

RYLA

Rotary Youth Leadership Awards

RYLA University 2026

Rotaract  Club of
Leadership & Service

for

Districts 7475 & 7490

**Handbook, Guide & Forms
for Participant & Parent/Guardian**

Hello!

Congratulations on being selected as a Rotary Youth Leadership Awards scholarship recipient! As a 2026 RYLAteer, you are joining a long legacy of RYLA University participants that are top-quality, high-value people who go out and make a positive impact on the world!

Please review the information in this Handbook and Guide closely. In it, you will find essential information about the mission and vision of RYLA University as well as program rules, a recommended packing list and important documents to fill out in order to finalize your enrollment in the program.

This year's program begins the morning of Monday, June 29th and concludes at 5 PM on Thursday July 2. The program will be held at Drew University, 36 Madison Avenue, Madison NJ 07940.

Drop off and sign in are from 9:00 AM to 10:00 AM on June 29. We ask that participants with last names starting with A-M arrive from 9:00 to 9:30 and N-Z from 9:30 to 10:00. During this time, participants will arrive, check in and participate in pre-program activities. Detailed drop off instructions will be emailed at a later date.

Participants are required to remain on program premises for the duration of the program. Late arrivals to and early departures from the program are prohibited. Emergencies that require departure from the program will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

Visitors are not allowed (drive-bys to drop off items for participants are also not allowed). Parents/guardians are invited to Closing Ceremonies which begin at 3:30 PM on Thursday, July 2. Parking instructions (and pick up instructions for those not attending Closing Ceremonies) will be emailed at a later date. Participants' parents/guardians or an authorized Rotarian who has completed Rotary's Youth Protection training may pick up participants.

Meals will be provided, starting with lunch on Monday through lunch on Thursday.

The Rotaract Club of Leadership & Service is truly looking forward to a historic program this year. We look forward to welcoming you in just a few days!

David Z. Edelstein

Program Director

President, The Rotaract Club of Leadership & Service

General Program Information & Background

❖ What is RYLA?

The Rotary Youth Leadership Awards (RYLA) is an intensive leadership experience organized by Rotary clubs and districts where participants are presented with opportunities to develop their personal, team, community and global leadership skills while having fun and making connections.

❖ What are the benefits?

At RYLA, participants:

- Connect with leaders in their community
- Build communication and problem-solving skills
- Discover strategies for becoming a dynamic leader in their schools and communities
- Learn from community leaders, inspirational speakers and peer mentors
- Unlock their potential to turn motivation into action
- Have fun and form lasting friendships

❖ Background

- Current high school students finishing their junior year of high school are eligible to attend.
- Participants must not turn 18 years of age before July 3, 2026
- Participants are sponsored by local Rotary clubs and are selected from students enrolled and in good standing in public schools, private schools, charter schools and home schools in the Rotary club's designated geographic area

❖ The RYLA program consists of Leadership Training via:

- Outstanding speakers
- Experiential activities
- Discussion groups
- Service projects
- Friendships with peers that will last a lifetime

❖ Talent Show

- RYLA University will host a talent show as an activity during the program. Participants are welcome to bring instruments and other items to use as part of the talent show.

❖ Closing Ceremonies

- Closing Ceremonies will take place from 3:30 PM to 5:00 PM at Drew University. Instructions for parking will be sent via email before the Program begins. Pick up instructions for those not attending Closing Ceremonies will also be emailed at a later date, It will be imperative that all participants and guests depart the camp facility on time, as the RYLA program must quickly vacate the premises.

❖ Camp Rules

- Participants are prohibited from driving themselves to the program for any reason. This is for safety considerations and in keeping with RYLA, Rotary and Drew University policies. Participants may be dropped off and picked up by parents/guardians or an authorized Rotarian who has completed Rotary's Youth Protection certification.
- Participants are required to remain on program premises for the duration of the RYLA program. Late arrivals to and early departures from the program are prohibited. Emergencies that require departure from the program will be handled on a case-by-case basis.
- Visitors are not allowed, except for during Closing Ceremonies.
- Drive-bys to drop off items are not allowed.
- Cell phones and other electronic devices are allowed; however, RYLA encourages participants to limit the use of such technologies during the program. The use of phones does have its place during the program (for example to share contact information with other leaders and engage in activities designed to teach how to use technology to create service projects), but there are also times and activities where the use of technology is strongly discouraged in order to enhance the in-person experience.
- Bullying and/or violence of any kind are unacceptable and will not be tolerated.
- Failure to comply with program rules may result in dismissal. Although this has not happened to our knowledge at any previous RYLA University program, any student that presents a disruption to the program or presents a risk to other participants, staff or volunteers will result in the parent/guardian being asked to pick up their participant immediately.

Forms to Complete

There are 3 forms that must be filled out to complete the registration process:

1. Participant Information (online form)
2. Statement of Participants Health (online form)
3. Participant Authorization Form (printed form)

The **Participant Information** and **Statement of Participant's Health** forms are to be completed online by the Participant and Parent or Guardian. The forms are accessed at: www.rylauniversity.com/forms or through the website at members.njrotary.org/sitepage/ryla.

If you have any issues or questions with the online forms, please email WeAreServantLeaders@gmail.com

The **Participant Authorization Form** is included in this Handbook, or it can be downloaded at members.njrotary.org/sitepage/ryla. The form has 2 pages and 3 sections: 1) Release, Waiver, and Indemnity; 2) Health Care; 3) Photo and Video Release. Each section must be signed and dated by the Parent or Guardian.

This form should be mailed to:

Bob Law, RYLA Registrar, 32 Cobblewood Road, Blairstown NJ 07825
or scanned and emailed to bob.law.7475@gmail.com

Also included in this Handbook is an **Epinephrine Auto - Injector Authorization Form** for those that require it. This form should also be mailed or emailed to Bob Law at the above address. The form can also be downloaded at members.njrotary.org/sitepage/ryla.

The deadline for submission of all forms is **May 31, 2026**. Participant's eligibility to attend the program is not guaranteed if forms are submitted after May 31.

Participant's Packing List

The RYLA program includes many activities that require movement and are both indoors and outdoors. We recommend packing school-appropriate, comfortable clothing and preparing for various weather conditions. It may be hot and sunny and/or cool and raining. The temperature and conditions may vary from day to night, day to day, inside to outside.

There are no laundry facilities on the premises, so please pack enough to last you the duration of the four-day program!

Recommended packing items:

- Reusable water bottle
- Pillow, sleeping bag or twin-sized bed sheets and blanket
- Bath towels
- Flashlight
- Laundry bag
- Personal hygiene/toiletry items (toothbrush, toothpaste, shampoo, deodorant, hair dryer, etc.)
- Flip flops (for wearing while showering)
- Comfortable closed-toe shoes
- Extra pairs of socks
- Hat
- Sunglasses
- Light jacket/sweater
- Comfortable clothing you can move in (think: running, jumping, sitting) for 4 days
- Bug repellent, sunscreen
- Phone charger
- Small bag/backpack
- Medications listed on your **Statement of Participant's Health Form**. There will be no sharing of any medications.
- Face masks, if desired
- Any specific snacks you might prefer during the program (please no peanut-containing items, as some participants have severe allergies). We will provide meals from lunch on Thursday through lunch on Sunday and other snacks as well, but if you have a specific snack you enjoy, bring it! Please be mindful of other participants' potential allergies.
- Personal valuables (electronics, jewelry, watches, etc.) and cash of high value are discouraged.

Participants and their parents/guardians acknowledge and accept that valuables, instruments, and/or other items brought to the facility are the sole responsibility of the participants and that damage to and/or loss of personal items are not the responsibility of the RYLA program, RYLA University, The Rotaract Club of Leadership & Service, Rotary Districts 7475 & 7490, Program Staff or any other parties related to the program and/or the facility.

Prohibited Items

- All tobacco products and paraphernalia
 - This includes vaping devices, e-cigarettes, etc.
- All drugs, unless prescribed to the participant and identified on the Statement of Participant Health Form
- Alcohol
- Guns, knives and other items that may be used as weapons
- Fireworks
- Inappropriate, revealing or offensive clothing (remember: school appropriate)

***By participating in the program, participants and their parents/guardians understand and agree that the Program and Drew University have full permission to search a participant's belongings at any time if it is suspected there may be a prohibited item present.**

Emergency Communication

David Edelstein, Program Director: (201) 528-5241

Bob Law, RYLA Registrar: (862) 432-7096

Jim Boyer, Advisor: (201) 206-3117

In an emergency dial 911 if you are at Drew University

RYLA University 2026 for Districts 7475 & 7490
June 29, 2026 – July 2, 2026
Drew University, Madison NJ

Participant Authorization Form – Page 1 of 2

Participant's Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Participant's Home Address: _____

Participant's Mailing Address: _____

Participant's Email Address: _____ Phone Number: _____

Parent/Guardian Name: _____ Relationship to Participant: _____

Parent/Guardian Home Address: _____

Parent/Guardian Mailing Address: _____

Parent/Guardian Email Address: _____ Phone Number: _____

In consideration of my child (as identified above and referred to herein and in other related documents as "Participant") being permitted to participate in the Rotary Youth Leadership Awards (RYLA) University 2026 for Districts 7475 & 7490 (hereafter referred to as "RYLA") to be held June 29, 2026 through July 2, 2026 at Drew University, Madison, NJ and all associated activities I have read, understand, agree to the terms and conditions and have executed this two (2) page Participant Authorization Form in the three (3) sections required below. I also agree that the personal, health history and medical information that I have entered for the Participant on the website at www.rylauniversity.com/forms is correct and accurately reflects the health information of the Participant and agree that that information is part of this document.

Section 1: Release, Waiver & Indemnity

I have read the RYLA Participant Handbook & Parent/Guardian Guide distributed to each Participant with their application. I understand that some activities in the program carry risk of physical injury and that the Participant will be encouraged to participate in those activities. I understand that these activities are a part of what has made the RYLA program so successful in the growth of young people and that the Participant has my approval to participate in all the activities of RYLA.

Participant, for himself or herself, his or her spouse, parents, legal representatives, heirs, and assigns, hereby releases, waives and discharges RYLA, Rotary International, Rotary Districts 7475 & 7490, The Rotaract Club of Leadership and Service, their officers and members, all promoters, sponsors, advertisers, owners, and lessees of the premises upon which RYLA is conducted, and each of them, their officers and employees (referred to hereinafter as "Releases") from all liability to Participant, Participant's spouse, parents, legal representatives, heirs, and assigns, for any and all loss or damage, and any claim or damages resulting therefrom, on account of injury to Participant's person or property, even injury resulting in the death of Participant, whether caused by the negligence of Releases or otherwise while Participant is participating in RYLA activities.

Participant and Parent or Guardian agrees to indemnify Releases and each of them from any loss, liability, damage, or cost they may incur due to the presence of Participant in or upon RYLA premises or activities, whether caused by the negligence of Releases or otherwise.

Participant and Parent or Guardian hereby assumes full responsibility for the risk of bodily injury, death, or property damage, due to the negligence of Releases or otherwise, while in or upon RYLA premises or activities, and while competing, officiating in, working, or for any purpose participating in RYLA activities.

Participant and Parent or Guardian expressly agree that this release, waiver, and indemnity agreement is intended to be as broad and inclusive as permitted by the laws of the State of New Jersey; and that if any portion hereof is held invalid, it is agreed that the balance shall, notwithstanding, continue in legal force and effect.

Signature of Custodial
Parent/Guardian _____ Date: _____

Section 2: Health Care

Medication Administration

The Policy of RYLA University 2026 for Districts 7475 & 7490 and its personnel is not to physically administer any medication to participants. Participants must be able to self-administer all of their medications.

Properly labeled medications will be stored at RYLA during the program in a secured space as required by New Jersey law. RYLA personnel will retrieve medications and supervise any participant self-administering medications and record this information in our medical log.

Special Needs

RYLA welcomes participants with special needs to our programs. Parents/guardians should discuss their participant’s abilities/limitations with our RYLA staff. While RYLA will make reasonable accommodation to include special needs participants in our program, we also understand that the physical activities which are an integral part of the program may not be suitable for every participant and RYLA reserves the right to ask that a participant not participate in that part of the program. This request insures a safe and enjoyable experience for the participant as well as the other participants in the program.

COVID-19 Policy

RYLA adheres to the most-current New Jersey Department of Health guidelines and requirements. Consistent with Rotary as an organization that encourages and uses vaccines, we suggest all participants involved in RYLA get vaccinated against the COVID-19 virus. RYLA will not require vaccination, though it is strongly recommended. RYLA will not require participants to test for the virus prior to attending RYLA, though it is strongly recommended.

RYLA respects everyone’s individual decision on whether to wear a mask at the program and ensure their comfortability in doing so. RYLA reserves the right to ask participants to test for COVID-19 and quarantine anyone who does test positive or contracts COVID-19 during the RYLA program. If someone is known to have the virus prior to the program starting, he or she will not be allowed to participate—this goes for both participants and volunteers. RYLA reserves the right to dismiss participants from the program if the program staff determine a participant’s health status is a risk to others at the program.

This policy is subject to change depending on the health requirements, guidelines, and suggestions of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and/or New Jersey Department of Health.

Parent/Guardian Authorization for Health Care:

This health and medical history provided by me for the Participant named above on the RYLA University 2026 for Districts 7475 & 7490 at www.rylauniversity.com/forms is correct and accurately reflects the health status of the Participant to whom it pertains. The Participant described has permission to participate in all camp activities except as noted by me on the website. I give permission to the physician selected by the camp to order x-rays, routine tests, and treatment related to the health of my child in an emergency situation. If I cannot be reached in an emergency, I give my permission to the physician to hospitalize, secure proper treatment for, and order injection, anesthesia, or surgery for this child. I understand the information on this form will be shared on a "need to know" basis with camp staff. I give permission to photocopy or scan this form. In addition, the camp has permission to obtain a copy of my child’s health record from providers who treat the Participant, and these providers may talk with the program’s staff about Participant’s health status.

Signature of Custodial Parent/Guardian _____ Date: _____

Section 3: Photo and Video Release

I hereby authorize RYLA to publish photographs or videos taken during RYLA University 2026 for Districts 7475 & 7490 of the Participant and/or myself, and our names and likenesses, for use in RYLA’s print, online and video-based marketing materials, as well as other RYLA publications.

I hereby release and hold harmless RYLA from any reasonable expectation of privacy or confidentiality for the Participant and/or myself associated with the images specified above. Further, I attest that I am the parent or legal guardian of the Participant and that I have full authority to consent and authorize RYLA to use their likenesses and names.

I further acknowledge that participation is voluntary and that neither I or the Participant will receive financial compensation of any type associated with the taking or publication of these photographs or videos or participation in RYLA marketing materials or other RYLA publications. I acknowledge and agree that publication of said photos confers no rights of ownership or royalties whatsoever.

I hereby release RYLA, its contractors, its employees and any third parties involved in the creation or publication of RYLA publications, from liability for any claims by me or Participant in connection with participation in the program.

Signature of Custodial Parent/Guardian _____ Date: _____

This form should be mailed to Bob Law, RYLA Registrar, 32 Cobblewood Road, Blairstown, NJ 07825 or scanned and emailed to bob.law.7475@gmail.com

Participation in the program will not be allowed unless this form is received signed in the three (3) places indicated by the Parent or Guardian.

RYLA University 2026 for Rotary Districts 7475 & 7490 at Drew University

June 29, 2026 – July 2, 2026 Only

Epinephrine Auto - Injector Authorization for Participant at Risk for Anaphylaxis AUTHORIZATION TO SELF-CARRY

NAME: _____ DOB: _____

Allergies that could cause Anaphylaxis: _____

Anaphylaxis is a life-threatening, acute systemic (whole body) type of allergic reaction. It occurs when a person has become sensitized to a certain substance or allergen. It is a **MEDICAL EMERGENCY**.

Symptoms can include, but are not limited to:

- | | |
|---|-------------------------|
| -uneasiness and agitation | -dizziness |
| -facial flushing | -throbbing in ears |
| -rapid pulse, weak pulse, or unattainable pulse | -difficulty breathing |
| -swelling of face, lips, tongue, eyelids, or throat | -nausea and/or vomiting |
| -unresponsiveness due to decreased BP | -coughing or wheezing |

If participant is having an allergic reaction AND is symptomatic:

1. Stay with camper. Call 911. Initiate emergency protocol.
2. If any throat, heart, respiratory or central nervous system symptoms are present: Administer one of the following Epinephrine Auto-Injectors per device instructions:

- Epinephrine Injection** Auto-Injector
Adult 0.3mg
- Epinephrine Injection** Auto-Injector
Pediatric 0.15mg

If participant is having an allergic reaction with NO respiratory distress, administer:

- Diphenhydramine** (Benedryl)
50mg tablet or liquid PO immediately
- Diphenhydramine** (Benedryl)
25mg tablet or liquid PO immediately

Do not give anything by mouth if unconscious or unable to swallow

Physician Signature Date

Parent/Guardian Signature Date

Physician's Stamp

Authorization to Self-Carry

The participant named above has been instructed in the proper use of the Epinephrine Auto-Injector. We request that he/she be permitted to carry the Epinephrine Auto-Injector on his/her person. He/she has been instructed and understands the purpose and the appropriate method and time to self-administer the Epinephrine Auto-Injector.

Physician Date

Parent/Guardian Date

Ready to Rise! Ready to Rock! Ready to RYLA!

Rotaract Club of Leadership & Service President David Edelstein attended RYLA in 2014 as a representative from Paramus High School and the Paramus Rotary Club.

David's first involvement with Rotary was as a PHS student, volunteering at the annual Rotary Pasta Dinner held at the school. As a high school junior, David received the Certificate of Global Peace & Multicultural Understanding from the Paramus Rotary Club in recognition of his contest-winning poem on the topic of Multicultural Diversity. He was also a four-year scholarship recipient from the Paramus Rotary Club.



David describes RYLA as a program that had immediate impact and lasting influence on who he is and, consequently, his entire life. While at RYLA in 2014, David learned lessons of personal, team, community and global leadership, teamwork and service. He immediately began putting these lessons to practice in his home, school and extracurricular life (including a heavy influence on a 10,000-word thesis he wrote as part of his black belt testing for Isshin-Ryu karate, titled "The Power of Words.")

David reunited with RYLA in 2016, returning as a program organizer and leader. In 2018, 2023, 2024 and 2025, David visited RYLA 5330 in California to observe and share RYLA mindsets and strategies. David has connected with RYLAs across the US and internationally, including Districts 6980 and 6930 in Florida, 7150 and 7170 in central New York and 7910 in central Massachusetts. David has been a guest speaker for RYLA Hawaii, RYLA New Mexico and RYLA Southern California. During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-2021, David helped create and lead an interactive online RYLA program (RYLAUniversity.com) for Districts 5020 and 5030 in Washington State and western Canada, and District 5650 in Nebraska. David was named a Paul Harris Fellow in 2023. He was a Team Development and Program Strategist for RYLA 6820 in Mississippi for which he received the District Service Award in 2024.

David graduated Summa Cum Laude with University Honors from the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University with a Bachelor of Science in Broadcast & Digital Journalism. David served as Vice President of the Rotaract Club of Syracuse University in its first full year of existence. He is a founding member and current President of the Rotaract Club of Leadership & Service in District 7490.

Please feel free to reach out to David for any RYLA-related questions, comments, assistance, ideas, information, stories, etc. You may email him at: WeAreServantLeaders@gmail.com or call/text him at (201) 528-5241.