



ROTARY INTERNATIONAL DISTRICT 7170 YOUTH EXCHANGE PROGRAM

To the Host Parents,

Congratulations! You are about to become a new parent, probably not for the first time, but this time your new child will already be a teenager upon arrival, may not speak English fluently, and will certainly have cultural traits that are different from yours.

By agreeing to be a host family for a Rotary Exchange student, you have agreed to: assume parental responsibility for this young person; provide shelter and sustenance; offer guidance and counsel; and give love and emotional support to the child of strangers who may live thousands of miles from you.

But we do not ask you to do this all on your own - Rotarians in your local community as well as those of us who serve on the District Youth Exchange Committee will do all we can to make this exchange a success. We provide you with the information you need, through our Host Family Orientation meetings and this Information Booklet. We meet with and provide orientation training to the Exchange students upon their arrival. And we will, throughout the exchange period, be in contact with both you and the student to answer questions, address concerns, and resolve problems.

All too soon, it will be time for your student to move on to the next host family or return home at the end of the exchange year. Many of the host parents who preceded you do not say "good-bye" when that time comes, but instead say "fair well, until we meet again", with the full intention that this new member of the family will indeed be met again. We hope you experience those feelings, and will do all we can to have that happen.

This Information Booklet provides the information you will need to be a successful Host Family; please refer to it often.

In Youth Exchange Service,

The District Youth Exchange Committee

Rotary International
YOUTH EXCHANGE
District 7170



INBOUND PROGRAM

Information Booklet
For Host Parents

www.rotary-youth-exchange.com

ROTARY YOUTH EXCHANGE OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAM

- X **To further international goodwill and understanding** by enabling students to study first hand some of the problems and accomplishments of people in lands other than their own.
- X **To enable students to advance their education** by studying for a year in an environment entirely different from their own, and undertaking the study of courses and subjects not normally available to them in their own country.
- X **To give students opportunities to broaden their outlook** by learning to live with and meet people of different cultures, creeds, and colors and by having to cope with day-to-day problems in an environment completely different from the one they have experienced at home.
- X **To have students act as ambassadors** for their own country by addressing Rotary clubs, community organizations and youth groups in their host country; by imparting as much knowledge as they can of their own country, its attributes and its problems to the people they meet during their year abroad.
- X **To provide sufficient time to study and observe another country's culture** so that upon returning home students can pass on the knowledge they have gained by addressing Rotary clubs and other organizations and assimilate the positive aspects into their everyday living.

THE ROTARY SUPPORT SYSTEM

What is Youth Exchange?

Rotary Youth Exchange is a country-to-country exchange of high-school age young people, between the ages of 15 to 18 years old at the time of arrival in the hosting country, for a cultural and educational experience for both the student and those serving as hosts. The duration of the exchange is 10-12 months, and generally follows our school year, with most students arriving in August. Some southern hemisphere students arrive in January.

What is Rotary?

Rotary International, as the sponsoring organization of this program, is an international volunteer service organization comprised of Rotarians around the world dedicated to improving their community, both locally and world-wide, through service to others. A more comprehensive description of Rotary and its structure can be found in *What is Rotary?* Visit www.rotary.org and www.rotarydistrict7170.org However, one term found throughout this Book warrants explanation here: “**District**” is the geographic organization of a number of local Rotary clubs for purposes of governance and support. We are **Rotary International District 7170**, consisting of 45 Rotary clubs representing much of Central New York.

Role of the Rotary District - The District Youth Exchange Committee

Rotary Youth Exchange is, more specifically, an exchange of students between two Rotary Districts in different countries. District 7170 currently conducts exchanges with more than 20 other districts in countries around the world, involving the exchange of 90 students each year. Conduct and administration of the Exchange Program is the responsibility of each participating Rotary district under the authority of the respective **District Governor**, a Rotarian elected for a one-year term to provide leadership to the clubs and Rotarians in that district. All Rotary districts participating in the Youth Exchange Program agree to comply with Rotary International guidelines, but retain autonomy in conduct of the program. This responsibility is delegated in District 7170 to the **District Youth Exchange Committee** (or **YEC**).

For example, the selection, screening and preparation of “outbound” exchange student candidates is the responsibility of each sending or “**sponsoring**” Rotary district, although a uniform application form has been developed for this purpose by Rotary International. On the other hand, once our District YEC has agreed to **host** an inbound exchange student, and one of our 45 Rotary clubs has agreed to support and supervise that student, that student agrees to comply with **this** district’s rules, regulations, and guidelines as a condition of the exchange.

To assure a complete understanding of those conditions, the District 7170 YEC provides a comprehensive orientation to all inbound students shortly after their arrival. Even before the student’s arrival, a member of the District YEC, referred to as the “**Country Contact**”, (who also is the student’s **district counselor**), establishes and maintains communications with his or her counterpart in the exchanging district, the inbound student both before arrival and during their year here, and the outbound students we are sending to that District.

The country contact/district counselor for the student you are hosting is a valuable resource for both you and the exchange student, and is familiar with the conduct of the exchange program, both here and in the country

your student is from. Please call this member of the District YEC, or any others on the committee, any time you have a question or need help with a problem. Names, addresses, and telephone numbers for all members of the District YEC are listed on *the **District 7170 Flow Chart*** that is included in the “Traveling Folder” you will receive when your exchange student arrives in your home. Also included in this folder will be the student’s passport and DS 2019 (stapled to the passport), return airplane ticket, a copy of the student’s application and insurance card, an insurance claim form, and a *Medical Authorization* letter.

The Hosting Rotary Club’s Role

The local Rotary club provides another level of support to you, the student, and the exchange program. Most Rotary clubs will identify an individual Rotarian as the **Youth Exchange Officer** (or **YEO**) to administer the club’s exchange program, including recruiting outbound candidates and host families. This person, or perhaps another member of the Rotary club, will be designated as the inbound exchange student’s **club counselor** for the duration of the exchange. The **club counselor** serves primarily as an advisor and advocate for the student, but should certainly also be in contact with the host family on a regular basis, and is available to answer questions or direct host parents to the appropriate resource when needed. The **youth exchange officer** will also provide an orientation program for you and for the other host families before the student arrives.

The hosting Rotary club has or will make the arrangements for enrolling the exchange student in your community’s high school or a private school shortly after he or she arrives. The YEO or club counselor will assist the student in selecting a course of study that should be neither overly-challenging nor boring for the student. As a host parent, you should discuss schoolwork with the student, teachers, and school officials if academic or social problems are becoming apparent.

The hosting club provides another form of support to the exchange student in the form of a **spending allowance**. Each month the Rotary club will provide a stipend (\$50-70) directly to the student, to be used for incidental personal expenses, entertainment, school supplies, etc. Through the Rotary-provided allowance and parental resources, exchange students are expected to be **financially self-supporting** in terms of personal expenses, clothing, entertainment, and travel (when not part of a host family event). In addition, District 7170 requires all inbound students to deposit with the hosting club a **\$300 emergency fund** that can be accessed by the club to pay for extraordinary expenses when the student is not able to do so. Please discuss any financial concerns with the Rotary club representatives.

The hosting club will regularly invite the exchange student to attend Rotary meetings and other Rotary events. While students are encouraged to attend Rotary meetings and other events as often as possible, only attendance at the Inbound Orientations and the Rotary District Conference are mandatory for the student. Interference with host family activities from, or transportation to/from, Rotary events (including student “weekends”) should not impose a burden on the host family, and the YEO/Club Counselor should be advised before this might occur.

District + Club = Rotary Support

This team of the youth exchange committee, **country contact**, the local Rotary club **youth exchange officer**, and **club counselor** are here to help the exchange student and host family have a successful exchange experience. They are available to you, 24 hours a day, to provide you with assistance on any matters of concern. We strongly urge you to seek our involvement before problems become too large for simple solutions.

THE EXCHANGE STUDENT'S ROLE

Above all else, we expect the inbound students to be *involved*: involved in your family, involved in school, involved in the community in which you live, and involved in Rotary. To do this successfully, most exchange students must do two things: **learn to communicate in English, and learn to adapt**.

Learning English

Nearly all students arrive with some understanding of the English language, and most can speak and understand our language well, having studied English for several years in school. But for most, considerable effort will be needed on their part to understand the English we *speak*, which is often different than the English they were *taught* in school. Practice, by engaging in real conversation, reading, and writing our language are necessary to develop true proficiency. You can help by asking questions that require more than “yes” or “no” answers, having patience when communications are not clear, and consciously speaking slowly and clearly, with frequent checks for understanding.

Learning to Adapt

Learning to adapt means, for most students, being willing to try new things, do things differently, recognize the cultural basis for the environment they are used to, and accepting that our cultural differences are neither “better or worse”, simply “different”.

Comply with our Rules

All inbound exchange students, and their parents, agreed to comply with the rules, regulations, and guidelines that are part of the Rotary Youth Exchange application. These are common sense conditions that are intended to insure the student's safety, comply with the standards of the international organizations monitoring exchange programs, and assure that their conduct does not impose a burden on the families who open their homes to these students -- you host parents. ***The Program Rules & Conditions of Exchange*** is located in the Appendix of this handbook for your information. A summary of the more important rules are listed below:

1. **Driving:** Exchange students are **not** permitted to operate motor vehicles, including motorcycles, boats, or any other powered device requiring an operators license as a condition of the medical and accident insurance. They are not allowed to enroll in Driver's Education classes.
2. **Drinking and Drugs:** We expect all exchange students to comply with NYS laws, including those applying to possession and consumption of alcoholic beverages and controlled substances.
3. **Smoking:** Beginning January 1, 2006, District 7170 no longer accepts students into the program who smoke.
4. **School Attendance:** This is an educational exchange, and students are **required to attend school regularly**, and maintain satisfactory class work, such as turning in homework. On the other hand, the program's objective is not to provide a high school diploma to these students, and each school agreeing to enroll exchange students will determine what, if any, certification will be provided for classes taken. As the host parent, you are responsible for determining the appropriateness of any school **absence requested by the student**, as you would for your own children. You should know,

and comply with, the attendance requirements (and absence notification requirements) for the school your student is attending. The Appendix in this handbook contains the District 7170 **Academic/Extracurricular/Athletic Policy** which has been discussed with the students as well as the school administrators who provide educational opportunities to our exchange students. If you have any questions on this policy, please speak with your student's **country contact** or **club counselor**.

5. **Travel:** Travel for the exchange student as part of your family, or with school or church groups, is highly encouraged and will provide the student with opportunities to learn about our country. However, **independent travel, or travel without adult supervision** should be given the same level of parental consideration you would use with your own children of that age. Additionally, Rotarians at both the host club and district committee need to know where exchange students are in the event of an emergency. The **Travel Policy for District 7170 Inbound students** has been reviewed in detail with your exchange student, and **compliance with this policy is a condition of the exchange**. We ask that you be familiar with this policy, and enforce it with your student. *Please know that we will always support the host parents when you say "NO" to travel that YOU are not in agreement with.*
6. **Visits by the student's parents, family, and friends:** We strongly **discourage** any visitors from the student's home country during the first 7-8 months of the exchange year, and **specifically at any time that will interfere with school, or that will cause an inconvenience to the host family. Furthermore, visits by family or friends during the traditional Christmas-New Years and Easter holiday periods are expressly forbidden.** On the other hand, parental visits near the conclusion of the exchange year are great opportunities for the student to share their mastery of our language and knowledge of our culture, and introduce natural parents to all of the host families they've lived with. Any such visits planned by the student or his/her parents must be fully acceptable to you, the host parents, and must be discussed with both the club and District YE counselors **before** being finalized.
7. **Use of telephone and Internet:** Students who frequently communicate with either family and friends "back home" by telephone or e-mail often delay their own adjustments and adaptation to the exchange, and extend, instead of minimize, the feelings of homesickness. In addition, they often do not recognize the cost of lengthy, international telephone calls until the phone bill arrives. **Occasional** (perhaps every three or four weeks) telephone calls to or from home, plus calls on special occasions, should be sufficient voice contact when combined with "newsy" letters the student mails home that will likely be cherished and reread by his or her parents long after the letters arrive. While technology developments have allowed e-mail to somewhat replace posted mail, this can impose a burden, or at least an inconvenience, on the host family, and **you should establish a clear understanding with your student on what is acceptable to you.** Of course, the student is responsible for any costs incurred for telephone or Internet charges, and host parents should decide, in advance, how the student will pay for such usage when it is permitted.

THE HOST FAMILY'S ROLE

The operative word here is *Family*, and we ask you to help your exchange student become a part of your family during the 3-4 month period that he or she lives with you. That means treating this young person as you would your own son or daughter, not as a guest, and exercising all of the **parental responsibilities and authorities** you would for your own child. While many factors will influence to what extent you may need to focus on this role, such as your own experience as a host parent, ages of your own children, and whether you are the first, middle, or final host family for this student, here are some suggestions that previous host parents have provided to us:

- X **Establish a clear understanding of expectations** soon after your student arrives. Read together the ***First Night Questions*** (available at www.yeoresources.org in several languages) that we provide to both students and host parents that cover most of the topics that will help define those expectations. Cultural differences as well as personality differences often lead to misunderstandings unless these topics are discussed and clarified. Many students will use these questions as a “check-off list” to make sure nothing has been overlooked during the first few days; we suggest that host parents also review this list for any topics that are important to them.
- X Be prepared to help your student recover from **homesickness**. This can take many forms, from simply general sadness to wishing to stay in his or her room alone. It is perfectly normal for exchange students to have bad days and experience homesickness. If you are sensitive to this, you will be able to reassure your student that their reactions are perfectly normal. Help them to **keep busy and get involved**. These feelings will pass. If they have poured out their frustrations in a letter home, (often saying they want to return home immediately), suggest that they put it away for a couple days, re-read it, and only then mail it -- if it still applies. Most times the letter will be thrown out!
- X Encourage your student to **get involved**. School extracurricular activities, sports, community activities, church groups, and family activities may be new and unfamiliar to your student, and will likely be very “different” from those activities he or she was involved in back home. If you sense that your student is bored and reluctant to participate in available activities, it may simply be because no one has asked him or her to join something. Try to introduce the student to some people who will help overcome this reluctance.
- X **Understand “culture shock”, and help your student learn about our culture**. Read the article ***How To Cope With Culture Shock*** which may help you understand some of the feelings your student may experience as a result of the differences between our culture and the one he has known since birth.

OTHER INFORMATION NEEDED BY HOST PARENTS

INSURANCE

All inbound exchange students are required to carry a medical/accidental injury policy that meets our requirements, and most students have a policy issued by the American International Companies (AIG) through Joseph C. Bolduc & Associates (visit www.cisi-bolduc.com). The AIG claim form and proof-of-insurance card are provided to the student soon after arrival here, and should be stored in the Traveling Folder. For students holding a policy from their sponsoring Rotary district, claim forms and instructions should also be stored in the Traveling Folder. In addition, a ***Medical Authorization Letter***, signed by an officer of the Host Rotary club, should be provided to the Host Parents **before** the student moves into your home, authorizing you to seek medical treatment for the student while part of your household.

The cost of any medical treatment is the responsibility of the student and his/her natural parents; the insurance only provides for either payment or reimbursement of a portion of certain expenses (usually after a nominal deductible has been met). Students should have the financial ability to pay for any medical expenses at the time provided, and host families should not incur any costs in this regard.

However, as host parents, you are asked to make arrangements for medical treatment when necessary, as well as to determine when medical treatment is called for. Your student may be reluctant to discuss medical problems initially, and their own culture, or medical system at home, may be quite different than that which we have, so you may need to patiently ask questions and offer suggestions when you observe conditions that could be medically-based. Many Rotary clubs have arrangements with local medical-services providers (often a member of the Rotary club), and you should be apprised of these arrangements by the Rotary YEO or Club Counselor before a medical problem arises.

It is always advisable to inform the host Rotary club of any medical treatment or medical problems that have occurred so that information is made available to subsequent host families. Serious illnesses or injuries involving hospitalization (including emergency room) must be made known to the District Country Contact as soon as possible.

DISTRICT 7170 EXCHANGE STUDENT PROTECTION POLICY

Rotary International is committed to creating and maintaining the safest possible environment for all participants in Rotary activities. It is the duty of all Rotarians, Rotarians' spouses, partners, and other volunteers to safeguard to the best of their ability the welfare of and to prevent the physical, sexual, or emotional abuse of children and young people with whom they come into contact.

-Rotary International Code of Conduct for Working with Youth –

The following pages are excerpts from the District 7170 Exchange Student Protection Policy. These pages are specifically for our Host Parents, and are included here for your convenience. You may, at any time, request a copy of the entire Policy.

**District 7170 Youth Exchange Program
Exchange Student Protection Policy
Information for the Host Family**

District 7170 thanks you for hosting our Youth Exchange Student. We want you to have a rewarding experience, and wish to provide you with all the help we can give.

As explained in the first page, we have put in place a youth protection policy designed to help everyone involved in the program to assure the safety of the student. We are including here some information just for you, as host family.

The *District 7170 Youth Exchange Student Protection Policy Mission Statement* explains our commitment to the safety of the student.

We are providing a *District 7170 Flow Chart*, so that you and your exchange student know who to contact for help, and how to reach him/her.

The *Guidelines for Safeguarding the Welfare of Youth Exchange Students* provides information about different kinds of abuse, what to look for and what to do.

WHAT TO DO IF AN EXCHANGE STUDENT TELLS YOU ABOUT ABUSE

- Most importantly, listen attentively and let him/her know it was right to tell someone about his/her worries.
- Stay calm and make sure that the exchange student feels safe and knows that he/she is not to blame for inappropriate behavior by another person.
- Explain that you have to tell someone else about the abuse.
- Only ask questions that establish what was done and who did it. Do not jump to conclusions or promise to take a specific action until the situation is thoroughly investigated.
- Make detailed notes of what the student said and the date and time of your conversation.
- Contact the Host Rotary Club Counselor immediately.
- Don't worry that you may be making things worse by reporting your concerns. Few things are worse than allowing child abuse to continue.

With all of us working together, we can keep our exchange student safe and make this a meaningful and happy exchange experience for all of us.



ROTARY INTERNATIONAL

District 7170
Central New York State, USA
Youth Exchange Committee



YOUTH EXCHANGE STUDENT PROTECTION POLICY MISSION STATEMENT

Rotary International District 7170 Youth Exchange Program is committed to creating and maintaining the safest possible environment for all our Youth Exchange Students, both inbound and outbound.

We do this by:

Recognizing that all young people have the right to freedom from abuse.

Ensuring that all our staff and volunteers are carefully selected and accept responsibility for helping to prevent the abuse of children in their care.

Responding swiftly and appropriately to all suspicions or allegations of abuse, and by providing adults and young people with the opportunity to voice any concern they may have.

Appointing a District 7170 Exchange Student Protection Officer who will act as the main point of contact for parents, children, host families and outside agencies.

Ensuring that access to confidential information is restricted.

Reviewing the effectiveness of our **Exchange Student Protection Policy** and activities periodically.

Our Exchange Student Protection Officer is:

Name _____ Michele Hughes _____

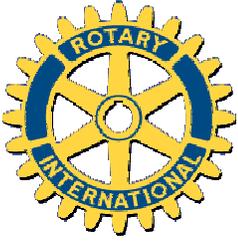
Address _____ 3 Copeland Street, Cortland, NY 13045 _____

Telephone Numbers

Home _____ 607-756-4739 _____

Work _____ 607-758-4118 _____

Cell _____ 607-345-0683 (husband's cell #) _____



ROTARY INTERNATIONAL

District 7170
Central New York State, USA
Youth Exchange Committee



GUIDELINES FOR SAFEGUARDING THE WELFARE OF YOUTH EXCHANGE STUDENTS

FORMS OF ABUSE

Sexual Abuse

Either boys or girls can be considered to be sexually abused if exposed to:

- sexual intercourse, masturbation, oral sex or fondling
- the viewing of pornographic books or videos
- taking part in the making of videos or pornographic photos.

What to look for:

- pain, itching, bruising or bleeding in genital area
 - stomach pains
 - discomfort when walking
 - unexplained sources of money
 - inappropriate drawings, language or behavior
 - aggressive or withdrawn behavior or fear of a particular person
 - reluctance to discuss changes in behavior or attitude
-

Physical abuse

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, squeezing, biting or burning. In certain situations, abuse may occur when the nature and intensity of training exceeds the capacity of the young person's body.

What to look for:

- unexplained or untreated injuries
 - injuries on unlikely parts of the body
 - cigarette burns, bite or belt marks, scalds
 - fear of host parents being contacted, going home or receiving medical advice
 - flinching when touched
 - reluctance to discuss injuries
 - covering arms or legs
-

Neglect

Where adults

- fail to meet a young person's basic physical needs, e.g. food, warmth and clothing
- constantly leave a young person alone or unsupervised
- fail or refuse to give a young person love, appropriate affection or attention

Neglect may also occur during organized activities if young people are placed in an unsafe environment, are exposed to extreme weather conditions or are at risk of being injured.

What to look for:

- poor personal hygiene
 - constantly hungry
 - inappropriate clothing or dress
 - constantly tired
 - lonely, no friends
 - noticeable loss of weight
 - disheveled appearance
-

Emotional abuse

This form of abuse includes:

- persistent lack of love or affection
- frequent shouting
- taunting
- over-protection which can lead to poor social skills

Emotional abuse may include situations where host parents, coaches or organizers subject young people to criticism, bullying or unrealistic pressure to perform to high expectations.

What to look for:

- over-reaction to mistakes
 - sudden speech disorders
 - extremes of emotions
 - self-mutilation
 - sudden weight loss or gain
-

WHAT TO DO IF AN EXCHANGE STUDENT TELLS YOU ABOUT ABUSE

- Most importantly, listen attentively and let him/her know it was right to tell someone about his/her worries.
- Stay calm and make sure that the exchange student feels safe and knows that he/she is not to blame for inappropriate behavior by others.
- Explain that you have to tell someone else about the abuse.
- Only ask questions that establish what was done and who did it. Do not jump to conclusions or promise to take a specific action until the situation is thoroughly investigated.
- Make detailed notes of what the student said and the date and time of your conversation.
- Contact the District 7170 Child Protection Officer immediately.
- Don't worry that you may be making things worse by reporting your concerns. Few things are worse than allowing child abuse to continue.

EXCHANGE STUDENT PROTECTION CODE FOR YOUTH EXCHANGE OFFICERS AND OTHER VOLUNTEERS

Do:

- treat all young people with respect and be aware of their reactions to your tone of voice and manner
- remember that it is okay to touch young people in a way that is not intrusive or disturbing to him/her or to observers.
- make sure that any allegations are recorded and acted upon, according to District 7170 Youth Protection Policy.

Do Not:

- engage in rough physical games including horseplay
- use physical force in any way, especially as a form of punishment
- touch a young person in an intrusive or sexual manner
- make sexually suggestive comments to a young person, even as a joke

Try to Avoid:

- spending too much time alone with a youth exchange student. Such situations may lead to misunderstandings.



ROTARY INTERNATIONAL

District 7170
Central New York State, USA
Youth Exchange Committee



EXCHANGE STUDENT PROTECTION CODE

DO:

- treat all young people with respect and be aware of their reactions to your tone of voice and manner
- remember that it is okay to touch young people in a way that is not intrusive or disturbing to him/her or to observers.
- make sure that any allegations or suspicions are recorded and acted upon.

DO NOT:

- engage in rough physical games including horseplay
- use physical force in any way, especially as a form of punishment
- touch a child in an intrusive or sexual manner
- make sexually suggestive comments to a student, even as a joke
- spend too much time alone with an exchange student. Such situations may lead to misunderstanding.

**District 7170 Youth Exchange Program
Exchange Student Protection Policy
Information for the Inbound Exchange Student**

Your safety is the first priority of all of us involved in the District 7170 Youth Exchange Program. We hope the following information will help you keep yourself safe. Please read carefully the **Guidelines for Safeguarding the Welfare of Youth Exchange Students.** This will help you understand some of the dangers concerning abuse, and what you can do to avoid them.

The **Important Information** form has important contact information, and should be carried at all times. Your Host Club Chairperson will see that you have the information and contact numbers that you need before you leave your home country. Please fill in the rest of the blanks and BE SURE to bring the form with you when you travel.

The **Exchange Student's Bill of Rights** should reassure you about trusting your own feelings. You know what feels right and wrong to you, and your Bill of Rights supports your right to protect yourself.

Your **Personal Safety Code** will help you know how to conduct yourself safely under certain circumstances.

District 7170 makes the following commitment to our Youth Exchange Students:

- We are committed to ensuring the safety of every student.
- We will take any allegations or reports of abuse of any kind seriously.
- Students should continue reporting their concerns until someone listens seriously.
- Physical force is never an appropriate form of discipline
- No student will be sent home because of an allegation of abuse, unless they wish it or their safety is in question.

In addition, please learn the Three "R's" of Youth Protection

- a. **Recognize** that anyone could be a child molester and be aware of situations that could lead to abuse.
- b. **Resist** advances made by child molesters to avoid being abused.
- c. **Report** any situation where you feel uncomfortable to host parents or other trusted adults.

You will be given a District 7170 Flow Chart. This will contain all the names and contact information of Youth Exchange officers from your Host Club Counselor to the District Chairperson. They are all ready to help you if you need them.

It is also important for you to have the name and contact information for your sponsoring Rotary District Counselor, and the sponsoring Rotary District Chairperson. Send monthly reports home to these contacts so that they can know how you are doing.

Before you leave home, set up a "secret message" with your parents to be used in an extreme emergency if you feel you cannot talk freely with them.

BEING THE FIRST HOST FAMILY

While being “first” often provides the greatest challenges for dealing with things like language difficulties and cultural differences, it also provides the opportunity to form a lasting emotional bond with the student. This can continue after the student moves on to subsequent host families, since he or she will remain part of your community for the balance of the exchange year.

When the time comes for the student to move on, be prepared for the emotions that come with separation and fear of something new, both for the student and you. It will help to make this transition go smoothly if the student has met the new family, perhaps first in your home, and then later for a visit in the next host family home, to provide opportunities to become familiar with the family and surroundings.

Once your student has moved, maintain contact without undermining the development of relationships with the next family. Inviting your student to share special family events, like birthdays, will reinforce the relationship you developed earlier, and will usually be welcomed by the current host family, just as you welcomed others’ invitations to the student when part of your family.

When it is finally time for your student to return home, he or she will be leaving not one but several **families** that he or she will consider “home” for the rest of his or her life.

BEING THE FINAL HOST FAMILY

Being the host family at the conclusion of the exchange year could involve dealing with many of the same emotions the student had upon arrival, but this time caused by the realization that the “familiar” is now *our* culture, and the “unknown” involves *returning home*. Understand that the exchange student **must** return directly home at the conclusion of the exchange year (generally within 10 days of high school graduation, or the conclusion of the Tour of the USA, if applicable) as a condition of the exchange program. **A sign of a successful exchange is the student’s reluctance to go home - we wouldn’t want it any other way.**

You may need to help your student prepare mentally for this departure, in addition to the many physical aids that will be needed. **Start by selecting an actual departure date** that everyone involved agrees with (including the student’s parents), and help the student make the necessary airlines reservations. (Although we require all students to have round-trip airlines tickets, some airlines can only book flights 6-9 months in advance, and most students must change the initial return date once they know graduation and Tour dates, etc.). As departure date approaches, help your student with packing and luggage, recognizing that much has been collected since arrival, and it may be necessary to ship some of the student’s possessions home to keep suitcases below the airlines’ quantity, size and weight limits.

Help the student wrap up any financial obligations with you and others, especially regarding long-distance telephone charges and medical bills. Use of a pre-purchased phone card, or having the student make final calls collect, will minimize phone charges appearing on your telephone bill after the student has departed. Discuss with the student and the Rotary Club Counselor the return of the student’s emergency fund balance.

Involve the prior host families, and the host Rotary club, in planning a farewell event before the student departs. Allow sufficient flexibility in your schedule during the final few days to provide your student with the opportunity to say goodbye to the many friends made during the past year. In many cases, these “good-byes” will be even harder for the student than those 11 or 12 months earlier, and your understanding and support will make this a happy time for everyone involved.

IF THERE ARE QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS.....

While there is no way we or you can guarantee that every exchange student and host parent will enjoy a completely successful exchange, we do our best to help them, and you, and the percentage of “unsuccessful” exchanges is very small. Most problems that do occur can be taken care of satisfactorily if addressed early, before they become too big to handle.

IF YOU DO HAVE A CONCERN, AND NEED TO DISCUSS SOMETHING, please first contact the local Rotary club youth exchange officer or the student’s club counselor. If he or she is not available, or the matter has not been resolved satisfactorily, please contact the District YEC country contact or any other member of the District Committee. Refer to the *District 7170 Flow Chart* included in the student’s traveling folder.

Please do not dismiss non-compliance with our rules as a “cultural thing”, or try to solve major problems yourself. Because this is an international program, there may be cultural and/or Rotary subtleties of which you are unaware, and there may also be long-range implications affecting future exchanges. Please call and give us the opportunity to show you that we are as concerned about the exchange student as you are. We can't help you or the student, if we don't know that there is a problem.

Finally, while much of this booklet addresses rules, regulations, and “dealing with problems”, we want you to know that being a host parent is also a lot of fun and is full of rewards. You will get to know, and love, someone from another country, another culture, and another part of the world. You will have the opportunity to watch, and help shape, the development and maturity of a young person. You will have opportunities to learn of another culture yourself, and in the process of sharing our culture and our country with this student, gain knowledge and understanding for you and your family. And at the end of the exchange, you will have added to your family a son or daughter who may live in a “foreign” country the rest of their life, but will always be a part of **your** family.

APPENDIX

For Host Parents

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What is Rotary?

The History of Rotary

Rotary was started on February 23, 1905 in Chicago, Illinois, the world's first and most international service club. The founder of Rotary was attorney Paul P. Harris (1868-1947), who gathered with three others to discuss his idea of a group of businessmen from different professions getting together periodically to become better acquainted. They decided to limit membership to one representative of each profession and to rotate the meeting site among each member's place of business, to acquaint each other with their various vocations and to promote business. The rotation of meeting places is the source of the name "Rotary."

Club membership grew rapidly. The second Rotary Club was founded in San Francisco in 1908. When clubs were formed in Canada and Great Britain, in 1912, Rotary became an international organization.

Since 1905, the ideas of Paul Harris and his friends have become ideals which have been accepted by people of practically all nationalities, and of many political and religious beliefs. Today there are Rotary Clubs in Austria and American Samoa, in Brazil and Brunei, in Italy and India, in Scotland and South Africa - in some 170 countries. The universal acceptance of Rotary principles has been so great that there are now more than 28,000 Rotary clubs, with a membership of over 1.2 million men and women.

Rotary Motto and Themes

Rotary International has adopted as its motto, "*Service Above Self*". A second theme of Rotary is "*He profits most who serves best.*" Additionally, each year, the Rotary International President coins a theme for that Rotary year.

Rotarians throughout the world quote the Four Way Test of the things we think, say or do:

1. Is it the TRUTH?
2. Is it FAIR to all concerned?
3. Will it build GOODWILL and BETTER FRIENDSHIPS?
4. Will it be BENEFICIAL to all concerned?

Rotary in Central New York

Each of the more than 28,500 Rotary clubs in the world is a member of Rotary International. Rotary is divided into 521 Districts, each of which is headed by a District Governor. We are District 7170 which consists of 45 clubs in Central New York. The first Rotary club in our part of the state, the Rotary Club of Binghamton, was organized in 1912, just seven years after Rotary began in Chicago.

Our District includes the Binghamton and Cortland area, and stretches from Trumansburg to Waverly, to Hancock, to Stamford.

The District Governor, and all officers of Rotary on the international, district or club level, serve for a Rotary fiscal year that runs from July 1 to June 30.

A number of district-level committees are organized to provide sponsorship or support for Rotary functions and initiatives that involve Rotarians from across our District. The Youth Exchange Committee, or YEC, is an example of a District Committee. Committee members represent a cross-section of the communities in District 7170, and perform many functions for the Youth Exchange Committee and our Inbound and Outbound Exchange Students, including the role of Country Contact, the point of contact with a representative of the Youth Exchange Committee in the approximately two dozen Districts and countries we exchange with.

The Rotary Foundation

In 1917, the Rotary Foundation was established. The Rotary Foundation is a philanthropic trust promoting further understanding and friendly relations between peoples of different nations. The Foundation sponsors the largest scholarship program in the world and is supported purely by voluntary contributions from Rotary Clubs and Rotarians.

The Rotary Foundation has eight working programs and a budget of approximately \$45-\$50 million (US) each year. These programs include Ambassadorial Scholarships, Rotary Volunteers, The 3H program (for Health, Hunger and Humanity), Rotary Peace Conferences, World Community Service, Special Grants, and two others that you may encounter during your exchange: Group Study Exchange, and Polio-Plus.

Group Study Exchange involves paired districts in different countries sending teams of 4 or 5 business or professional men and women for a 4- week period of study and discussion with their counterparts in the other country. Polio-Plus is Rotary's plan to eliminate polio from the world by the year 2005, Rotary's 100th birthday.

Rotary at the Local Level -- The Rotary Club

The "personality" of each Rotary club is a reflection of the community it serves and the membership of that club. Even within our own District, club size ranges from less than two dozen members to more than two hundred members, and while all Rotary clubs meet weekly, some meet for breakfast, some meet during lunch, while others meet for dinner. Some Rotary club meetings are quiet and "serious", keeping to a tight schedule so the members can return to work on time, while other club meetings are less formal and structured. Some Rotary clubs conduct much of their service project business during their weekly meetings, while others carry out most of this planning "outside" their regular meeting time. You will likely find that the Rotary club hosting you will be very different from the Rotary club sponsoring you, and both will be different from other Rotary clubs you may have the opportunity to visit during your exchange year. But Rotarians around the world all share the common philosophy of Service to Others, and as an exchange student, they are there to help you be a successful exchange student.

As with most organizations, Rotary clubs are lead by officers who are elected by the membership for one year terms, beginning on July 1, the beginning of the Rotary Year. The officers include the Club President, Secretary, Treasurer, Vice-President and/or President-Elect, and Directors. Rotary clubs participating in the Youth Exchange Program generally appoint a Youth Exchange Officer, or YEO, to oversee that program, and that Rotarian, or another member of the host Rotary club, will be designated as your Club Counselor.

Program Rules and Conditions of Exchange

As a Youth Exchange student sponsored by a Rotary club and/or district, you must agree to the following rules and conditions of exchange. Please note that host districts may edit this document or insert additional rules on the reverse side if needed to account for local conditions.

Strict Rules and Conditions of Exchange — Violations will result in student's immediate return home.

- 1) Obey the Laws of the Host Country — If found guilty of violation of any law, student can expect no assistance from their sponsors or their native country. Student will be returned home as soon as he/she is released by authorities.
- 2) The student is not allowed to possess or use illegal drugs. Medicine prescribed by a physician is allowed.
- 3) The student is not authorized to operate a motorized vehicle of any kind which requires a federal/state/provincial license or participate in driver education programs.
- 4) In respect to the consumption of alcohol, students must obey the laws of the host country. If they are below the legal drinking age, use of alcohol is forbidden and is immediately cause for early return. If they are above the legal age, students should refrain from drinking, honoring the spirit of the Rotary International Youth Exchange program.
- 5) Stealing is prohibited. There are no exceptions.
- 6) Unauthorized travel is not allowed. Students must follow the travel rules of the Host District.
- 7) The student must be covered by a health and life insurance policy agreeable to the Hosting District.
- 8) The student must attend school regularly and make an honest attempt to succeed.
- 9) The student must abide by the rules and conditions of exchange of the Hosting District provided to you by the District Youth Exchange Committee.

Common Sense Rules and Conditions of Exchange — Violations will result in a district review and restrictions. Severe/Consistent disregard for these rules will result in being returned home.

- 1) Smoking is NOT allowed.
- 2) Become an integral part of the Host Family, assuming duties and responsibilities normal for a student of your age and other children in the family. Respect your host's wishes.
- 3) Learn the language of your host country. The effort will be appreciated by teachers, host parents, Rotary club members and others you meet in the community. It will go a long way in your gaining acceptance in the community and those who will become lifelong friends.
- 4) Attend Rotary-sponsored events and host family events. Show an interest in host family and Rotary activities to which you are invited. Volunteer to get involved, do not wait to be asked. Lack of interest on your part is detrimental to your exchange and can have a negative impact on future exchanges.
- 5) Get involved in your school and community activities. Plan your recreation and spare time activities around your school and community friends. Do not spend all your time with the other exchange students.
- 6) Choose friends in the community carefully. Ask for and heed the advice of host families, counselors and school personnel in choosing friends.
- 7) Do not borrow money. Pay any bills you incur promptly. Ask permission to use the family telephone, keep track of long distance calls and reimburse your host family each month for the calls you make.
- 8) Travel is permitted with host parents or for Rotary club or district functions authorized by the hosting Rotary club or district with proper adult chaperones. Other travel must be approved by the host district **country contact**, host club, host family and student's own parents/legal guardians in writing exempting Rotary of responsibility and liability. Students may not travel alone or accompanied only by other students.
- 9) If you are offered an opportunity to go on a trip or to an event, make sure you understand any costs you must pay and your responsibilities before you go.
- 10) You must show proof of proper immunization.
- 11) Students should have sufficient financial support to assure their well-being during the exchange year. Your hosting district may require a contingency fund for emergency situations. It must be replenished by the student's parents/guardians as it is depleted. Unused funds at the end of the exchange will be returned to the student. These funds must be turned over to your Host Rotary Club upon your arrival and is not meant to cover day-today expenses.
- 12) Any costs relative to a student's early return home or any other unusual costs (e.g., language tutoring, tours, etc.) shall be the responsibility of the student's natural parents/guardians.
- 13) Students must return home directly by a route mutually agreeable to the host district and student's parents/guardians.
- 14) You will be under the Hosting District's authority while you are an exchange student. Parents/guardians must avoid authorizing any extra activities directly to their son/daughter. The Host Club and District Youth Exchange Officers must authorize such activities. If the student has relatives in the host country or region, they will have no authority over the student while the student is in the program.
- 15) Visits by your parents/guardians, siblings and/or friends while you are in the program must be approved by the hosting district. Such visits may only take place with the host club and host district's consent and only within the last quarter of the exchange or during school breaks. Visits are not allowed during major holidays, even if occurring during school breaks.
- 16) Avoid serious romantic activity. Abstain from sexual activity and promiscuity.

ACADEMIC/EXTRACURRICULAR/ATHLETIC POLICY

PURPOSE:

- X To enable students to enhance their education by studying for a year in an environment entirely different from their own, and to study courses not normally available to them in secondary schools of their native country.
- X To provide educational experiences which promote student learning and to attain academic proficiency in a New York State (NYS) school.
- X To provide for participation in extracurricular activities that will enhance student growth and maturity.

Rotary District 7170 subscribes to the importance of Exchange students participating in extracurricular activities and on athletic teams as such enhances the student's ability to interact cooperatively with others both in and outside school. Such participation also helps students grow as individuals and as competitors.

This policy is based on discussions with local school staffs, the NYS Athletic Association, US State Dept. Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS) [formerly US Information Agency (USIA)], and the District 7170 Youth Exchange Committee, and is in concert with the policies and regulations of each. We encourage school administrators and staff to adopt all aspects of this policy in regard to Rotary District 7170 Exchange students.

If a high school has a more demanding academic/ extracurricular/athletic policy, the appropriate school policy shall take precedence.

POLICY

GENERAL:

1. New York State secondary schools recognize the cultural enrichment derived from welcoming foreign students into the educational environment and encourage exchange student programs.
2. The Rotary International Youth Exchange program of Rotary District 7170 has been designated an "Exchange Visitor Program" by the US State Dept. BCIS, pursuant to federal regulations (22CFR, Part 514, 19 March 1993), and is authorized to issue DS-2019s, *Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor (J-1) Status* for visas for one (1) year of study in secondary schools within District 7170.

ACADEMIC:

1. It is recognized that Exchange students differ because of variations in individual ability, preparedness based upon the educational system of their home country, and fluency in the English language.
2. An Exchange student must be a bona fide student in the school and must be taking a full course of study including at least four academic courses plus physical education. Students should take an English and Social Studies course, such as American History, plus a selection of math, science, technology, language or other electives to fill out their course of study. D7170 Rotary Exchange students are prohibited from taking any and all Driver Training and/or Driver Education courses. Host parents and club chair or counselor should accompany the student when making up class schedule.
3. Exchange students are expected to satisfy NYS and school attendance requirements, do assigned homework, make an honest effort to maintain passing grades, and participate in school activities. Schools are requested to recognize attendance at Rotary functions as excused absences. A Rotary representative or Host Parent will identify such functions in writing.

4. Progress reports, report cards and other student documents should be sent to the club chair or counselor with copies sent to host parents.

5. Credit for courses taken in the student's native country toward fulfilling NYS high school requirements for graduation is the decision of the school administration. Exchange students may be awarded a certificate of attendance, school diploma or NYS diploma based upon successful completion of the respective requirements and at the discretion of the school administration.

6. Students arriving in January and beginning school in the second semester of the academic year are eligible only for a certificate of attendance. January-arriving students who would normally be seniors, should typically be placed in the second semester of the junior class upon registration, with courses including some senior electives. These students would then move with this class to the first semester senior year the following September, thus maintaining continuity of friends. The school administration will make the final decision on placement based on school policy for mid-term entrance, age of the student, and the academic ability of the student.

7. Teachers are requested to provide an evaluation of Exchange students in academic jeopardy to the Guidance Counselor and in turn to the Rotary Youth Exchange Officer and Host Family. Since academic eligibility policies may differ among the D7170 school systems, the local policy should be applied to exchange students in the same way it is applied to local students.

8. Schools are encouraged to allow Exchange students classified as Seniors to participate in graduation activities and the commencement ceremony.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES:

1. Exchange students are encouraged to participate in the school's extracurricular activities.

12. The Guidance Counselor is requested to make the Exchange student knowledgeable of activities available within the school including any participation requirements, and to encourage such participation.

ATHLETICS:

1. Exchange students are encouraged to participate in the school's total sports program.

2. Exchange students must meet the Eligibility Standards of the NYS Commissioner of Education and NYS Public High School Athletic Association, Inc., Constitution, Article II.(2) to participate. *A bona fide foreign exchange student may be immediately eligible upon registration in the school district, such eligibility to be limited to one year, provided there is no evidence of athletic recruitment resulting in the student's attendance at the school either by the school or any other outside entities.*

3. *Exchange students who are 18 ½ years of age on the first day of school or have already completed 12 years of education (exclusive of kindergarten) are not eligible to compete in interscholastic sports.* However schools are encouraged to allow such students to practice with the team and/or serve the team in some other capacity in order to encourage the building of interpersonal relations with their peers.

4. *Exchange students who have played an organized sport in their home country in the year prior to coming to New York State schools are not eligible to play the same sport on an interscholastic team.* They are, however, eligible to play on other sports team, provided they meet all eligibility requirements. Or the school may allow them to practice with the team or help out in some other capacity.

DETERMINATION AND INTERPRETATION OF ELIGIBILITY IS THE DECISION OF THE LOCAL SCHOOL'S ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT.

T ravel Policy For District 7170 Inbound Exchange Students

This is a cultural and educational exchange, NOT a travel exchange. Exchange students should have no expectations of being a tourist. The host Rotary club and host parents are under no obligation to provide or permit it. However, some travel through the generosity of, and with, the host club, individual Rotarians and host families is encouraged. **Under no circumstances shall students make their own travel arrangements and then expect the host club and host parents to agree. Inbound exchange students must comply with this policy, and host parents are asked to enforce it. Violations of this policy may be grounds for terminating the exchange, and returning the student to his or her home country immediately.**

IN ALL CASES, THE STUDENT, MUST POSSESS WRITTEN APPROVAL FROM THE NATURAL PARENTS AUTHORIZING TRAVEL DURING THE EXCHANGE YEAR.

The reason for these rules is simple. The District 7170 Youth Exchange Committee, host Rotary club and host parents are responsible for students while in this country. We must know where students can be reached in case of emergency or a message from home.

Individual travel approvals will vary based upon many factors. Host parents will ask themselves if the travel is something they would allow their own son or daughter to do. Further, common sense must be a guide. For example, students are not allowed to get together with other exchange students on weekends, as this is a detriment to them and the program, taking time away from meeting and learning about people from the USA. Most important, the travel desires of an exchange student should never place a burden on the host family.

THERE WILL BE NO TRAVEL ALLOWED THAT HAS NOT BEEN APPROVED BY YOUR HOST PARENTS, HOST ROTARY CLUB COUNSELOR, AND THE DISTRICT 7170 YOUTH EXCHANGE COMMITTEE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THESE RULES

TRAVEL APPROVAL REQUIREMENTS:

Travel, other than as part of your Host Family travel, will only be permitted under the following general conditions:

- * Student possesses a letter from natural parents authorizing travel
- * School is not in session (exceptions-school sponsored trip or Rotary sponsored trip)
- * Travel is to visit host family relatives/friends, or for school-, church-, or community-sponsored

functions.

* The following information is provided at least two weeks in advance and verified by a Host Parent:

1. Where you are going
2. When you are leaving and returning
3. Who you are traveling with
4. Means of transportation
5. Where you are staying (name, address and phone number)
6. Contact phone number while you are gone.

TRAVEL WITH HOST FAMILY OR ROTARIANS is allowed, provided that all adults with unsupervised contact with the exchange student have undergone a criminal background check, and three personal references have been checked.

TRAVEL WITHIN THE IMMEDIATE AREA OF HOST CLUB COMMUNITY, with host siblings or friends, is allowed, with host parent's approval. The host club must be notified. Overnight travel is not allowed.

TRAVEL OUTSIDE THE IMMEDIATE AREA OF HOST CLUB COMMUNITY must have **host parent and host club** approval, and the approval of the **District 7170 country contact**. Travel plans must be submitted to host club and country contact at least **two weeks in advance**.

TRAVEL WITH NATURAL PARENTS must have **host parent, host club and District 7170 country contact approval**. Travel plans must be submitted at least **two weeks in advance**.

TRAVEL OUTSIDE OF THE UNITED STATES must have **host parent, host club and District 7170 country contact approval, 2 weeks advance notice, and signature of the District 7170 Responsible Officer**.

UNACCOMPANIED TRAVEL IS NOT ALLOWED

UNAUTHORIZED TRAVEL WILL RESULT IN THE STUDENT BEING RETURNED HOME.

QUESTIONS FOR “FIRST NIGHT” WITH HOST FAMILY

1. What do I call you? “Mom”, “Dad”, or given (first) name?
2. What am I expected to do daily other than:
 - a. Make my bed
 - b. Keep my room tidy
 - c. Clean the bathroom up after I use it?
3. What is the procedure about dirty clothes? Where do I keep them until wash day?
4. Should I wash my own underclothes?
5. What is the procedure if I need to iron my clothes?
6. May I use the iron, washing machine, sewing machine, etc.?
7. Where can I keep my bathroom accessories?
8. When is the most convenient time for me to use the bathroom on weekday mornings?
9. When is the best time for me to shower or bathe?
10. When are mealtimes?
11. Do I have a regular job at meal times? Set, clear, wash, dry the dishes; the garbage?
12. May I help myself to food and drinks (non-alcoholic) at any time or must I ask first?
13. What areas are strictly private e.g. your study, bedroom, pantry, etc.?
14. May I put posters and pictures in my room? On the wall? How do you want things hung?
15. What are your feelings about my drinking alcohol if offered by you?
16. What time must I get up weekday mornings?
17. What time should I get up weekends and holidays?
18. What time must I go to bed weekdays? Weekends?
19. What time must I be in on school nights if I go out? (Exceptions by special arrangement).
20. What time must I be in on weekends if I go out?
21. What dates are the birthdays of family members?
22. May I have friends stay overnight?

23. What are your rules on entertaining friends in my room?
24. Can I invite friends over during the day? After school? When no one else is home?
25. What are the rules about phone calls? Local?, Long Distance?, Overseas? How and when may I pay for calls I make? How do you want me to keep track of my pay telephone calls?
26. What are the rules about access to the Internet and e-mail (if there is a computer in the house)? Are there time limits or time periods that use is permitted or prohibited?
27. May my friends call me? What times are not good?
28. What is the procedure about posting mail?
29. Do any of you have any pet dislikes? e.g.. chewing gum, music types, being late, wearing curlers or a hat at the table, being interrupted while reading, etc.
30. How do I get around our community? bus, bicycle, be driven, riding with friends, etc.
31. What about transportation to the mall or movies?
32. May I play the stereo or TV?
33. May I use kitchen appliances? Microwave? Dishwasher? Stove?
34. What are your expectations about going to church?
35. May I smoke? Where? (Rotary discourages smoking in general and forbids smoking in bedrooms)
36. If I have something bugging me, how do you want me to handle it?
 - a. Write a note explaining it
 - b. Ask for a heart to heart discussion
 - c. Tell my counselor
 - d. Keep it to myself and live with it
37. How often can I go out during the week?
38. Who pays for “family event” expenses? me? you? (movies, sports events, concerts/shows)
39. Can I use the shampoo and tooth paste or buy my own?
40. What do I do about school lunch? Buy? Bring from home?
41. Are there any eating habits or foods I need to discuss? I don't like _____.

In general, ask about those things you feel are most important the first night, and then other over the next few nights. Try to always keep an open and honest line of communication with your Host Family and Rotary counselors.

HOW TO COPE WITH CULTURE SHOCK

by Arthur Gordon

As the world grows smaller, as ever-increasing numbers of people travel, work or study abroad, more attention is being focused on a kind of silent sickness that often afflicts the inexperienced traveler or the unwary expatriate. It's the loss of emotional equilibrium that a person suffers when he moves from a familiar environment where he has learned to function easily and successfully to one where he has not. The term used to describe this malady is "culture shock".

The effects of culture shock may range from mild uneasiness or temporary homesickness to acute unhappiness or even, in extreme cases, psychological panic, irritability, hyper-sensitivity and loss of perspective are common symptoms. Often the victim doesn't know what's the matter with him. He just knows that something's wrong -- and he feels miserable.

Most experts in inter-cultural communication agree that the basic cause of culture shock is the abrupt loss of the familiar, which in turn causes a sense of isolation and diminished self-importance. "Culture shock", says anthropologist Kalvero Oberg, "is brought on by the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse. these signs or cues include the thousand and one ways in which we orient ourselves to the situations of daily life: when to shake hands and what to say when we meet people, when and how to give tips, how to give orders to servants, how to make purchases, when to accept and when to refuse invitations, when to take statements seriously and when not."

According to Dr. Oberg, these cues, which may be words, gestures, facial expressions or customs, are acquired by all of us in the course of growing up and are as much a part of our culture as the language we speak or the beliefs we accept. All of us depend for our peace of mind on hundreds of

these cues, even though we may not be consciously aware of them. "When an individual enters a strange culture," Dr. Oberg says, "all or most of these familiar cues are removed. he or she is like a fish out of water. No matter how broad-minded or full of goodwill he may be, a series of props has been knocked out from under him."

Sometimes the transition to an alien culture has an immediate impact. A short term American visitor to certain Eastern European countries may find himself dismayed or depressed by living conditions that seem perfectly normal and acceptable to the people of that country - toilets with no seats, for example, or even more primitive bathroom facilities. It may come as a real shock to a teenager from Texas to find that hamburgers are non-existent, or, that local hairdressers never heard of plastic curlers.

More insidious is what might be termed delayed culture shock. Often when a person takes up residence in a foreign country there's a period of excitement and exhilaration when everything seems new and challenging and fascinating. If one has friends or business connections one may be asked to dinner, taken sight-seeing, made much of -- at first. Also, in the beginning similarities between cultures are more apparent than differences. Almost everywhere people live in houses, go to work, relax on week-ends, do the shopping, eat three meals a day and so on. All this seems reassuring.

It's not until this honeymoon period ends that the newcomer begins to realize that there are endless subtle differences that leave him facing a host of perplexing problems. Many of these problems never bothered him at home, because they solved themselves almost automatically. Now, to his increased dismay, he finds that he has language

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troubles, housing troubles, money troubles, transportation troubles, food troubles, recreation troubles, perhaps even health troubles. All of these things drain away his reservoir of good-humor and equanimity. Having his laundry done may become a major struggle. Making a telephone call may be a small crisis. It may seem to him that people say yes when they mean no and promise to do things which they never do. Time may be regarded quite differently by the people among whom he finds himself. So may space, in some countries people like to stand very close together when they converse, in others this violates a deep-rooted sense of privacy.

Underlying all these difficulties is the uncomfortable feeling of not really belonging, of being an outsider. In changing cultures, the newcomer has inevitably changed his own status. At home he was "somebody", or at least his place in society was established and recognized, here he is relatively "nobody". As a foreigner, he is a member of a minority whose voice counts for little or nothing. He may find that his homeland, so important to him, is regarded with suspicion or dismissed as unimportant. In short, as one observer put it, he finds himself in "circumstances of beleaguered self-esteem".

A mature, confident person may be able to shrug off these circumstances. But if the newcomer is insecure or sensitive or shy, they may seem overwhelming. Furthermore, as troubles pile up and he begins to look around for help, he may conclude that the natives of the country in which he finds himself are either incapable of understanding his plight or are indifferent to it. This in turn triggers the emotion that is one of the surest signs of culture shock: hostility to the new environment. The victim says to himself, "These people don't seem to know or care what I'm going through. Therefore they must be selfish, insensitive people. Therefore I don't like them."

Inevitably this reaction tends to increase the isolation of the unhappy visitor because people sense his antagonism and begin to avoid him.

When this happens, he may seek out other disgruntled souls, usually expatriates like himself, and find melancholy relief in criticizing all aspects of the host country. These discussions almost never lead to any honest evaluation of the situation or awareness that the difficulty may lie in the attitude of the critics themselves. They are simply gripe-sessions in which the virtues of the home country are exaggerated almost as much as the alleged failing of the country being visited. As Dr. Oberg says, "When Americans or other foreigners get together to grouse about the host country and its people, you can be sure they are suffering from culture shock."

Sometimes the victim of culture shock may go to the other extreme, surrendering his own identity and trying to imitate all the customs and attitudes of the alien culture. Or he may try to solve the problem by withdrawing into himself, refusing to learn the native language, making no effort to find friends among the local people, taking no interest in their history, art, architecture, or any other aspect of their culture. While in this state of mind he may display a variety of unattractive symptoms. One is a tendency to over-react to minor frustrations or delays or inconveniences with irritation or anger out of all proportion to the cause. Another is to be unduly suspicious, to think that people are out to cheat or swindle him because he is a foreigner. Yet another is over-concern about cleanliness, an unwarranted conviction that water, food or dishes are unsanitary when in fact they are not. Often the person is unaware of the extent to which he is displaying these symptoms.

He does know, however, that he is miserable and that the casual remedies recommended to him --- patience, hard work, mastery of the language and so on -- don't seem to do much good. Sometimes he will develop a marked degree of over-dependence on people from his own country who have passed through their own period of culture shock and are residing successfully and happily in the host country. If they in turn can display wisdom, patience and understanding of his symptoms, they often are able to shorten the span of his misery.

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One reason the unhappy expatriate gravitates toward his own countrymen is that in their company he can at least feel sure of being understood. Underlying much of his confusion is the fact that even if he speaks the language of the country there remain endless opportunities for misunderstanding. All experts in communication emphasize the fact that language and voice are by no means our only form of communication, they are supported by hundreds of gestures and facial expressions that are easily misinterpreted.

Yet another stumbling block that compounds the problems of culture shock is the tendency of many people to think of members of other cultures in terms of stereotypes. The excitable Arabs. The amorous French. The touchy Italians. The lazy Latinos. The volatile Hungarians. The materialistic Americans. Some psychologists think that anxiety-prone people cling to stereotypes because it lessens the threat of the unknown by making the world predictable...and what the victim of culture shock needs desperately is a familiar, predictable world.

Almost always, fortunately, symptoms of culture shock subside with the passage of time. The first sign of recovery may well be the reappearance of the victim's sense of humor; he begins to smile or even laugh at some of the things that irritated him as much at first. As familiarity with local language and customs increases, his self-confidence and self-esteem begin to return. He comes out of his shell and makes tentative overtures to the people around him -- and as soon as he starts being friendly, they stop seeming hostile. Slowly he progresses from a grudging acceptance of his surroundings to a genuine fondness for them and becomes proud of his growing ability to function in them. In the end, he wonders what he was so unhappy about in the beginning.

Is it possible to shorten the duration of culture shock or minimize its impact? The experts think so. Here are three suggestions they offer to anyone planning a stay in a foreign land.

* First, be aware that such a thing as culture shock exists, that it will probably affect you one way or

another, but that it doesn't last forever.

* Next, try to remember, if and when you become thoroughly disenchanted with your surroundings, that the problem probably isn't so much in them as it is in you.

* Third, accept the idea that while it may be somewhat painful, culture shock can be a very valuable experience, a mind-stretching process that will leave you with broader perspectives, deeper insight into yourself and wider tolerance for other people.

If it happens to you, don't think that you're strange or abnormal. If you had a happy life back home, why shouldn't you miss some aspects of it or feel a sense of loss? You'd be abnormal if you didn't.

If it happens to you, don't sit around being negative and critical, this just prolong and deepens your gloom. Try to keep busy. Arrange something pleasant to look forward to. Set goals for yourself -- learning ten new foreign phrases each day, for example-- and stick to them.

If it happens to you, try not to be judgmental. everyone has an ethnocentric tendency to think that his own culture is superior to all others. Actually, any culture is a good culture if it provides an environment that meets basic human needs.

If it happens to you, force yourself to look for the best, not the worst, in your situation. People who go around looking for trouble usually manage to find it. Train yourself to enjoy the diversity of people and cultures, not fear it or shy away from it.

Recently in Russia two members of an American tour-group at different times during the day bought a candy bar from a booth in a railroad station. Each was given his change in the form of chocolate wafers. One American, disturbed by this departure from the familiar, felt that he was being victimized and protested vehemently. The other, charmed by what seemed to him a quaint and delightful custom, regarded it as a novel and refreshing experience and even bragged about it to his fellow tourists. The first American, it seems reasonable to say, was far more a prisoner of his own culture, than the second.

Appendix F

In sum, before he leaves home the visitor to a

foreign land should make up his mind neither to resist the culture in which he finds himself nor surrender to it. What he needs to do is fight or grope or inch his way toward a new and flexible personality, a personality that retains its own cultural identity but recognizes the right of members of other cultures to retain theirs.

If that new personality can help him toward a

better understanding of himself and of others, if it can enable him to communicate easily and convey warmth and understanding and goodwill across the culture barricades, then the pain of culture shock will have served its purpose, and the recovered victim will truly have the best of two worlds.

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