Information Book For

Host Parents

Updated April 14/2024 KF

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 ambassador from another country, to provide shelter and sustenance, guidance and counsel, and love and 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 Rotary 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 Exchange 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 “goodbye” when that time comes, but instead say “farewell, 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,

Kit Freudenberg

Rotary District 6080 Youth Exchange

Committee Chair

Missouri USA

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**RYE Calendar 2024 - 2025**

June 1 Elizabeth J. Upton Foundation fundraiser, Columbia

June-July    2024-25 Inbound and Outbound students traveling home

July-August              2024-25 Inbound and Outbound students traveling to new countries and host districts  
  
July 27                2024-25 Returning Outbound students Rebound Orientation  
                                Jefferson City 9 – 3:30 pm; Patrick Prenger, Maria Seville

August 23-24-25 #1 IB Orientation; Cub Creek Science Camp, 16795 State Highway F, Rolla  
  
Oct 15              Deadline for 2024-25 OB Youth Exchange Candidate Application  
  
Oct 15 - 30 Rotary Club interviews for OB Candidates and recommendations to District  
  
Oct 25-26-27             #2 IB Orientation, Wonderland Camp, 18591 Miller Circle, Rocky Mount

Nov 16           District interviews for 2025-26 OB Class, Lake of the Ozarks area, location/time TBD

Dec 7 - 8                  #1 OB Orientation for students and both parents/guardians, Jefferson City, location TBD

Friday 5 pm arrival students; Saturday 9 – 4 pm students/parents/guardians

Jan 24-25-26    SCRYE Conference, Tulsa, OK for IBs and ROTEX. RYE training available

Mar IB and OB Round Up at President Elect Training, Jefferson City

#3 IB and #3 OB Orientation at the D6080, D6060 and D6040 Districts Conference,

Lake of the Ozarks - All IB and OB students from 3 districts

June 1 IB and OB Farewell Event, Place and Time to be determined

**Contact Information for Rotary District 6080**

**Youth Exchange 2023-24**

[**www.rotaryyouthexchange6080.org**](http://www.rotaryyouthexchange6080.org) **or** [**www.rye6080.org**](http://www.rye6080.org)

**Kit Freudenberg: District Youth Exchange Officer (YEO) and District Youth Exchange Chair**

573-619-3058 [Cell] [Chair@rye6080.org](mailto:Chair@rye6080.org) or [KitFreudenberg.secas@secas@gmail.com](mailto:KitFreudenberg.secas@secas@gmail.com)

**Linda Malinski: YEAH Database Administrator and Program Support**

[compliance@rye6080.org](mailto:compliance@rye6080.org)

**Youth Protection Officer – to be announced**

**Ted Cenatiempo: CISI Insurance Coordinator**

203-399-5556 (cell) [cisiwebadmin@culturalinsurance.com](mailto:cisiwebadmin@culturalinsurance.com)

**Molly Froidl: Outreach (Columbia area)**

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**Patrick Prenger**: **ROTEX/Program Alumni**

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**Maria Seville: ROTEX/Program Alumni**

[mariaseville@gmail.com](mailto:mariaseville@gmail.com)

**Susan Potrafka: Program Chair (District interviews and orientations)**

573-308-4566 [spotrafka@gmail.com](mailto:spotrafka@gmail.com)

**Sandy Munton: Program Team (District interviews and orientations)**

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**Joe & Julia Prullage: Country Coordinators**—Asia

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Julia 573-544-3551 (cell) [juliaprullage@gmail.com](about:blank)

**Maria & Ethan Seville** **Country Coordinator—Brazil**

mariasevelle@gmail.com

**Alicia Turner**—**Country Coordinator—Belgium, France, Switzerland (French speaking)**

573-694-0064 (cell) [turnera@ncrpc.com](about:blank)

**Molly Froidl: Country Coordinator – Italy, Germany, Switzerland (German speaking)**

573-219-6610 (cell) [mollyfroidl@gmail.com](mailto:mollyfroidl@gmail.com)

**Objectives of the Program**

* **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.

* **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.

* **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.

* **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.

* **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.

**Definitions**

**Outbound student**

A term applied by sending districts to students they support for an exchange in another country.

**Inbound student**

A term applied by host districts to students they receive from another country for an exchange.

**Sending district**

The Rotary district in the student’s home country that facilitates the exchange to another country.

**Host district**

The Rotary district that receives a student from another country. Host families work closely with the host district.

**Host club**

The Rotary club that supports the student during the exchange.

**Host counselor**

Member of the host club appointed to serve as the exchange student’s main contact with the club and to act as a liaison between the student, club, host family, and community. This individual must not be a member of the student’s host family.

**Youth Exchange officer**

A Rotarian appointed or elected to hold an office on a district or club Youth Exchange committee. Selected by the district governor, the district Youth Exchange chair oversees activity related to the program throughout

an entire district.

**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 18½ 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 starts in Missouri in August with the start of school.

**What is Rotary?**

Rotary International, as the sponsoring organization of this program, is an international volunteer organization comprised of Rotarians around the world dedicated to improving their community, both locally and worldwide, through service to others. Additional information at [www.rotary.org](http://www.rotary.org). However, one term used throughout this handbook warrants explanation here: The Rotary District is the geographic organization of a number of local Rotary clubs for purposes of governance and support. We are **Rotary International District 6080**, consisting of 52 Rotary clubs representing much of central Missouri, [www.rotary6080.org](http://www.rotary6080.org).

**Role of the Rotary District and Youth Exchange Committee**

Rotary Youth Exchange is, more specifically, an exchange of students between two Rotary Districts in different countries. 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 and **South** **Central Rotary Youth Exchange (SCRYE) guidelines**, but retain autonomy in conduct of the program. This responsibility is delegated in District 6080 to the **District Youth Exchange Committee.**

The selection, screening and preparation of Outbound exchange student candidates is the responsibility of each sending or sponsoring Rotary District. A uniform application form has been developed for this purpose by Rotary International. Once our District Youth Exchange Committee has agreed to accept an Inbound exchange student and a club has agreed to host and support that student, that student agrees to comply with **this** District’s rules, regulations, and guidelines as a condition of the exchange.

Inbound students receive a comprehensive orientation shortly after their arrive in August. Before the student’s arrival, the Youth Exchange Committee establishes and maintains communications with its counterparts in the exchanging district, the inbound students both before their arrival and during their year here, and the outbound students we are sending overseas.

District 6080 Youth Exchange Committee is a valuable resource for both you and the exchange student. Each student also has a Country Coordinator who works with both Inbound and Outbound students prior to their exchange year.

**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 club **Youth Exchange Officer** (**YEO**) to administer the club’s Exchange program, including recruiting Outbound candidates and Host families. A second member of the Rotary club will be designated as the Inbound student’s **Club Counselor** for the duration of the exchange. The **Club Counselor** serves primarily as an advisor and advocate for the student, but will also be in contact with the host family on a regular basis, and be available to answer questions or direct host parents to the appropriate resource when needed.

The hosting Rotary club has made or will make 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 can advise the Club Counselor when classes need to be adjusted. You should discuss school work 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 minimum of $100 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 6080 requires all Inbound students to deposit with the hosting club a **$400 emergency fund** that can be accessed by the club in case of emergency for the student. 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, the annual SCYRE conference and the annual Rotary District Conference are mandatory for the student. Interference with host family activities or transportation to/from, Rotary events should not impose a burden on the host family. The YEO/Club Counselor should be advised before this can occur.

**Rotary Support = District + Club**

This Team of the **District Youth Exchange Committee**, 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 to provide 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**

All students arrive with some understanding of the English language. 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.

*Inbound exchange students will be tested for English proficiency before and after arrival. Tutoring can be arranged by Rotary for students who are experiencing difficulty communicating. School counselors and teachers can also be valuable resources for both the student and host family in addressing communications problems.*

**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 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 ensure their 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. A summary of the more important rules is listed below:

1. **Driving**: Exchange students are **not** permitted to operate motor vehicles, including motorcycles, boats, or any other powered device as a condition of the medical and accident insurance. Under no circumstances may they take a Driver Education course.

2. **Drinking and Drugs**: We expect all exchange students to comply with our laws, including those applying to possession and consumption of alcoholic beverages and controlled substances.

3. **Smoking**: Applicants are asked to indicate if they smoke on the application. District 6080 does not accept students who smoke or use any tobacco product regardless of age. Students are absolutely not permitted to smoke while here on exchange.

4. **School Attendance**: This is an educational exchange and students are **required to attend school regularly** and participate in class work. The program’s objective is not to provide a high school diploma to these students. 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.

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 the host country. However, independent travel or travel without adult supervision should be given the same level of parental control you would impose on your own children of that age.

The Travel Request Form is in the front of your student’s handbook.

Travel with host family, school groups, or Rotarians is permitted, but the Club YEO and/or Counselor must be notified in advance of overnight trips outside of the host family’s community. Also, when driving outside of the community, the driver must be 25 years or older.

The District YEO must approve any travel outside of Missouri. See Appendices for Travel Authorization Form.

Travel is not permitted outside of the US. Inbound students must arrive directly in District 6080 from their home country and must return directly at the end of the exchange year.

Examples:

Student and friends want to drive to the football game. Do you know the driver and group? Would you let your child ride with them to an event.

Student wants to catch the bus and go downtown for shopping, movie, meet friends. Would you let your child do this?

Student is part of Marching Band and there are competitions and trips each weekend for 6 weeks. Get the competition/travel list from the band director. Give a copy to the Club Counselor. As long as the student follows the school’s travel rules, i.e. must ride on the bus to and from events, and the Club Counselor has and knows about the trips, the travel is “blanket approved” by the Counselor.

Student and friends want to drive over to Kansas City or St. Louis for an event. Do you know the driver and group? The drive is longer than 1.5 hours – the driver must be 25 years or older.

Student wants to fly to New York City to visit a cousin who lives there. This will not be authorized.

Additionally, Rotarians at both the host club and district committee need to know where Exchange students are in the event of an emergency. 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 by your student that YOU are not in agreement with.*** When in doubt, ask the club YEO or Counselor, Country Coordinator or District YEO. We are available to answer these questions.

6. **Visits by the student’s parents and family**: Program rules prohibit any visitors from the student’s home country during the first 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.** On the other hand, parental visits at the conclusion of the exchange year are great opportunities for the student to share their exchange life. Any such visits planned by the student or his/her parents should be fully acceptable to you, the host parents, and should be discussed with the appropriate Rotarians **before** being finalized.

There will be no expectation that host families host visiting family.

No visits by home country friends will be approved.

6. **Use of telephone and Internet**: Students who frequently communicate with family and friends “back home” by telephone, social media and/or e-mail often delay their own adjustments and adaptation to the exchange. This can extend rather than reduce feelings of homesickness. Constant e-mail or instant messaging also prevents a student from becoming part of the host family and community. Students are told to limit electronic communication with home.

Additionally, we advise host families against providing cell phones to exchange students. Data usage can get very high very quickly. Most students will arrive with their own cell phone and get a local sim card. They are responsible for those costs. The Club Counselor can advise on this.

**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 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:

* **Establish a clear understanding of expectations** soon after your student arrives. In the Appendices is a listing of **First Night Questions** 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 the 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.
* 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 involved. These feelings will pass.
* 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. These 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 in. Try to introduce the student to some people who will help overcome this reluctance.

* **Understand “culture shock”, and help your student learn our culture**. See the Host Family Roadmap for more information on how to cope with Culture Shock. This information may help you understand some of the feelings your student may experience because of the differences between our culture and the one they have known since birth.

**Other Information Needed by Host Families**

**Insurance**

All inbound exchange students must have a medical/accidental injury policy that meets Rotary’s requirements, under a policy issued by the American International Companies through CISI Instructions for submitting a claim are included in the Appendices. In addition, a **Medical Authorization form**, 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 students while part of your household.

**The cost of any medical treatment is the responsibility of the student** and his/her natural parents, and the insurance provides for either payment or reimbursement of a portion of those 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. Club YEO and Club Counselor have access to the student’s $400 emergency fund.

**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. Their own culture or medical system at home may be quite different than that which we have. You may need to patiently ask questions and offer suggestions when you observe conditions that may be medically-based.

Many Rotary clubs have arrangements with local medical-services providers (often a member of the Rotary club) and you should be appraised 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 should be made known to the District YE Chair as soon as possible**.

**Being the first Host Family**

While being first Host Family 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. Students usually stay for 3 ½ months with each family:

For example:

Arrival early August through Thanksgiving

December to Spring Break

April until departure

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 to his or her own family, they will be leaving not one but several **families** that they will consider “home” for the rest of their lives.

**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. The “unknown” involves *returning home*. Understand that the exchange student **must** return home at the conclusion of the exchange year (within 7 days of high school completion, or the conclusion of a Rotary Sponsor Tour, if applicable) as a condition of the exchange program. **A sign of a successful exchange is the student’s reluctance to go home and 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. As the departure date approaches, help the student with packing and luggage, recognizing that much has been collected since their arrival. It may be necessary to ship some of the student’s possessions home to keep suitcases below the airlines’ quantity and weight limits. Do NOT pay for this – this is the student’s expense.

Help the student wrap up any financial obligations with you and others. Discuss with the student and the Rotary Club Counselor the return of the student’s emergency fund which may be used to pay for over-weight or extra bags on the flight home.

Involve the prior host families and the host Rotary club in planning a farewell event before the student departs. And 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 said 11 or 12 months earlier, and your understanding and support will make this a happy time for everyone involved.

**Important Reminder**

Whenever the exchange student changes host families, the new family name, address, phone numbers, and e-mail must be reported to Youth Exchange Chair. The regulations of the US State Department require address changes to be filed within ten days. Failure to do so can result in the deportation of the student. Although we consider it the student’s responsibility to report their moves, we recommend that host families and/or club counselors stay on top of the situation as well, due to the seriousness of the consequences.

**LASTLY, 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 contact the local Rotary Club Youth Exchange Officer or the student’s Club Counselor.**  If he or she is not available, please contact a District YEO. They will get in touch with the student, and if appropriate, the counterpart in the sponsoring district for further information and help.

**Please do not dismiss non-compliance with our rules 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 and the host family 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 possible challenges, we want you to know that being a host parent is also a lot of fun and 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.

**A Road Map for Host Families – Step by Step**

**Preparing for your student’s arrival**

**Pre-Arrival Communications**

Before your inbound exchange student arrives in the United States, it is important to establish some type of communication between the student and your family. This will help to make the initial meeting more comfortable for both you and the student. This also makes your student feel more confident in YOUR interest in hosting.

Shortly after Rotary has confirmed the student’s placement, initiate contact via e-mail or phone. Communication from siblings is very important, especially if they are the same age as the student. Your student will want to know if his future host brothers and sisters share the same interests.

Here are some suggestions for things to include the email and conversations:

* Describe your family: number and ages of children, family interests, jobs, grandparents

* Talk about any pets: what kind, their names, how many, do they live inside or out

* Describe your community: i.e. country, city, or small town; how far are you from town or a large city; population; major features)

* Describe your home: how close is it to school/shopping/etc., how big is the house, do you have a swimming pool, rec. room, etc.

* Talk about the types of activities your family enjoys

* Discuss any traditions or weekly observances your family has: church, Easter egg hunts, family

reunions, Halloween, family time, etc.)

* Describe the school your student will attend: size, how far from home, how the student will get there, sports and extra-curricular activities and types of classes available, etc.

* Send photos of your family, your home, and your community

* You might want to send links to websites regarding local attractions or tourist information. Check with the Chamber of Commerce and your local tourism department

* Discuss any trips you may be planning that will include your student

Although some of this information may have already been provided by Rotary, your description and discussion will be personal. The significance in writing this letter is to let the student know that you and your family are genuinely looking forward to his/her arrival. The welcome letter will help to establish a foundation on which a strong relationship can be built.

**Gathering and Communicating Information on Your Family and Community**

Prior to your student’s arrival, your family should work together to gather as much information about your community and family as possible. Some of this information can be included in the initial letter, and the rest can be given to him/her on his arrival.

Community information that might be helpful to the student can include:

* A map of your city or area, with the locations of your home and school marked

* Information on your community, such as climate, population, industries, etc.
* Information, including schedules, of any public transportation such as busses, trains, etc. (remember

your student can’t drive!)

* Pictures and brochures of your community

* Information on nearby points of interest or places you intend on showing him/her

* Exterior and, if available, interior pictures of the student’s school

* Information on extra-curricular activities and sports available at the school

* What a typical weekday and a typical weekend day might be like

* What kinds of things you eat for meals, and when meals are generally eaten

* If a room will be shared with a sibling, give information on the host brother/sister who will share the room.

**The Student’s Living Space**

The issue of whether or not a student should have his/her own room is highly debatable. On one hand, if an extra bedroom is available, it will give the student a place that he/she can feel at home, and where he/she can retreat if the whirlwind of new experiences become too much to handle. On the other hand, sharing a room with a sibling the student’s own age helps the student to become a closer part of the host family more quickly. Sharing a room also prevents the student from withdrawing and shutting off from the rest of the host family, which is possible in the first few months of homesickness.

If your student does have a separate room, and is showing signs of withdrawing, push him or her to participate in as many activities as possible. Invite him/her along when you run down to the store, go to the Mall, etc. In any case, Rotary requires that the student has his/her own bed, and should have adequate storage space for clothes and personal belongings, and a desk or quiet area in which to study.

**Discuss this Manual as a Family**

As a host family, you are about to accept a new member into your home and into your lives. However, this new member has had a completely different social upbringing than your own family. What you take for granted as socially polite or acceptable may not be so obvious to your student. Discuss the enclosed list of First Night Questions. Use it as a guideline, along with the list of Rotary rules, to discuss family rules for the student. Have your family decide together on issues such as curfew, chores, television, and bedtimes. Discuss what issues you believe may arise during the exchange and think about the most effective way of handling those circumstances.

Remember that the student is here to become an integrated member of your family. The topics discussed in this manual are relevant to each and every member of your family, and you should learn to rely on one another for support and assistance during this challenging time. When everyone works together to strengthen and keep lines of communication open, problem resolution will be much easier, and your hosting experience is sure to be rewarding.

**Travel**

Your Inbound student should contact you as soon as possible with his/her travel arrangements. You should know about any layovers or overnight stops during the student’s route. Make sure the student has your home phone number, as well as phone numbers for the Rotary counselors and district YE Chair. Most countries teach English as a required course in school, but students from non-English speaking countries will feel very insecure in their mastery of English.

***The Big Day - Your Student Arrives***

Discuss who is meeting your student with the Club YEO and/or Counselor. Will the student be picked up and stay a few days with the Club Counselor? Are they going home with you?

**Reconfirm the Arrival Time**

Early arrivals, delays, or cancellations of flights are not uncommon, especially where international travel is concerned. Flights in the summer are quite often overbooked, so it is very important that you check the progress of the flights. Give the student your cell phone number or that of a Rotary counselor to call if a delay occurs after you have left for the airport. If there is a last-minute delay on a short domestic flight or some other problem you need to have some way for the student to get word to you.

**Meeting Your Student’s Flight**

Your Inbound student is walking off the plane from a flight of 6-8 hours or more. He or she probably doesn’t understand a word of what people are saying, is exhausted, confused, and probably scared. Imagine how good it would feel to step off the plane, and see a group of eager friendly people, recognizable from some photographs, holding up a huge welcome sign with his/her name on it! A sign is very important since there will probably be a lot of people milling around the airport. It helps to start the experience on a positive note for your student and helps him/her feel welcome in the new country.

In addition to a sign, balloons or flowers help add an extra note of welcome (as well as making for great pictures!). It’s important to have as much of the household at the airport as possible. Recognizing brothers and sisters will help the Inbound’s confidence, especially when they’re smiling! Rotarians will likely also be at the airport to greet your student, and it can be a nice idea to invite some neighbors or students from the local school too.

**What to Do if Your Student Is Not on the Plane**

If your student is not on the scheduled flight, call the designated emergency contact person immediately. If no word has been received of a delay or problem, contact an airline representative immediately to see if the student missed a connecting flight somewhere enroute. Next, call your Rotary Youth Exchange officer. Together, we will be able to determine what happened, and what needs to be done next.

**Claiming Luggage**

Help your student claim luggage and transport it to the car. If some of the luggage is lost, immediately contact the airport personnel. The Inbound student will need to give information such as color, size, shape, the student’s flight route, whether or not his/her name was on it, etc. Do not leave the airport until the procedure for claiming lost luggage has been completed. The airline should deliver the bags to your home, so you should not have to go back to the airport to pick them up. To make it simpler to reclaim lost luggage, suggest to the student that they take photos of the luggage before leaving the country. Also suggest making a list of what each bag contains in case they cannot be found and the airport has to estimate repayment.

**When You Arrive Home**

The first thing your student will probably want to do is to call his/her natural parents to let them know that he/she has arrived safely and has been met by the host family. It may be an emotional call, as he/she is tired, disoriented, and has now realized just how far away this is from his friends and family. Be prepared for this and offer appropriate support when the call ends.

**The Abbreviated House Tour**

After arriving from the airport, show your student his/her bedroom and give a brief tour of your home. Show where the bathroom is located, and where to go for breakfast in the morning. Do not try to orient the student to everything in your home at this time as he/she will most likely be exhausted and in need of sleep. Point out where the necessities are kept (shampoo, towels, water glasses, etc.), and that these are as much his as anyone else’s in the family. Make sure he/she knows how the toilets, fixtures (hot and cold), showers, and hair dryer work. Don’t try to discuss rules and jobs at this time, because your student is too disoriented to absorb much information.

**Sleep**

The main thing on your student’s mind upon arrival will probably be sleep. Waiting in huge airports surrounded by strange languages, carrying heavy luggage, crossing time zones, dealing with customs and passports, and sitting on the plane for half the day will have left your student exhausted. In addition, your student will be experiencing many different emotions that can be confusing and stressful.

However, it is recommended that **if** your student arrives early in the day, keep him/her awake until at least 7:00 p.m. That will facilitate adjustment to the time zone, and jet lag will be minimized. You could suggest unpacking and arranging the room, perhaps a walk around the neighborhood, etc.

***The First Week***

**The Expanded House Tour**

As a means of integrating your student to feel more a part of the family, plan a detailed tour of your house within the first few days after arrival. Be sure to show how everything works, from running the dishwasher and laundry machines, to locking the front door at night. If necessary, explain how the microwave oven and the stove work. Explain to the female student how to dispose of sanitary products.

Take nothing for granted. It may be that your student feels embarrassed to ask how to operate certain items, or is too self-conscience about language skills to ask questions. Putting signs on everything with the word for that object will be a big help in language assimilation for the student with weak English skills. A little extra time spent orienting now can save embarrassing misunderstandings in the future.

Discuss empathy with your children, and warn them never to laugh or make fun. What may seem funny to them can be morbidly embarrassing to the student.

**The Neighborhood Tour**

Show your student around your neighborhood/community to become familiar with these new surroundings. Feeling comfortable in this new town will happen gradually. Encourage the student to ask questions. Introduce him/her to your neighbors and other members of your community. Show where the bus stop and market or corner store is. Let him/her know if there are any dogs to be cautioned about. Point out several landmarks in case he/she becomes lost.

If you live in a larger town, provide warnings against talking to strangers, going into bars or nightclubs, trespassing on private property, how to deal with interactions with gangs, what sections of town to avoid, etc. Again, take nothing for granted.

**Registering for School**

Each school system differs for registration requirements. Before your student arrives, ask your local Rotary club and the counseling staff at the school about registration details. It is very possible that the Club YEO and/or Counselor has already registered your student and selected the classes.

If not, help your inbound choose classes, and introduce him/her to the school counselor. Some countries have very specific requirements for the classes that your student must take to receive credit for the school year. Your Rotary club should receive information from the student’s home Rotary regarding any requirements. The host Rotary Club may be able to help with fees for special classes, such as gymnastics or for a musical instrument, if your student desires to continue their ongoing training.

Some students feel they are obligated to assume an almost impossible academic load. It is not unknown for the exchange student to want to take such things as four or five laboratory classes as well as a full schedule of other subjects. On the other hand, some students will want to take as few courses as possible. Striking a reasonable balance, especially if the student’s English is shaky, is important. Guidance, with the help of a high school counselor, is necessary in such matters, especially if the student has the goal of graduating from the U.S. high school. *All students are told ahead of time that there is no guarantee that they will be able to obtain a US high school diploma, and many schools simply will not allow it.*

If some of your friends have children at the same school, introduce them ahead of time, ask them to show the student where classes are, and to provide introductions to the teachers. Find out if any members of your local Rotary club are involved in the school and can help the student get oriented.

Involve the school’s Interact Club (Rotary-sponsored service organization) if one exists. If the school has a language class or club for the student’s language, ask if the student can talk to the class. This will help the student meet new people, and help the other students in the school know about him/her. Strongly encourage your Inbound student to become involved in as many extracurricular activities as possible. This will help the student make friends quickly, and provide opportunities for experiences that otherwise may not come by, such as choir or band trips, theater productions, or community projects.

**Bank Account, Return Tickets, and Passport**

As part of the Rotary program, students are required to arrive with an emergency fund. This fund will be held on behalf of the student by the hosting Rotary Club and accessed by the Club YEO and Counselor. This money is to be only used in case of emergency, such as needing replacement of eyeglasses or emergency dental work.

New clothes do not normally fall under the category of emergency needs (especially relevant for requests like new clothes for Homecoming). Normal expenses during the student’s stay should be covered by the Rotary monthly stipend and their funds from home. The host parents are not expected to purchase clothing, souvenirs, or postage, pay for the student’s cell phone or provide spending money.

If the host parent chooses to provide an allowance as they do for their natural children, it is at their discretion.

The student’s natural parents may desire to wire or send a check to the student to cover additional needs, or provide the student with a credit or debit card to purchase things like clothing or school supplies.

The student should be encouraged to establish a budget to ensure their available funds will last for the entire exchange. There will be opportunities to go on Rotary or school-sponsored trips that will require payment. Discuss the end-of-the-year trip options with the student to help them budget for this expense if they desire to participate. The travel and housing expenses for these trips, while reasonable, are still considerable, and must be planned in advance. Encourage your student to discuss the options with their Club YEO and Counselor.

When your exchange student arrives, Club YEO or Counselor will go through a check-in procedure reviewing the student’s airline tickets, passport, etc. They will also verify that the student has stapled into the passport the copy of his or her DS-2019 form, and the I-94 white card received in US Immigration when the student entered the country.

Keeping the tickets safe during an entire year, especially during one or more moves to subsequent host families, is a challenge that must be taken into consideration (of course, electronic tickets do not require quite the same concern). The student’s passport acts as the student’s ID during the year, and is usually kept in the student’s possession or in a safe place at home. Verify occasionally that the student still has it in his/her possession, because it will be required to travel to another country and to return home.

**Rotary Insurance**

The students are required to purchase through Rotary a health insurance policy. This consists of a major medical policy, with a stated deductible. The students, not the host families, are responsible for their own medical and dental expenses. The Rotary club may also be able to assist, particularly if a doctor or dentist is a member of the club.

If a student should need health services and is under the age of 18, you will be asked to sign a consent for treatment form. **THESE FORMS OFTEN CONTAIN LANGUAGE MAKING THE SIGNER A GUARANTOR OF PAYMENT.** Make sure you do **NOT** sign as guarantor. You may need to cross through and initial this section or hand write that the signer is **NOT** committing to be the guarantor.

If you have any questions about insurance, talk to Club Youth Exchange Officer or Counselor.

***How to Treat Your Student***

One of the most common mistakes a new host family makes is to treat their exchange student as a visitor, guest, or tourist instead of a family member. While you may be very enthusiastic about his or her arrival into your home, it is important to spread the enthusiasm throughout the stay. Although your student will want to see as much of the area as possible during the year, it is also expected that he/she will share in family life. If you have children of your own, remember to treat your student the same way you would treat your own children of the same age.

If your student learns early on in the exchange year that he/she will be treated no differently than anyone else in the home, that will result in a much better understanding of the reality of being an exchange student. At first the student may seem to need nurturing and mothering as much as a small child might. The student is insecure, vulnerable, and needs to learn so much before they can be comfortable in the new setting. The 15 ½ to 18 ½ year old looks (and tries to act) like an adult, but probably is struggling with fear of embarrassment and homesickness. A little tact and sympathy, combined with a willingness to keep the lines of communication open even if it gets a little uncomfortable, will go a long way to family harmony and a rich and fulfilling exchange experience for both the student and the host family.

Religious observances may be very important in both your own family and in the culture from which your student came. It is important that you be sensitive and open on this subject. Invite your inbound to attend worship with you, but do not insist that they participate in your faith. Encourage them to explore the various ways that people worship in this country by attending services with other families. Respect your student’s beliefs, and whenever possible, aid him/her in making arrangements for religious observances of the family. Although differences of this nature can be a source of tension, they can also provide richness to the exchange experience by understanding and sharing some of your student’s culture and observances.

**Rotary Rules**

These are the rules, signed by all Rotary students, and which MUST take precedent over family rules. The following are those which apply to the Inbound student:

1. The student and host parents will attend orientation meetings under the Rotary program.
2. All costs of insurance, medical, and transportation to and from the host country are the responsibility of the student. The student must have an emergency fund of $400, provided by the natural family. This fund is for emergencies only.

1. Travel during the exchange year is subject to Rotary and host family control, supervision, and approval. One-day trips other than with the host family (i.e., Rotary, church, school, etc.) must be approved by the host family. Any long distance (out-of-state) or over-night travel with the host family requires that Rotary be informed, and provided with the itinerary and contact phone numbers. Written permission from the natural parents may also be required. Students cannot travel with anyone other than a Rotary member or the host parents, or if school will be missed, without host family and Rotary District Chair permission. The host family includes past, present, or future host families.

Permission for travel may be denied if the Rotary or host parents decide that adult supervision is not adequate, or if the school will not give permission for the student to be absent.

1. While in the host country, supervision of the student is solely in the hands of host district, host clubs, and host families.

1. The student will become an integral part of the host family, assuming duties and responsibilities usual for a family member of that age, respect the wishes of the host family, and accept such guidance and restrictions as the host family and Rotary may impose.

1. The student must attend school full-time as specified by the host district during the year of the exchange. It is understood that no request will be made or granted for matriculation at a school level other than that specified by the host district.

1. The student will not be allowed to secure employment except under certain non-competitive conditions (baby-sitting, yard work, etc.) where payment is in cash, no Social Security card is required, and no more than 15 hours a week is spent in such activities.

1. Laws of the host country are to be observed at all times, and it is understood that in case of violation, no assistance may come from the student’s home country.

1. Romantic attachments must be avoided.

1. Smoking and use of tobacco products including vaping are forbidden.
2. The student is forbidden specifically from:

* + using controlled substances of any kind except those prescribed by a physician for valid medical reasons;
  + consuming alcoholic beverages of any kind unless part of religious service;
  + driving or controlling any motorized vehicle during the exchange year (including motorcycles, off-road vehicles, snowmobiles, boats, etc.).

1. Attendance may be required at Rotary sponsored events.

1. Costs related to an early return home, for whatever reason, are the sole responsibility of the student and his/her natural parents, as are any other costs not stated above as being the responsibility of the host club.

1. The student will return home at the end of their exchange year, by a direct route, as directed by the host district and host family.

The basic hard and fast rules that every student must abide by are the famous four D’s: No **D**rinking, no **D**riving, no (serious) **D**ating, and no **D**rugs. (Although experienced exchange students add a fifth D: “**D**on’t get caught!”, Rotarians often add a sixth: “**D**on’t think we won’t find out!”)

Sometimes a student is returned home prior to the scheduled conclusion of his stay. In most cases, early program termination is the result of one or more serious violations of the Rotary Rules. But there are other ways for a student to get sent home early, such as failure to attend school, ongoing conflicts with host families, disrespectful behavior, etc.

**Conducting a Discussion on Family Rules and Routines**

This is a very important discussion to have with your Inbound student soon after arrival. By familiarizing your new family member with your rules and routines, you can avoid many misunderstandings.

Before your student arrives, have a family meeting to discuss the rules (both spoken and unspoken).

Spoken rules will be fairly easy to identify: weekday and weekend curfews, everyone eats dinner together, no television until after homework is finished, etc.

Unspoken rules: Don’t talk with your mouth full. Don’t slam the doo. Ask to be excused from the table. Always put the toilet seat down afterwards. These may present a greater challenge.

Family routines: What is the order for using the bathrooms in the morning, and how long does each person get? Does the family regularly eat out Friday nights? When does the family get up on weekends? How late can friends call me? These may be the most difficult to identify, because they may be second nature to you.

Be understanding about mistakes such as swearing without knowing what the word really means, putting feet on the coffee table and elbows on the table. But, in the enforcement of the rules, be up-front about the consequences. Let your student know how you treat your own children in the same situation, and if it happens again, carry out the treatment. This will make for a much smoother and more positive experience for you and your student, as well as avoiding jealousy and negative feelings from your own children.

Remember that the hosted teenager is not unlike the American teenager, and all adolescents are difficult to cope with at times. Your student may be enthralled with music that you find less than enjoyable, needs limits set in where he/she can go and what hours to keep, reminders to clean up after themselves, and discussions on the “why’s” of the house rules.

The situation is complicated by the fact that no matter how good the student’s preparation was for the exchange, they are still strangers in a strange land. Appreciation for the beauty of the English language, as well as its inconsistencies, is gained from the deep involvement of words between the host family and the hosted student. Both the host family and the student will come face to face with their and other’s prejudices, which may be an uncomfortable experience since most of us are sure that we don't have any!

The vast majority of problems that arise between the host family and the student are due to communication misunderstandings. **This is no time for subtlety**. If something that is happening is bothering you, don’t assume the student is inconsiderate or selfish. Discuss the issue as soon as possible rather than letting it fester. If you approach the issue as a communication problem, tell the student when he/she does whatever it is that bothers you that it makes you feel uncomfortable, or angry, or worried. Suggest a better way for the student to act and the discussion will be less confrontational. Even if the discussion does become a little heated, this is better than trying to bury your feelings, hoping it will get better.

Remember that the Club Youth Exchange Officer and Club Counselor are your best resources. They can put you in touch with experienced host parents and other Rotary Youth Exchange folks to help with any problems

**Assigning Chores**

Along with the topic of family rules comes the distribution of household chores. You should expect your student to contribute an equal share to the running of the household, as do your own children. To expect anything less would not only prevent the student from making the transition from guest to family, but it will also risk jealousy and anger from your own children.

Some exchange students are not used to household chores or the “Do It Yourself” mentality of America. Students may need a little extra encouragement, as well as basic instructions on things like how to run a vacuum cleaner, how to dust, and how to wash their own clothes. Be patient but firm, and don’t mistake lack of experience for laziness.

It often helps to create a list that includes each family member’s responsibilities and how many times per week the chores are expected to be accomplished. Post this list in a place where the whole family will see it. It would be helpful if this were an established custom when your exchange student arrives, so others in the family are used to checking the list to make sure chores are done, and can guide your student in doing the same.

Ask if they have a special meal they would like to prepare for the family. Teach them how to make your favorite meal.

**Discussing Transportation Options**

Transportation issues can sometimes be a source of tension between students and their host parents. Host parents may feel that their student is too demanding and expects them to take him wherever he/she wishes to go. Students sometimes feel frustrated by the fact that Rotary International does not allow them to drive during their exchange year. Additionally, many students come from cities with well-developed public transportation. They find it difficult adjusting to placement in areas not serviced by public transportation.

Host parents, being sensitive to this background and these limitations, need to discuss school, after school, and weekend transportation with the student. Certain guidelines regarding transportation should be set to prevent misunderstandings and unrealistic expectations. One possible option is for the host family to help the student secure a used bicycle for use during his exchange. The bike can then be sold before departure, and most of the funds spent on the bike can be recovered.

And Rotary Club members, YEO and Counselor may also have some solutions for transportation.

***Challenges You May Face***

**Culture Shock**

Most students who spend time living and studying in a foreign country experience varying degrees of culture shock. The term culture shock is used to describe the feelings of disorientation experienced by people when living in a culture different from their own. It results from the awareness that one’s basic assumptions about life and one’s familiar ways of behaving are no longer appropriate or functional. Generally, culture shock begins around the second month of a student’s exchange and may continue for up to three months. When international students experience culture shock, they may exhibit one or more of the following behaviors:

* Criticize the American educational system

* Avoid attending classes because they feel that their peers are not friendly enough

* Express an exaggerated reaction to certain comments

* Exhibit irritability over minor events

* Withdraw and spend extended periods of time alone

* Communicate with or call home frequently

* Express feelings of being misunderstood

* Increase food consumption

* Exhibit complete loss of appetite;

* Complain of insomnia

* Sleep excessively

This list is by no means complete. Behavioral patterns at either end of the spectrum can be indicative of culture shock. The best assessment of whether or not your student is experiencing culture shock is to ask yourself if he/she seems to be exhibiting any unusual behavior that you consider extreme or out of the ordinary.

When experiencing culture shock, your student may feel as though there is something wrong with him and the way he is handling his adjustment. It is helpful for you to explain - based on the information we have provided - the dynamics of culture shock and outline some of the examples we have provided above. Your student needs to be reassured that these feelings are normal and should not be viewed as a weakness on his part.

Host families need to be prepared to offer emotional support to their student during this difficult time. The busier your inbound is, the quicker he will adjust to the new culture. If he has too much time to think about how different everything is, the recovery process will take much longer.

If your student attends school with, or has access to, people who speak his native language, your student may spend excessive amounts of time with these people conversing in their language rather than in English. This situation should be strongly discouraged. Avoiding practicing English, even though speaking in English may be very stressful to the student, will significantly prolong the student’s adjustment period. The more quickly the student masters English, becoming familiar with colloquial phrases and slang, the faster he will be able to make many friends and have many positive experiences during his exchange year.

Two issues that may be a challenge relating to differences in culture are drinking alcohol and smoking. It is difficult enough to adjust to a new culture without also dealing with a sudden cessation of smoking. Also, older exchange students (over 17) may be accustomed to going out drinking with their friends on a regular basis, and don’t understand why they cannot continue this practice in the U.S. Talk to your Rotary Youth Exchange Officer about suggestions on how to deal with this type of issue.

**Homesickness**

Another aspect of culture shock and the adjustment process is homesickness. Most international students experience this challenge at some point during their exchanges. This is a normal reaction to the separation from family, friends, and familiar surroundings.

To address this challenge, encourage your student to become involved in activities with your family and those sponsored by his school and your church. Not only will this help to facilitate the formation of friendships, it will foster an atmosphere of acceptance. This will help him to feel like a member of a group and take his mind off his friends and family back home. The more active and involved your student becomes, the less time he has to think about the things he misses.

Additionally, try to dissuade your student from spending an excessive amount of time on the phone or online with his natural family or friends from home. Even though this is a normal reaction to homesickness, it can deepen the feelings of sadness and separation. It isn’t the words as much as just the sound of loved ones’ voices that trigger the feelings of isolation.

Discuss limiting communication to their folks at home. An instant message on how miserable they are will upset their parents long after the student has already moved beyond the immediate crisis of that day.

Some host families may interpret their student’s homesick behaviors as a negative reflection on their efforts. This may lead them to the conclusion that the student misses his natural parents as a result of unhappiness with his new American family. Most often this is not the case. However, this kind of misunderstanding can cause tensions between host family members and the student. Host families must remember that working with the student toward decreasing his feelings of homesickness and providing him with a warm and supportive environment will do much to alleviate this situation.

**The Conflict of Expectations Versus Reality**

Your exchange student will undoubtedly experience a great deal of excitement and anticipation prior to arrival in the United States. This enthusiasm has probably been growing ever since the moment of his or her acceptance into the program.

On arrival, the inbound will find this new environment positive and interesting. And most likely be eager to see and do everything possible in the shortest amount of time. As the novelty wears off, your student may begin to feel confused by confronting new lifestyles, value systems, behaviors, and beliefs. It is important for host families to realize this is a normal reaction. The transition phase of an exchange is a critical, yet often confusing, period for the international student. Offering your support and understanding will be the most effective way to help him or her deal with the conflicting emotions being experienced.

Eventually, your exchange student will reach a level of understanding and respect for the new host culture. Only then will his/her mind be able to accommodate both the positive and negative aspects of the culture and allow effective functioning within it. Frustrations that occur after this transitional period will be handled much more easily by your inbound.

You, too, may experience a conflict between your expectations and reality. Finding out that your student is different than what you expected can be disappointing, too. This is particularly challenging for host parents who have had a positive hosting experience in the past. Each student is very much an individual, just as your own children are. Try to evaluate your expectations and make sure that they are realistic.

**Comparisons**

Your exchange student will naturally compare different aspects of American life with life at home. This is a normal reaction of students during their adjustment process. These comparisons can be healthy observations when phrased in a positive, non-judgmental manner: “In my country, families buy the groceries they need on a daily basis while I’ve noticed that here, in the U.S., families only shop once a week”. However, they can negatively impact the host family and others when phrased in a judgmental manner: “If you shopped for the groceries you needed every day, like we do back home, we would always have fresh food in the house”. This may be difficult for you and your family to tolerate.

A productive way to deal with this situation is to communicate to your student how it makes you feel when he offers his comparisons between his country and the United States in a critical manner. Once your student becomes more conscious of his behaviors and sensitive to your feelings, subsequent comparisons should be expressed in more non-judgmental terms. Keep in mind, though, that you are dealing with young people who sometimes speak first, and think later, especially when they are feeling frustrated. Be empathetic and patient, while continuing to suggest ways your student can share aspects of his home life in positive ways.

There are sure to be differences between your family’s lifestyle and the way other host families live. Your exchange student may verbalize his observations regarding these differences to you and your family. It is easy to hold your discomfort inside because you do not want to offend your student or compare your lifestyle with others, the “keep up with the Jones’s” syndrome. Don’t avoid the issue. Doing so only increases, not alleviates, tensions between you and your student. Again, the most effective way to handle this situation is to talk with your student and make him aware of your feelings.

One significant issue that may occur springs from the fact that many exchange students come from large, urban cities, and many of the Rotary host parents live in suburban or rural settings. When they are interviewed for the program, students are told that they must be prepared to accept a placement in any one of a number of different environments such as city, suburb, small town, or rural, and that many students go to rural areas. Often, they are surprised when they arrive at their new home and discover it is in a much more rural location than they had envisioned

Host families need to prepare themselves for this reaction and not feel offended by it. In an effort to help your student adjust, point out the activities that are unique to your area that may not have been available at home.

Accentuate the positive aspects of living in a rural community. Explain to your student that there are many fun things to do in a rural area, they just may be different than the things he considered fun in his country. Try to make an extra effort to accommodate your student in participating in extracurricular activities at school to increase his circle of friends.

If you become defensive and hostile, the opportunity to teach your student something genuinely different from his past experiences will be significantly impacted. And remember, if the student wanted things to be the same as they were at home, spending a year as an exchange student is almost guaranteed to be the wrong way to accomplish that!

**Bonding With Your Student**

The close relationship that can form between you and your student is one that may last a lifetime. For this reason, Rotary, as well as most host families, believes that this is the most important byproduct of the hosting experience.

It is quite common for an exchange student to build a closer relationship with one host parent than with the other. In some instances, your student will form a close bond with one of your children. However, it is also possible that no bond is ever formed. Please realize that this can happen. Try not to be disappointed if this happens to you. Focus on the many other positive aspects of the experience, such as the chance to learn about another culture, perhaps the good example the exchange student set academically for your own children, etc.

**Encouraging Your Student to Share**

Because each student comes from a different background, it is possible that your student may not be accustomed to sharing certain things. It may be a difficult transition for an only child to now share a room, the bathroom, household items, and even your attention, with his new host sibling(s). Being aware of this can help you identify and address conflicts before they become serious problems.

**Sibling Jealousy**

If there are other children in your family, there is the possibility for sibling jealousy to surface. Typically, when your exchange student first arrives in America, he will receive a great deal of attention from his host parents, the community, and the faculty and students at school. Unfortunately, this special treatment may cause his host sibling(s) to experience feelings of neglect and abandonment.

As a result, jealousy may develop toward the exchange student and rivalry may emerge between them. Host parents should be aware of these potential problems and monitor their own behavior, and well as the behavior of the natural children. As a host parent, be careful not to contribute to the development of jealousy by comparing your children to your student. Additionally, avoid showing any favoritism to the student.

Keeping the lines of communication open and encouraging discussions of any negative emotions early in the transition process can greatly decrease the possibility of conflict. By addressing this challenge and removing this barrier, the avenues are open to facilitate the development of a good relationship between your children and the student.

**Unwillingness to Recognize the Host Mother’s Authority**

The roles of authority within the American family structure may be very unfamiliar to your international student. In many cultures, the idea of a woman taking charge in the home, much less at work, is unheard of. Therefore, some students may feel they do not have to listen to or obey the requests of their host mothers. It may be necessary for the host father or the Club Counselor to explain this aspect of American culture so that the host mother’s authority is not questioned.

**Helping Your Student Make the “Guest to Family Member” Transition**

After your student has arrived, you should begin to help him make the transition from guest to family member right away. To do this, host families should start treating their exchange student in the same manner as they do their own children.

As mentioned previously, an important aspect of this is assigning your exchange student his share of the household chores. In doing so, you are communicating to your student that he is an important part of your family, one who shares equally in the responsibility of maintaining the home. Furthermore, by making it clear to your student that he is to abide by the same rules as other members of the family, his place within your family structure is again reinforced.

As a parent, you must be careful to not fall into the habit of making exceptions for your student when he breaks the rules. To do so will cause tensions to develop and will put a strain on the relationships within the home.

**Curfews and Whereabouts**

You may find that your exchange student was allowed a greater amount of freedom by his natural parents than you feel comfortable permitting while he is living with you. Do not feel pressured by this fact to alter your rules. As host parents, you are entrusted with the responsibility of looking after this student as you would your own children.

Be clear with the student from the beginning what your requirements are regarding curfews and whereabouts. By communicating these restrictions to your student, you are confirming to him that you believe he is responsible enough to follow your rules. Let him know what time you expect him in on school nights and on weekends. Let him know that you would like him to call if he is going to be late, and let him know if there are any places or areas that are off-limits. Clearly set the acceptable parameters for him and require him to respect them.

**Hygiene and Bathroom Etiquette**

This is an issue that many host families do not realize can become a problem. In some cultures, people do not bathe as often as most Americans. This can cause problems for the student with his host family and his peers.

One useful intervention is to purchase certain toiletries for all family members, including your exchange student. You can pass these items out, explaining to your children that you bought these for each of them to use daily. By directing these comments to the entire family, and not just your exchange student, you will avoid making him feel as though he was being singled out and criticized.

Alternatively, explain in privacy with your student the American customs and toiletries. It would be best if the host parent of the same sex as the student handle this discussion. This would also be an appropriate time to discuss feminine hygiene products with a female exchange student. Be sensitive to embarrassing your student, but don’t avoid the issues because it will only make things more difficult later on.

**Use of the Bathroom**

In most households across the country, mornings are a hectic and rushed time of the day. Furthermore, because sharing a bathroom is typical in most homes, it is necessary for the host family to discuss with their exchange student what the best time would be for him to use the bathroom in the morning. It is also a good idea to set a limit on how long he can stay in the bathroom, since others will probably be waiting to take their turns. Be sure to let him know in what condition he should leave the bathroom when he is finished.

**Picking Up After Himself/Herself**

This issue should be discussed when explaining the household rules to your exchange student. Make sure your student knows what it means to “pick up” after himself. Use specific examples. Clothes he throws on the floor are to be picked up before he leaves and put in the proper place. Dishes are to be put in the sink or the dishwasher. Homework is to be cleared from the kitchen table before dinner. The more precise and clear you are when establishing these rules, and the more consistently you enforce them, the better your student will perform.

**Chores and Household Responsibilities**

The importance of assigning chores has been mentioned several times. However, it may be that your student has never had to help out at home before. Therefore, it may be necessary for you to explain and demonstrate how to perform certain tasks. Your student should be quite willing to help, but if he is unsure of what you want him to do or how to do it, a misunderstanding may occur. Be sure to clearly explain what you expect him to do, and maybe walk through the tasks the first time or two with him. If he questions the reason for doing chores, let him know that everyone in the family carries an equal share of the burden. As a family member, this is his share.

**Drinking and Drugs**

According to Rotary policy, students are not allowed to buy, sell, or use any controlled or illegal substance without the prescription of a doctor. This is the quickest way for your student to be returned to his home country. In addition, students are not allowed to consume alcoholic beverages while in the United States. Talk to your Rotary Youth Exchange Officer if you have any questions regarding these policies.

**Dating**

It is fairly safe to assume that the issue of dating will arise at some point during your student’s exchange. The student is encouraged to go out with a group of friends. He/she may have a date for Homecoming or Prom or other special school event. This is to protect the exchange student from emotional hardship.

**Sex**

Sex is a delicate issue regardless of your country of origin. Sexual intimacy is not permitted during the exchange. It is addressed during their home country orientation and also here in D6080 orientation when they arrive. Try to establish an atmosphere where they feels comfortable approaching you with future questions. If a difficult situation arises that you do not feel comfortable handling, call the student’s Rotary counselor for advice.

**Time**

Among the countries of the world, the concept of times varies widely. Most Americans are very time-conscious and expect others to be as well. Yet, for the international student, arriving thirty minutes late for an appointment may be completely acceptable in his culture.

It is important for you to recognize this difference and to work with your student as they attempt to overcome a lifetime of learning. This process can become significantly easier if the student knows the host family is aware of these cultural differences and will support them in making the appropriate adjustments.

**Diet, Meal Times, and Weight Gains**

As host parents, you may find yourselves concerned with what and how often your exchange student eats. Some international students are overwhelmed by the variety and quantity of food available to Americans. It is not uncommon for exchange students to average between a 10 to 20 pound weight gain during their stay in America. Overeating can also be the student’s way of dealing with the stress of new surroundings.

Regardless of the reasons, the host family can help regulate their student’s diet by designating specific times when meals with the family will be eaten. Make sure your exchange student understands that he is expected to be present for these meals. In addition, it is helpful to encourage your student to engage in regular physical activity as a means of controlling his weight.

**Student Illness**

If your student falls ill, it is your responsibility to excuse them from school attendance and, if necessary, seek appropriate medical attention. Watch your student - they may be unwilling to tell you theyare ill - and treat them as necessary either by keeping them out of school and activities (despite storms of protest), by taking them to the doctor (again, despite fear or protest), or both. Realize that in some countries going to the doctor is frightening since it is reserved for severe illnesses. Reassure them that such visits are routine and often preventative.

The student's application contains a statement from the natural parents releasing their guardianship and establishing guardianship with the current host parents to make all decisions related to schooling, medical treatment, and social activities. This form should be taken along on any trip the family and student take together so that any medical decisions made by the host parents will be accepted by the authorities.

For serious illness or accident during their exchange year, the District Chair will put the District Crisis Management Plan into action.

**Language Skills**

Your exchange student may arrive with a limited grasp of English and, in many cases, a minimal ability to converse. Even students with many years of instruction in English may have difficulty in understanding and speaking American English initially. Shortly after meeting your student, make it a point to emphasize that they should never shake their head in a 'yes' nod motion when they really have not understood what you have asked them.

During the first few weeks, this difficulty may be attributed to the speed at which most Americans speak and the tremendous amount of slang we use. In the beginning, the student must mentally translate every word into their native language before responding. Therefore, in addition to having a little extra patience when dealing with the student, try to speak clearly, and avoid using slang, as these unfamiliar expressions will confuse your student. Remind them to avoid the head nod unless they DO understand. Another habit that is common among Americans is the use of acronyms. Instead of stating "I would like you to set the table now," you might be inclined to say, "Can you get that table set ASAP?" For someone who is still learning how to speak English, abbreviations and acronyms can often prove to be meaningless and ambiguous.

In the beginning, host families should be careful to articulate their speech clearly and speak slightly slower to their student. You should not raise your voice, nor should you speak in broken English the way your student may do, as this will only confuse the student further and undoubtedly make them more self-conscious about communicating. As your student's proficiency increases, begin helping them improve their English by correcting their word usage if he/she requests help in this area.

On occasion it may be necessary to seek help from someone fluent in the student's native language. This can be a teacher, a returned exchange student from that country (probably the best source of help!), a family friend, or someone from Rotary. This may be the best way to help the student deal with the frustration of knowing that a problem exists, but not being able to communicate with the host family about it. On occasion a student may try to avoid dealing with a problem by pretending to not understand.

On the other hand, if you speak your student's language, refrain from using it frequently and encourage their use of English instead.

**Tutors**

Most American schools are happy to host an exchange student because of the benefit it provides to other students in their school. However, if the student's lack of English skills is impacting teachers by requiring a significant amount of additional help, special tutoring may be required. Use of an English tutor is an excellent way to conquer our language. Any cost for special tutoring will be the responsibility of the natural parents. Contact your student's Rotary Counselor or the school counselor for recommendations.

**High School**

While academic success is important for all students, it is a challenge for an exchange student who is learning English as well. Classes should be selected that are not too difficult and allow the student to meet people and to experience our culture. Classes designed for heavy homework should be avoided. Enrolling the student in language appropriate classes is very important.

Often, a student who earned high marks in his/her native country will perform poorly at the beginning of their exchange. Encourage your student to work with his/her peers in study sessions or doing homework together. This helps your student academically and increases his/her circle of friends. Also, it might be nice to offer to help your student understand his/her homework assignments — especially early in the exchange.

If the student seems to be trying but continues to do poorly, provide support for the student by speaking with his/her teachers and/or school counselor. Or contact your student's Rotary Counselor for assistance.

Most students will receive no credit for the courses taken while on exchange. Most will not be allowed to graduate. Full attendance and effort in school is absolutely required. Failure to TRY is grounds to be sent home.

A host of small problems can be avoided by asking how school is different here than at home. , .. And then LISTENING.

**Attendance**

The rule for school attendance is based upon what you, as the Host family, would find appropriate foryour own child. Attendance in school is required every day the school is in session unless a scheduled Rotary function falls on a school day. Host parents are responsible for calling the school when the student is ill or needs to be involved in an activity that will be culturally educational and beneficial for the student.

If you would excuse your own child for the day or part of the day in question, it is then also appropriate for you to take your student out of school. Consult your student' s Rotary Counselor when in doubt. If your student is planning to miss school to travel with their biological parents, prior approval must be obtained from the Club Rotary Counselor and District Youth Exchange Officer.

**Establishing Friendships**

Exchange students may or may not have a difficult time establishing friendships. They soon discover that American teenagers typically form small social groups, or "cliques," and are often not very accepting of new people. International students need to be assured that this is quite common in the United States, and that it is no reflection on them as individuals. Encourage your student to take the first step by approaching new people and trying new activities.

Make sure they know you are supporting them in their efforts. Often, this can be the most intimidating part of their exchange, particularly if the student is somewhat shy. Your student may take refuge in associating primarily with other international students, but he/she must be encouraged to cultivate new American friends. Becoming a part of school clubs or  theater groups, or participating in band or choir, and sports teams will help provide an instant bond with some of the students and will help the student to make friends.

**Sports Eligibility — MSHAA.org**

If your student is interested in participating in sports, please make sure you understand the eligibility requirements — including, but not limited to, restrictions on age and students who have previously graduated from high school. The Club Counselor and Club YEO can help with this.

**End of the Year Tours**

Each student has the opportunity to participate in several optional trips during the year. All students receive information about these tour options prior to their arrival in the United States and again during their orientation. The costs for these tours range from $2500 -$4500 plus airfare to the tour departure city. Students must realize that there are 300 students eligible to participate in these tours and only about 150 bus seats available, so applications and deposits must be handed in promptly. Complete payment is due in early spring.

There are only two tours are approved by District 6080.

USA Tour (http://www.usatour.us)

BELO USA Travel ([www.belousa.com](http://www.belousa.com))

The District is charged with endorsing each applicant as to their ability to follow the rules and general behavior. Your student must obtain the money from their natural parents and pay when registering for the tour. Also, a color photo is required to be attached to the application for identification purposes.

**Priorities**

Your student may find that many opportunities will be available for them to explore during their exchange year. It is important that the host family understands how to help the student prioritize these obligations and invitations. Here are several guidelines to apply:

* The first priority is always District RYE events and activities
* Local Rotary Club activities have second priority
* The current host family has third priority - followed by former host families

Consideration must be given to special dates - Christmas, family birthdays, special family trips, spring break, Prom - while the student is being hosted.

Review the District calendar of events (included in this manual) as host families should not schedule activities that will conflict with scheduled District events. **REQUIRED** District events have a greater priority than any other activities - including Homecoming, a football game, and even Prom. However, with proper notice to the District Youth Exchange Officer, arrangements and compromises may be made so a student who is participating in a special school event can possibly attend both events.

**Moving to a New Host Family**

It is typical in the Rotary Youth Exchange program for the exchange student to stay with three families over the course of their 10-11 month stay. That means that the student, who has become accustomed to one family's ways of doing things, must start over with a new family several times. The first transition to a new family usually occurs after Thanksgiving. The second transition usually occurs in early-mid March. However, these dates are flexible and can be adjusted to accommodate the wishes of the various families.

The current host family can do a great deal to ease the transition to a new host family. It is important for the student to meet and get to know the new host family in advance of the move. Invite them over for dinner or have the new host family invite the student for dinner. Let the student see the room they will be staying in and meet their sibling(s). Current host parents should share the exchange student's food likes and dislikes with the next family and share the more positive aspects of their hosting experience. Try to keep negative comments to a minimum because your horror stories may cause the new host family to form a negative preconception of what their experience will be like. That being said, advice on areas of concern should be communicated to the next family as well as what worked in resolving difficulties. This will make the new host family feel more comfortable.

Plan the move early, meet the date agreed upon by the families and prepare the student. Talk about the move a few weeks before it occurs and start getting the student packed and ready to make the change.

The student may have some fears about leaving, so you should try to reassure him/her. The student may be reluctant to move because they have become comfortable with your family and anxious about having to go through the frustration of learning new ways of doing things again. It is not unusual for the student to become quite attached to the first host family. By arranging contact with the subsequent host family ahead of time, you can help to make the transition less stressful. Explain to the student that you cannot interfere with his/her developing a relationship with the new family and although you can see them occasionally, they are to try to focus on the new family.

Comparisons are inevitable and should be handled by pointing out that each family's rules and lifestyles are different and that adjustment to them is part of Rotary's purpose. The student's Counselor will discuss the new host family with the exchange student, accenting the positive aspects of learning a new viewpoint of American culture.

If you become aware that there is a serious problem with another host family, you should encourage the student to talk, not with you, but with the Club YEO/Counselor. Often the student is reluctant to do so (What will the new family think if I tattle on them? Will the Club YEO think I'm a wimp for not handling it myself? etc.). Insist that they bring the Rotary support network in, and if you see that they haven't, YOU talk to the Club YEO about your concerns, so they can handle any transition issues.