

Dear Prospective Youth Exchange Student:

Thank you for your interest in the Rotary Youth Exchange ("RYE") Program. The purpose of this letter is to give you some information about the program and to hopefully encourage you take the next step and become a part of our amazing organization.

Being away in a foreign country has a powerful broadening and an accelerating effect on your maturing process. Managing your own finances and making decisions give you more confidence and independence to take care of yourself. You learn to think and converse fluently in another language. You develop more confidence in speaking before groups. You become more tolerant of other people, different cultures, and different personalities. Your youth exchange experience will be priceless, and something that you can't replicate any other way.

Having Rotary Youth Exchange on your college application will undoubtedly carry more weight in many cases than your GPA, class ranking, or even SAT or ACT score. By successfully completing an exchange in another culture you are showing them that you have the "right stuff." Future employers will take similar views of your experience, not to mention the benefits of becoming bi-lingual and/or bi-cultural!

The RYE Program is volunteer-driven. It is organized and administered by volunteer Rotarians and their families throughout the world within the local Rotary Club and the Rotary District. Rotary volunteers screen student applicants, select the exchange students, prepare them, and arrange hosting abroad, schedule travel, purchase insurance, arrange for school admission, and assist in obtaining visas, etc. All of this is done by Rotarians as a service; they are not paid to provide this service.

Because we depend on volunteers, the Rotary Program is the least expensive, but safest and highest quality program. Students are provided local supervision by members of the local hosting Rotary Club, who are directly involved in the welfare of these students. Because of this close connection with local Rotarian advisors, students away from home are more comfortable knowing that Rotarians from their host club are available to help and offer guidance.

Eligibility:

The Rotary Youth Exchange program is open to high school students, or those who have just graduated. Students must be between the ages of 15 and 18 ½ on departure. Students younger than 16 or older than 18 ½ will have a narrower list of countries to which they can exchange due to age restrictions.

Students can choose to participate in our Long-Term or Short-Term/Summer Exchanges, as more fully described below.

Long-Term Exchange:

For a truly amazing, life-changing experience, there is nothing like the Long-Term Exchange. Students spend a school year in another country, becoming fluent in the language and immersed in the culture, and developing friendships that will last a lifetime.

Participants attend high school, and may or may not get credit back home for courses taken (but colleges often recognize the value of exchange programs with credit for language ability and greater

acceptance rates!). Each student will have two (or more) host families through the year to broaden the experience and see the variations that exist in all cultures.

It takes a very special teen to consider himself or herself capable of spending a year abroad, but the rewards and experiences are unlike anything you may ever know again. If you think you can do this, don't let the opportunity pass you by.

Short-Term/Summer Exchange*:

Rotary's Short Term Exchange program usually takes place during the summer and brings together paired families from different countries. Typically, you would spend 3-4 weeks overseas with a family that has a son or daughter of approximately the same age. And then, you and your new host sibling would come back to the US for a similar period of time with your family. The Short-Term Program does not generally include school attendance, but instead provides its educational experiences through exposure to a new language and culture. For younger students, or perhaps those wanting to sample the experience before committing to the Long-Term Exchange, Rotary's Short Term Exchange program can be ideal.

**Unfortunately, due to the after-effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, we will not be having a short-term exchange for the 2022 year.*

Cost & Value of the Program

Our district's program is priced on a flat fee basis, regardless of the exchange country, and the cost is approximately half of what other programs charge. Further, we consider our Program a scholarship program because, in addition to the amazing opportunities and experiences you will live while on exchange, you receive free room and board, a monthly stipend when on Long Term Exchange, and many free opportunities for travel and cultural experiences while on exchange (though some organized optional tours require payment). Also, most of our returning students are able to save thousands of dollars in college credits for language courses.

The Long-Term Exchange flat fee is **\$10,229** (discounts for early prepayment are available). This fee includes airfare, visa and travel assistance through our partner, It's Your World Travel, extensive insurance coverage, application fees, interview fees, three orientations (including a weekend-long getaway orientation with meals, accommodations, and fun activities included), a Rotary blazer, nametags, trading pins, and RYE apparel. While on a Long-Term Exchange, students also receive a monthly stipend from their hosting Rotary Club. The stipends are usually around \$150 - \$200, which amounts to a credit back to the student of about \$1,500 - \$2,000.

In the past, the Short-Term Exchange flat fee was **\$1,800** (discounts for early prepayment are available). This fee includes extensive insurance coverage, application fees, interview fees, and three orientations (including a weekend-long getaway orientation with meals, accommodations, and fun activities included). The students and families are responsible for arranging their own travel and, in most cases, visas are not required.

*** Program fees are evaluated and set each year, taking into consideration underlying costs (e.g., airline fees, visas, training fees, etc.).*

Of course, should you decide at any time in the preparation process that RYE is not for you or if life gets in the way and you have to exit the program, we have a generous and extremely fair refund policy.

Other Information and Deadline to Apply:

You can find answers to most of your questions by going to the South Central Rotary Youth Exchange ("SCRYE") website at www.scrye.org. Check out the FAQs under the "Future Student Info" tab. If you decide that you are ready to become a RYE student, please complete your application for either the Long-Term Exchange or the Short-Term Exchange and mail it to the following address by **September 15, 2021**:

Lilia Marek
595 S. Castell
New Braunfels, Texas 78130

The application form is available at www.scrye.org. ***Please be sure to have your application typed (not hand-written) and complete, or it may be rejected.***

Once your application is submitted, please plan to attend the mandatory Interviews/Orientation held by our District Committee on **October 16, 2021** in Boerne, Texas. You will get more details about the Interviews after we receive your completed application.

If you have any questions that cannot be answered by the information on the SCRYE website www.scrye.org, please do not hesitate to contact either one of us by calling or emailing us at:

Britt Etheredge
Cell: 830-708-8907
Email: britt.etheredge@caliberhomeloans.com

Lilia Marek
Cell: 830-643-9981
Email: lmarek@rougeuxpllc.com

We are excited to receive your application and look forward to meeting you in person.

Very truly yours,

Britt Etheredge and Lilia S. Marek
Co-Chairs for RYE District 5840