

Dear Rotarians:

I need your help in placing five students in our district. We have a boy and a girl coming from France, a boy and a girl coming from Japan, and a boy coming from Germany. We also have a boy coming from New Zealand; but he has already been placed.

Host families do not have to be Rotarian and single parents can also be host parents. This year, I am seeing couples with separate names hosting in other districts. The key is that all host parents have to have a background check. Don't think that only host families come from Rotarians. They don't. The great majority of host parents are outside of Rotary and until they are asked to be host parents, they don't even know what Rotary is. You can use this as a good recruitment tool for your club. It happens.

The club's responsibility is to provide an allowance to the exchange of \$50.00 per month during the time that they are with a host family. If they go home early, that is the end of the allowance. All students carry an American Insurance Card and provide a \$300.00 emergency fund to the host family should it become necessary. Another responsibility of the club is to provide a counselor from the club. They have some training in their responsibilities and they touch base with the exchange at least once a month--by phone, Skype, email, or eyeball to eyeball. The club also has to have a member inspect the home for cleanliness and safety prior to the exchange coming and six weeks after the exchange has arrived. There must be a second host family for an indefinite period of time (ideally a semester) so inspections must be for the second host family before that takes place.

We encourage the exchange to visit the club at least once a month and to complete a service project with the club.

There are so many benefits of hosting an exchange that I can't list them all. Students in our schools learn a lot about the exchanges home country. The exchange sees a side of the United States that may have been distorted before they came. I asked one exchange what it was he learned about the United States. He replied, "I thought if you came to America, you could do whatever you pleased that was American freedom. But I learned that America lives by rules and responsibilities and that freedom that I had in my head wasn't a true picture of the United States."

So I encourage you to take a close look at your community and seek out good host families. I ask that your club take on the responsibility of hosting a student exchange. If your club hasn't sponsored a youth, it is my job and the job of Paul Krieg to help you with the sponsorship. (Paul is the Inbound Chairman of the district.) Some clubs have elected to help other clubs if the other club doesn't have the financial ability to host, but has a host family. This is especially true for clubs in the cities who are limited by school district requirements.

You know my phone. It is below. You can help me with the stress of placing students by hosting and finding families. Eastern Kentucky covers a lot of ground, has a lot of wonderful cities and schools, and a lot of mighty fine folks and excellent Rotarians. We only need host families for five kids. Let's get this done! jtl

Respectfully,
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