

“RYPEN Through the Eyes of a Purple Shirt”.

As a young person, I've been lucky enough to experience many of the great youth programs that Rotary has to offer and recently I was so fortunate as to spend a weekend with some of the most promising young people in our district at this year's Rotary Youth Program of Enrichment (RYPEN).

This weekend is an action packed, intensive and incredible experience for young people aged 14-16 and as a Purple Shirt, it's truly rewarding to see the incredible transformation of the attendees from somewhat cautious on arrival Friday morning, to not wanting to leave on Sunday afternoon. The mixture of physical activities, icebreakers and motivational speakers is such a different camp experience to what any of them have previously encountered and one that will hopefully be a fond memory for them in the future. Certainly the constant request for them to be able to come back is a sure sign we're doing something right!

I personally was a member of the Yellow team (read: best team) and it was great to have the time to get to know my team members and discuss with them issues they feel are important in their life, and most importantly, have a lot of fun! It was great to see their enthusiasm to take on whatever was thrown at them over the weekend and be so receptive to all aspects of the camp, particularly the 'call in song' which is truly a sight to see on Sunday afternoon!

As for my fellow Purple Shirts, I couldn't ask for more wonderful people to be involved in such a weekend. Camps like this don't just happen and in the lead up so many wonderful ideas were raised in order to ensure that every year RYPEN only gets better. Our chairpersons and secretary do such amazing work behind the scenes in order to make sure the camp runs as smoothly as possible. As for the weekend itself, despite the Purple Shirts running on very little sleep, no job was left undone, everyone pitched in when/if needed without asking and the incredible way they were able to interact and engage with the awardees was unbelievable. These guys are truly wonderful and a credit to themselves and to Rotary.

All in all it is such a great camp, one that deserves the continuing support of the district as it is such a brilliant way to encourage young people in themselves and in Rotary and hopefully encourage participation in other Rotary youth programs in the future.

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