

Rotary District 6310 - Youth Exchange Short Term Exchange Program

Overview

Rotary Short Term Exchange Program (STEP) presents opportunities for students to advance their knowledge and world understanding by enabling them to live abroad for a brief time over the summer. Participants will live with one host family in the destination country for approximately one month in the summer, under the sponsorship of their local Rotary Club. This is a true exchange program because the host brother/sister from abroad will also spend a month with the participating student in his/her home in the USA during the same summer. Possible exception is if a student goes to the Southern Hemisphere then the student from USA would be there in the summer and host brother/sister would come during the winter (their summer) for the 3-4 weeks.

Objective: To foster world peace, international understanding and good will by extending international communication at the personal level through the exchange of high school age students. It is our hope that these young people will be able to observe, first hand, the problems and accomplishments of other countries by living with and meeting people of cultures, creeds and colors other than their own.

Eligibility: Any student, age 15-19 of good character who possesses a warm personality and a desire to live abroad and host in return. Candidates should be adaptable and flexible, well-mannered and want to experience life in other countries and cultures. Students will also be expected to follow the rules of their host country, host family and Rotary International. A minimum 2.50 GPA is required. Children of Rotarians and non-Rotarians are equally eligible.

Sponsorship: Applicants will be sponsored by a local Rotary Club in District 6310.

YE Short Term Exchange Program Organization

The STEP Program is a component of the District Youth Exchange Program and the operations are coordinated by the District 6310 YE STEP Committee. The program is coordinated at several levels; namely the local Rotary Club who may sponsor a student and the District STEP Committee who identifies and coordinates partnerships with foreign Rotary clubs, districts and eligible exchange students.

The Application Process

This is a two-step application process. First, the preliminary application, found on the STEP website homepage, may be submitted any time prior to **December 15**. Once the preliminary application has been reviewed and found to meet basic age and GPA criteria it will be passed along to the local Rotary Club's designated STEP Rotarian. Simultaneously the applicant will be sent a link to the Central States Rotary Youth Exchange STEP full application as well as supplemental documents. The supplemental documents require medical and dental information and signatures, as well as witnessed signatures from both parents and the student agreeing to the rules and conditions of the exchange. Guidance through the final application process will be provided by the STEP Committee and local Rotarian. The final application deadline with supplemental forms complete is **February 15**.

Acceptance into the program will be determined by the home interview conducted by the local STEP Rotarian, and a review of the full application; with guidance from the District YE STEP team.

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Post Final Application Process

Matches arranged: March 1 – April 30. Finding a match in the country of the student's choice is the responsibility of the STEP committee members. Once the complete application, program fee and approval by the local Rotary are received the STEP team will begin a search for a match in the preferred countries:

- The matching process is dependent upon when applications are received in both countries, the number of applications received and the gender of applicants.
- The student's application information is shared with our contacts abroad. They in turn share information about their applicants with us.
- Once a potential match is found the STEP committee contacts the student to confirm the match.
- The host family's information is shared with students so all can begin the process of coordinating the dates of the exchange.
- Both families must have unconditionally agreed upon the dates of the exchange and notified the District STEP Coordinators before booking flights.
 - Very important: Students and their families are responsible for flight arrangements and cost of total airfare. Cancellation of the airline tickets would be subject to the terms agreed to with the chosen airline.
- April: An orientation meeting is held. This meeting is mandatory. Students and at least one of their parents or guardians are required to attend.
- June: The exchanges begin; students either travel abroad or prepare to receive their visiting brother or sister.

Responsibilities of Local Rotary Clubs

Each Rotary Club must interview the student applicant to ensure he or she will be a good ambassador for their community. The Rotary Club is also responsible for ensuring the student's home is appropriate to host the inbound student. The Rotary Club President and Youth Exchange Officer (or other designated STEP Rotarian) must sign the final application. The Rotary Club and student should remain in contact during the exchange. Both students should make every effort to attend a local Rotary meeting during the exchange and should be able to speak about their experiences. Local Rotarians and Clubs may also provide experiences for the visiting foreign students.

Match

Students will be matched with a student in a preferred country. The two students will spend an agreed upon time together in each home. The two host families agree upon the actual dates of the exchange. The US student can fly to their host country first, then bring their host brother or sister back with them to complete the exchange or vice versa.

Language

Some countries such as Spain, France and Germany do prefer for participants to have basic knowledge of the language and a willingness to try to speak, given that these languages are frequently taught in US schools. However, all other countries are very open to participants without skills in their native language. The program is cultural in nature and is for a short period of time. Many countries throughout the world teach English as a second language and most participating students from abroad are proficient in speaking English. If students have taken a foreign language in high school and elect to visit a country that speaks that language, students will be able to gain some conversational ability. Most students do not find language to be a barrier to having a great exchange experience.

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Host family's Responsibilities

Host families are expected to treat the host student as they would their own child. It is also appropriate to entertain the student beyond the normal family activities to give him/her the best opportunity to experience American culture. Examples include family vacations to a summer cottage, a relative's home, or even another state, a trip to the zoo, the beach, a baseball game or museum. Room, board, travel expenses incurred in the States are paid for by the host family as they would if the visiting student were a normal family member.

American students should have NO job commitments during the exchange period so they can spend time with their foreign students. Often students are treated first class when they travel abroad. We would like the American host family to reciprocate with an excellent experience for the foreign students.

Student/Family Cost

- **\$250 Administration fee** which includes the cost of processing application and background checks, supplemental Life and Medical insurance while abroad, and the orientation meeting.
- **Administration refund policy:** In the rare instance that a match is not found for the application we will refund all but \$100.00 of the administration fee. The \$100.00 is used to cover completed background checks and other miscellaneous costs associated with our attempts to find matches for our students.
- Cost of round-trip airfare from home to the foreign country. Airfare costs have run anywhere from \$1,500 to \$2,000 depending on the destination and the number of connecting flights necessary to get to the final destination.
- Students let the Rotary STEP Coordinators know the travel dates as soon as they are confirmed. Insurance coverage (purchased through the same vendor as Central States Rotary Youth Exchange for 30 days coverage) will be arranged to cover the specific dates the students are traveling.
- There is also the cost to the family of hosting a guest for 3-4 weeks and the additional cost of any excursions or events the student may attend with the host family.
- Students must obtain a passport and visa (if required).
- Students provide their own spending money for the duration of the exchange.

Countries Available for Exchange

Rotary offers a broad choice of countries to ensure students have a good range of options. Country availability varies from year to year. This list is a sample of countries STEP students have gone to in previous years.

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| • Czech Republic | • Netherlands |
| • France | • Sweden |
| • Italy | • Switzerland |
| • Spain | • England |
| • Germany | |