



Laura

from

Burlington

to

New Zealand

“ Make the most of every day ”

Hello again! Greetings from Auckland, New Zealand.

Tick tock, tick tock! About 9 and a half months have passed since I left for the adventure of a lifetime. Now there's less than three months to go and I can't think of any word to describe how incredible this experience has been. Every time I sit down and just think I get a lump in my throat. I just don't want it to end. I am now my last and final host family. I am absolutely happy with them. My host mum's name is Alison and she is very kind. My host dad, Steve, is Australian and he has a great sense of humour. I have a host sister, Esther, who just became a mum to a beautiful baby girl named Eloise. Esther is great, she's very funny and down to earth. Baby Eloise brings so much joy and love to this family. She's growing up so quickly and exploring new things every day. Although we have busy schedules, we try and do things as a family on the weekends. In addition, the Gilbert household has two dogs, Buckley and Spell.



After 3 weeks of holiday, I am definitely glad to be back at school. Sadly, I have one last term left at Pakuranga College. Nonetheless, I am going to make my last few months there worthwhile. Since I maintain the same five subjects and classes, I don't change classmates or teachers. Thus, I have become really close to them and have shared some pretty memorable times. I have a couple of trips coming for Geography and Outdoor Education which I'm quite excited about. Furthermore, school football has once again begun which is going well. Sometimes we'll have a home game and we get such great support from

our school. We also like to do some team bonding so after a game we'll get a feed or go to one of our team-mate's houses. Other than that, the school always has some events happening at the school and I really enjoy attending those because as a school we always try and support each other in the things we do.

This past month I have been involved with two major events for Rotary. One of them was Challenge Camp which included two districts, 9910 and 9920. Throughout this week each of the exchange students was a buddy and/or minder for a young person for a young person of the same gender who has some kind of disability. By far this has been



one of the most rewarding experiences of my exchange. My buddy was a girl named Grace. She has a heart of gold. She never failed to make anyone laugh or smile. She looked forward to each day. Always having a positive attitude and a big bright smile. The first day we got to know each other, our hobbies, favourite food, our families and much more. Turns out we had a lot in common, we both love pizza and football.

The next day, we went Tree Top Walking and Zip Lining. Although it was quite challenging, we managed to get through it together and it ended up being a lot of fun. The following day we went to the hot pools and it really nice. On the last two days we prepared for a concert where all the campers and buddies would be participating in. With another group of girls we decided to do a dance. On the day of, I witnessed so much talent. It really goes to show that there are no limits to what you can do even if you have some kind of obstacle that you may be facing. That night we really became brothers and sisters. We didn't want it to be over. Sadly, the next day we all said our farewells to one another. The next rotary event we had recently was Selection Weekend. This was when the districts select the upcoming Outbounds. I had to do a presentation for the candidates to convince them to come to Canada. Each and every day here is a stepping stone to reaching my fullest potential as a young lady.



Cheers, *Laura*