a Rotaract club or volunteering at Rotary events so I can continue developing my leadership skills while giving back to the community. I also hope to support future RYLA participants, whether by sharing my experience, helping with events, or encouraging other students to apply. Staying connected in these ways will allow me to continue growing as a leader while remaining part of a community that has had a meaningful impact on me.



From RYLA to Rotary Youth Exchange: Mikayla's Story

Mikayla Kaminski-
RYLA Camper and Soon-To-Be Short
Term Rotary Exchange Student

I've attended RYLA twice, and what keeps bringing me back is the energy, positivity, and the overall sense of connection you can't find anywhere else. Some of my favourite memories are trivia nights (especially when we won), the dance, and creating music videos. Each time I go, it feels like home. The biggest lesson I've taken away is that opening up to others isn't as scary as it seems, when you're around the right people, you can just be yourself. RYLA has pushed me out of my comfort zone through meeting new people, stepping into leadership roles, and working with others I didn't know, all of which have helped me grow.

Being named Junior Citizen of the Year in my community showed me that the work I do matters, even if I'm not doing it for recognition. I genuinely enjoy helping and being involved behind the scenes. Some of the initiatives I've been part of include Youth4Change, working with Integrated Youth Services of Saskatchewan to help create "Homebase: For Youth, By Youth," organizing a local Pride walk, and supporting the YOUTH Matter Canada Mental Health Symposium. These experiences have shaped who I am and strengthened my passion for giving back.



RYLA HAS PUSHED ME OUT OF MY COMFORT ZONE THROUGH MEETING NEW PEOPLE, STEPPING INTO LEADERSHIP ROLES, AND WORKING WITH OTHERS I DIDN'T KNOW, ALL OF WHICH HAVE HELPED ME GROW

- Mikayla Kaminski



From RYLA to Rotary Youth Exchange: Mikayla's Story

Mikayla Kaminski-
RYLA Camper and Soon-To-Be Short
Term Rotary Exchange Student

I was inspired to apply for a short-term exchange to Madrid, Spain by both my mom and a counsellor I met at RYLA. Growing up, my mom made it a tradition to travel each year, which sparked my curiosity about the world. At RYLA, hearing about an exchange experience made me realize this was something I had always wanted to do. I'm most excited to experience a new culture, learn more about its history, and connect with people; including meeting the Rotary club in Madrid. To me, representing my community, RYLA, and Rotary means showing up with openness, respect, and a willingness to learn even if it takes multiple months. It's about being a positive reflection of the values I've gained and sharing those wherever I go. When I come back, I hope to share my experiences and encourage others to take opportunities like this. I would tell another camper that even if it feels a bit scary, it's completely worth it. You will grow in ways you don't expect and create connections that last far beyond the experience.



RYLA AND ROTARY
MEANS SHOWING UP
WITH OPENNESS,
RESPECT, AND A
WILLINGNESS TO
LEARN

- Mikayla Kaminski



Rotary Club Camper Spotlight

A RYLA Camper Making a Difference in Transcona

Christian Leader, a second-year RYLA camper, is a shining example of how young people can use what they've learned to benefit their community.

Recently, Christian was photographed putting his leadership skills into action by fixing a fallen Rotary sign for the Prairie Nature Park sponsored by the Winnipeg Transcona Rotary Club. This wasn't just a simple act of kindness—it was a demonstration of responsibility and community spirit.

By stepping up to restore the sign, Christian showed that leadership is about identifying needs and acting, no matter how small the task may seem. Camp RYLA is well-known for fostering leadership qualities in young people, encouraging them to take initiative both within camp activities and in their everyday lives.

Through the skills gained at Camp RYLA, he has become a role model for others, showing that even small acts of service can have a big impact. The future looks bright with young leaders like Christian taking the initiative to care for their communities.



Story submitted by the Winnipeg
Transcona Rotary Club

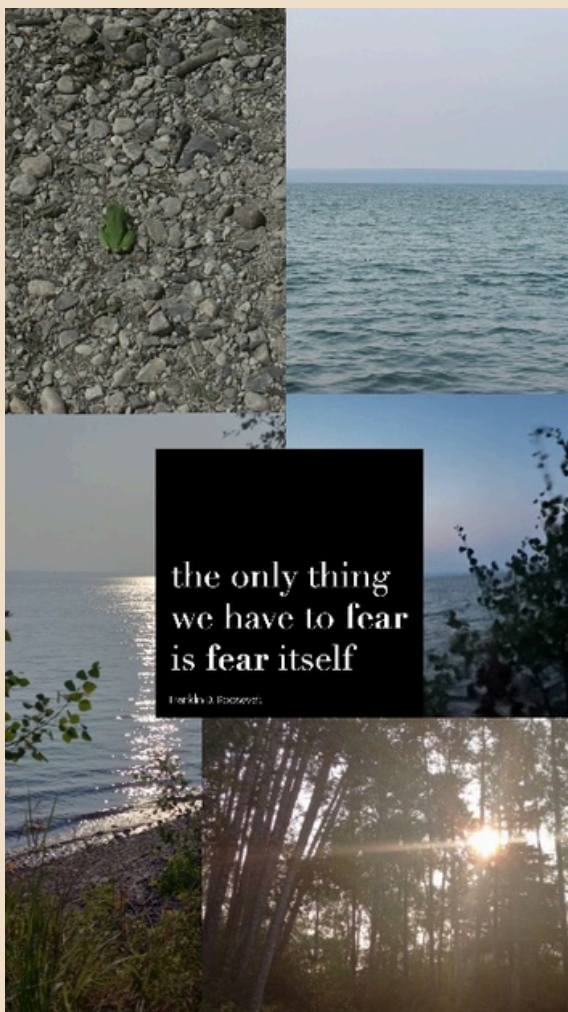


If you are a Rotary club in District 5550 who would like to share a story about a current/former RYLA camper, please send to sarah.hogue@live.com

Day 7 2026

Several 2025 RYLA campers attended RYLA Day 7 the weekend of March 27th and 28th, 2026. It was a social time for campers to reconnect and there were leadership sessions that allowed for campers to build on their skills! We asked each of them to share a quote from our leadership anchor session!

What quote do you repeat to yourself often in your day-to-day life? Talk about why this quote is important to you and how you hope it may influence others after sharing it!



Paelin Nestor
~ Junior Camper 2025

“The only thing we have to fear is fear itself”

This quote to me, means not letting the fear or anxiety you feel stop you from trying new things or doing what you love.

Day 7 2026



Berlyn Gregoire
~ Senior Camper 2025

"You don't have to be perfect to be a leader - you just have to show up"

This quote stuck with me because I used to think leadership meant always being confident and having everything figured out. But at RYLA, I realized that's not really true. Perfection doesn't matter to me the way it used to, because it can actually stop you from even trying. There was a moment where I wasn't fully sure of myself, and normally I would've just stayed quiet, but I spoke up anyway and even though it wasn't perfect, it still made a difference. That showed me that leadership is really just about being willing to try and be present. I hope when people read this, they feel a bit less pressure to be "perfect" and more encouraged to just try. Because sometimes just showing up, even when you're unsure, can actually make a bigger impact than you think.

Day 7 2026



“How lucky am I to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard”
-Winnie the Pooh

Rachelle Brown
~ Senior Camper 2025

“How lucky am I to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard”

I had the honour to attend RYLA for the past 4 summers. Over these 4 years, I have gotten to spend my summer with some of the most amazing people. RYLA has taught me a lot about myself and who I am as a leader. It is not only a leadership camp, but it is also a place to grow and find yourself. RYLA has shaped who I am as a person, and I have found myself becoming more confident and determined thanks to it. To this day, I still carry the lessons and friendships RYLA has given me into my everyday life. This March, I attended RYLA Day 7, which was my last time at RYLA. While I am extremely sad that I will not be going back, I am glad I had that experience. RYLA is like a second home to me, and even though I will not be back this summer, I will always carry a part of it with me.

Day 7 2026



AJ Millard
~ Senior Camper 2025

“Leadership is an action, not a position.”

Before camp, I was a leader who would tell people what to do and not help them. After camp, I have learned that the best way to lead is by doing and participating. I hope that everyone can learn from this quote and understand that to be a good leader, you need to participate and help instead of delegating all the other work to others.

COUNSELLOR HIGHLIGHT

Stepping into Growth, Change, and New Energy this Spring Season!

As we step into a new season, spring reminds us that growth is always possible. We can reset, refocus, and step into new versions of ourselves. Just like RYLA, it is a time for fresh starts, new connections, and having the courage to try something new.

In this issue we are highlighting two of our counsellors and inviting them to reflect on what this season means to them.

They each shared

- What they are stepping into
- What they are working on
- How they are growing as leaders in this moment

We've also asked them to share what mindset or energy they are hoping to bring into the summer!

Their reflections help us to understand that growth looks different for everyone and stepping into something new starts with intention and having an open mind.

JAKE

(Winnipeg, MB)

I've always felt that spring brings with it a sense of new beginnings, as we're all defrosting from the long winter. The changing weather can energize us to keep pushing toward our goals. To me, spring acts as a checkpoint and a chance to stop and evaluate how far I've grown.

In my work, I have been stepping into new leadership roles that have been pushing me as a team leader. It has been a challenge, but that lets me know I am growing as both a person and a leader. It's important to step out of our comfort zones to achieve growth and discover things we wouldn't have learned otherwise.

Transitioning into a leadership role can be staggering. Building yourself up to meet the requirements of a new role takes effort and personal growth. Once you step into that role, the focus shifts from how you can grow to how you can help raise the people around you to meet their goals. Listening to people, understanding their challenges and what drives them, and providing support is what I've been working on most as a leader.

In my personal life I'm working on becoming a more positive person and not letting stress weigh me down. Being a leader means greater responsibility, and it can be a lot. One way I've been tackling stress is by not taking everything so seriously. Many of the stressors in your life aren't as big as they seem in your head. Always try your best, but most problems aren't make-or-break. Take things less seriously and have fun while doing it.

TYE

(Winnipeg, MB/Portage la Prairie, MB)

With spring comes a new era for me, I have just finished up my last university classes and have to figure out my next steps for my future. I am stepping into a season of change, which at times can feel very scary but can also feel very hopeful and exciting. With a season of change comes new opportunities and many possible doors to walk through!

During this new era I am working on being okay with not knowing what is next and pushing myself out of my comfort zone. Not knowing what's next has always been something that scares me so by accepting that there's no plan and I really can choose any open door is pushing myself out of my comfort zone but also making my self say yes to opportunities that I used to be too scared to take.

Currently I am growing as a leader by attending Canadian Forces Morale and Welfare Services Deployment training in Halifax as a Recreation Coordinator that could end up deployed to Latvia! This course is pushing me in new ways and allowing me to really learn how to speak up, make people hear me when I'm not the loudest or oldest voice in the room and pushing me to try new things.

Going into the summer I would like to keep this mindset of change being okay and not knowing what's next is also okay. I want to live in the moment and take the opportunities that come my way. Summer will be about positivity and finding my footing within the world of Recreation :)

Contact Us!



TIKTOK @ryla5550



INSTAGRAM @ryla5550



YOUTUBE @RYLA5550



EMAIL ryladistrict5550@gmail.com



WEBSITE rotary5550.org

Youth tab - RYLA

Do you have a story you want to be featured in our next RYLA newsletter? Reach out to sarah.hogue@live.com!!