



ROTARY
INTERNATIONAL
YOUTH EXCHANGE PROGRAM

**YOUTH EXCHANGE OFFICERS
PRECONVENTION MEETING**

**Bangkok, Thailand
4-5 May 2012**

FINDINGS COMMITTEE REPORT

MEMBERS:

David Anderson, Chair, D9790, Australia
Chetan Desai, D3140, India
Luiz Spengler, D4470, Brazil
Ed True, D6510, USA
Henry Wun, D3480, Taiwan



THURSDAY 3 MAY

Registration for the Preconvention Meeting and the Convention itself opened at the InterContinental Hotel at 1200 and for those who had pre-registered the line moved quickly and efficiently. All the problems experienced in the first use of the electronic name tags at New Orleans in 2011 had been eliminated.

Under the Chairmanship of RI Youth Exchange Committee Chairman **Neil McDonald**, a meeting of leaders (presenters, Discussion Group leaders, Workshop Facilitators, Sergeants-at-Arms and the Findings Committee) was held at the InterContinental Hotel adjacent to the official YEO Hotel (the Holiday Inn). RI Youth Exchange Office Senior Supervisor **Kate Hoeppe** also briefed the attendees at the meeting especially on transport arrangements to and from the venue for the Preconvention Meeting, the IMPACT Centre. Members of the RI Youth Exchange Committee were also present. At the conclusion of the general meeting, the teams met for their own briefing sessions.

A **Welcome Reception** was conducted at the InterContinental from 1730 hours allowing all who had registered for the Preconvention Meeting to meet informally. The hotel provided a wide variety of both Thai and international cuisine to suit all appetites. The Cash Bar operated on the voucher system which was a new cultural experience for some. No money changed hands at the bar as attendees were required to pre-purchase vouchers.

As the event was informal, there were no welcome speeches. Over 300 were estimated to have attended the reception.

DAY 1 (Friday 4 May)

Venue: IMPACT Centre

Presentations: Most PowerPoint and other presentations used in the Plenary Sessions and the Workshops have been made available online at the following address:

http://www.slideshare.net/Rotary_International/tag/yeo-preconvention-2012

OPENING PLENARY SESSION

RI Youth Exchange Chairman **Neil McDonald** presided over all Plenary Sessions.

Welcoming remarks were made by Chairman Neil saying many attendees had come a long way and for those who had availed themselves of the Preconvention tours had already been exposed to the warmth and hospitality of the Thai people. He identified a full program over the next two days which allowed not only plenty of time for networking, renewing old friendships and making new ones, but also plenty of opportunity for all participants to share their experiences, ideas and practices. He ended the opening remarks with an invocation which ended with the words "I am a Rotary Youth Exchange student because I care."

Members of the **RI Youth Exchange Committee** were **introduced** to the meeting as was Liaison Director Paul Kynff. Also introduced were:

- Kate Hoepfel, RI Youth Exchange Office Senior Supervisor
- Adam Doty, RI New Generations Programs Department Manager
- Eric Marcus, Chief Sergeant-at-Arms and the other Sergeants-at-Arms
- David Anderson, Chair of the Findings Committee and the other members of the Committee

Neil explained the new online evaluation survey for this Preconvention meeting. Unlike previous meetings, there would be no paper evaluation form distributed and all attendees would be emailed and requested to click on a link and complete the online survey.

The **Roll Call of countries** identified thirty-eight countries from the Rotary world had registered for the Preconvention Meeting although all thirty-eight countries were not represented at the meeting.

The **experience** of being a **current Rotary Youth Exchange student** was shared with the audience by **Sadie Rose Zavgren**. She is a student sponsored by the Rotary Club of Milford, New Hampshire, D 7870 and currently being hosted in District 3360 by the Rotary Clubs of Naresuan and Pitsanoluke, northern Thailand.

Zavgren spoke of the confusion she experienced before she arrived in Thailand nine months earlier – confusion with the language announcements made on the plane before arrival! She said she was totally confused. She spoke of the first few months and how she came to grips with a difficult language and tips she developed to help her in understanding it. She spoke of the cultural experience of being the only 'farang' (foreigner) in her school of over 2,000 students, and how, at first, she felt awkward with the attention she received. Sandee (as she became known by the Thai people) spoke of the independence she learned with her host families and her world seemed much smaller. She acknowledged, "I had to adjust to this new life and had to accept that I was no longer the same person I was back home." Participants warmly appreciated Zavgren sharing nine months of her yearlong exchange.

Zavgren address can be viewed at www.youtube.com/watch?v=3GNkG7ETCMQ

The **experience** of being a **past Rotary Youth Exchange student** was conveyed by **Simon Mizzi** who was a student from France to Thailand in 2008. Having had the opportunity of being a Rotary youth

exchange student opened up for Simon a whole new world and provided him with choices he would otherwise not have had. On return to France after the year of exchange, Simon enrolled in business school in Bordeaux. After eighteen months, the university provided him with several internships over the remainder of his course. After a six month internship at Nottingham (UK), he had the opportunity for another in Bangkok. Without the experience of being a youth exchange student this chance would never have been an option. His third and final internship is why Simon's third internship was in Bangkok and why he is currently in Thailand. Simon paid tribute to the Rotary Youth Exchange Program. It had given him choice; it gave him the chance to decide his own path and to make his own decisions. Being on exchange, students are faced with circumstances where they may be forced to make a decision. "Making Choices" is a valuable lesson exchange students learn. Youth exchange teaches valuable life lessons but which, at the time, a youth exchange may not see but certainly later in life, they do see.

The final speaker in the **Opening Plenary Session** was RI President **Kalyan Banerjee**. This outstanding Rotary leader (2011-12 District Governors might be biased) began his address by acknowledging that youth exchange is, "one of my favourite Rotary programs of all time" and that the RI Board of Directors agreed to allow two full days for this Preconvention meeting. In keeping with his theme for the year and one of the areas of focus being the family, Banerjee recognized that the single most important and valuable aspect of the youth exchange program is the benefit it brings to families. Youth exchange involves the whole family. It strengthens families as well as bringing young people into the family of Rotary. The presence of a Rotary youth exchange student within a host family enriches the life of that family and they also have the opportunity of seeing a young person grow and mature.

Banerjee then broadened his address to highlight the need to see younger members within Rotary. Only 10% of Rotary's membership is under 40 and we have to ensure that our generation of Rotarians is not the last. Accordingly, we have to reach out to the new generations and, "go where our young people are." This means that social media and Club websites become the public face of Rotary Clubs. He encouraged clubs to stay in touch with their youth exchange students on their return, mentor them, and bring them into the Rotary family.

The Rotary International President also referred to the response of Youth Exchange students at the March 2011 Japanese tsunami and subsequent nuclear catastrophe, their potential and ability to build world peace, and help to fight global hunger. He also referred to the ability of Rotarians, through their determination to end polio, to go where government and non-government agencies can't go; specifically, into homes and schools.

Past President Banerjee left all with the message, "good luck, go on and never stop" in what you do for our new generations.

The session concluded with a standing ovation to the RI President.

Attendance: estimated 250+

PLENARY SESSION 2

The session commenced with a presentation entitled “**Strengthening Youth Exchange at the Club level**”. The presenters were **Pauline Perrault** and **Rhonda Tkachuk**, both from D 5370 in Alberta, Canada, and were joined in the presentation by **Connor Malone**, a ROTEX student who was on a yearlong exchange in Thailand.

The speakers agreed on the need to have a vision, and it all begins with Rotary clubs: without Rotary clubs there is no Rotary Youth Exchange.

The presentation focused on:

- Engaging Clubs
- Marketing
- Training
- Program successes

Also highlighted were several practices developed and utilized in District 5370 to build the program and gain greater Rotary club participation.

Time constraints prevented full expansion and development of the presentation which is available through the Slideshare site referred to earlier.

Attendance: 200+

CONCURRENT WORKSHOPS

Workshop A: Online Training Demonstration Tutorial

Presenter: Dennis White, D 6220, USA

Synopsis:

The workshop focused on a review of online youth protection training for volunteers at club, district and multi-district levels. An introduction to the online training was outlined during the 2011 YEO Meeting in New Orleans. This workshop enabled participants to have the complete program demonstrated to them.

The online training can be seen at www.yeoresources.org/Pages/ProtectionTraining.html

Online training can be set up for districts or multidistricts but only District Protection Officers will be able to set up and administer the program and not individual Rotarians or YEOs. The online demonstration enables YEOs and Rotarians to:

1. Try out and evaluate the program to decide whether it could be adapted to suit a District's needs and whether it could be incorporated into a District's youth protection policy, and
2. allow individuals to educate themselves about Rotary youth protection policies

YEOs from France and Brazil expressed an interest in translating the online training into respective local languages.

There was agreement on the value of the online training and that it is a great tool which can be utilized by club-level YEOs and host families.

Attendance: 80

Workshop B: Best Practices for Student Orientations

Presenters: Cathryn Buckley, D6330, Canada

Don Moore, D6330, Canada

Synopsis:

The Workshop focused on best practices for delivering effective orientation programs for Outbound, Inbound and Rebound students.

Cathryn and Don represent Central States Rotary Youth Exchange which is a multi-district that includes seventeen Districts in the Great Lakes area, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, North Dakota, part of Minnesota and the southern part of Ontario, Canada. They have been associated with this program for several years. They jointly shared best practices adapted by Central States Rotary Youth Exchange (CSRYE) for student orientation with the aid of PowerPoint presentation.

Topics covered included:

1. A Brief history of CSRYE
2. Tools used for Student orientation
 - a. Training Manuals (Don Moore))
 - i. YEO Manual
 - ii. Inbound student manual
 - iii. Outbound student handbook
 - iv. Host family handbook
 - v. Rebound experiences
 - vi. Sexual Abuse training materials
 - vii. Child protection reporting guidelines
 - b. Videos for recruiting and training (Cathryn Buckley)
 - c. Webinars for District Training (Don Moore)
 - i. Central states subscribes to GoToMeeting and GoToWebinar for online training
 - ii. All 18 districts shares the license which makes it affordable to use
 - iii. www.culturegrams.com is another subscription shared with outbound students, parents and inbounds
 - d. Website: www.csrye.org (Cathryn Buckley)
 - e. Shoemaker Scholarship (Cathryn Buckley)
 - i. In Recognition of Rotarian Shoemaker for 30 years of service to youth exchange
 - ii. A financial award to assist an outbound student
 - iii. District may nominate a student who meets the criteria to apply for the award
 - iv. 12 students have been recipients
 - f. Summer Conference (Don Moore)
 - i. In July, 18 districts meet in Grand Rapids Michigan to focus on celebrating the students – inbounds, outbounds and rebounds (arents are invited)
 - ii. Consists of inspiring presentations from former exchange students whose life paths have been shaped by their experience
 - iii. Incoming RI President or the President-elect attends
 - iv. Information exchange between students
 - v. Parent information sessions
 - vi. Pizza and dance parties
 - vii. Students, parent,s and Rotarians housed in one place
 - viii. Students have different color badges (e.g. Outbounds – Green, Inbounds – Blue, Rebound – Red, Rotex – Purple)/ All other attendee badges are in black

All the useful Manuals can be downloaded from <http://www.csrye.org>.

Discussion topics covered in the Workshop

1: Summer Camps organized by CSRYE:

- Is it beneficial to invite parents? Rotarian Cathryn responded that it is beneficial to invite parents. It completes the overall training that they have. CSRYE also invite travel agents to summer camp to guide parents on student visa applications and ticketing. It was also discussed that districts should make it mandatory for at least one parent to attend one orientation.
- Do individual districts have specific role in training their students? Rotarian Cathryn informed the attendees that each district in CSRYE has to give the minimum level of training as per CSRYE guidelines and manuals. Districts also provide additional training per the specific needs of an individual district.
- Concerns about rebound students passing on tips to Outbounds and inbounds on how to get away with rules. It was discussed that this is very common and only way it can be minimized is to select mature rebound students to interact with outbound and inbound students.

2: How can we use manuals and handbooks developed by CSRYE

It was appreciated that CSRYE did an excellent job of creating good manuals for inbounds, outbounds and host parents. A Rotary district 1800 representative thanked Rotarians Don and Cathryn for an excellent and inspirational presentation and also cited an example that he found in one of the CSRYE handbooks where it mentions that inbounds are selected because they are leaders and they are not expected to behave like followers. He said that this is a very new and interesting approach to explain students about how to avoid using drugs. He also inquired how he can use manuals and handbooks developed by CSRYE.

Rotarian Don informed all the attendees that they are most welcome to download all the manuals and handbook from www.csrye.org and modify the same as per specific requirements of their districts.

3: How to drive people to visit the CSRYE website so that it can be used as an effective tool:

The CSRYE website address is mentioned on every manual, all the promotional material (i.e. brochures), and on the business cards of all the RYE officers. CSRYE encourage clubs to provide a link to the CSRYE website. All Facebook pages created by outbounds and inbounds have to adhere to technology code of conduct set by CSRYE and also has the link to the CSRYE website.

4: How to find and recruit host families:

It was highlighted that one YEO implemented a new idea of asking her inbounds to suggest on their monthly reports to name of two or three undergraduate students who can be potential host families for future inbounds. It was also discussed that potential host parents must be invited to Youth Exchange events where they have an opportunity to see Youth Exchange students in action.

5: Training resources available at club level:

Youth exchange officer/counsellor handbook is the tool that clubs can use for an effective exchange program at club level. Rotarian Don revealed that one of the Youth Exchange district dhairs in CSRYE appointed a youth chair for the club who is conversant with all youth related activities like RYE, RYLA, MUNA and other activities related to Rotaractors and Interactors. He will be the ideal person to guide the club regarding all youth related activities.

Attendance: 75

Workshop C: Databases and Youth Exchange Administration

Presenters: Al Kalter, D6970, USA

Friedrich Neddermeier, D1850, Germany

Niels Oehlenschlager, D1470, Denmark

Moderator: Vikram Sanghani, D3060, India

Synopsis:

A review of several databases developed by three Multi-Districts and used to administer Youth Exchange in their multidistrict or worldwide.

As Moderator, Rotarian Vikram introduced the session by outlining what he saw as the need for databases and each panellist was called upon to outline the online youth exchange management system each multidistrict developed and uses. Al Kalter presented on behalf of the Florida multidistrict, Friedrich Neddermeier on the German Database used in all 14 German districts and Niels Oehlenschlager as Chairman of the Danish multidistrict outlined the Danish Management system. Each system undergoes continued development and refining as a youth exchange management tool. The German system, for example, is being modified to allow STEP students to apply for several camps.

There are also other management tools used and reference was made to the system developed in Belgium.

There was agreement with the comment from Rotarian Tom Martin (D 5010, USA) when he said there appeared to be a need for one unified system which all YEOs could use across the entire Youth Exchange program. The problem will always exist that the systems which have been developed by countries or multidistricts will continue to remain independent of each other unless the process or applications become compatible with one another.

Each of the three presenters used a PowerPoint to explain their database management system operating and developed for their Multi District.

Attendance: 35

Workshop D: Youth Exchange A-Z, Part 1

Presenter: Alan Wylie, D5890, USA

Synopsis:

The Workshop provided a general overview of the basic components of the Rotary Youth Exchange program and was designed for YEOs new to the program at both a club and district level. The Workshop was conducted in two parts (the second session was held on Saturday 5 May).

The Workshop began with an overview of the “magic of youth exchange” citing examples of students and their impact on clubs, host families and schools. Over the two sessions, the following topics were explored, some of them in substantial depth:

- An example of a quick overview of the program for prospective students and families
- Club and district involvement in the Youth Exchange program – the roles of each in the program
- The long term outbound program including recruiting, selection and orientation
- The long term inbound program including orientation, hosting, school expectations and rules. “Remember, youth exchange is not a travel program”
- A brief overview of the Short Term Program (STEP)
- The nine steps to getting a US Visa
- US administrative and reporting requirements

- Background checks
- Exchange agreements between Districts

Attendance: 45

PLENARY SESSION 3

This session commenced with a presentation by **“Woody” Angst**, D 5010, USA, entitled **Youth Protection Policies: Development and Implementation**. The session served as an introduction to the first round of small Group Discussions. Woody began by asking two questions:

1. Why not address other risks as well as abuse?
2. Why are districts not addressing the need to protect young people in other programs?

He identified a wide variety of risks other than abuse – from natural disasters and national crises to student initiated acts and medical emergencies- which need to be addressed. Regardless of the event, there were three guiding questions:

1. Is the student directly in danger and being potentially at risk by being a youth exchange student?
2. Does a youth exchange student attract more attention and, therefore, create more risk for all hosts regardless of who they might be?
3. Can the exchange continue in accordance with the program rules?

Woody then provided a brief series of case studies or experiences to highlight risks which might exist.

He suggested a number, though not complete, set of “best practices” to ensure a student’s protection. They included:

- Adequate insurance
- Use of the first-night questionnaire
- Training of all volunteers
- Training to and support from the district leadership
- Accepting only complete and accurate student applications
- Communication

The Plenary Session was to hear next from Rotary International **General Secretary John Hewko**. However, due to a minor personal accident, the General Secretary was represented by **David Jensen**, General Manager and Chief Communications Officer for Rotary International who delivered John Hewko’s prepared address. Before doing so, he referred to having recently met the Vice-Chairman of GE (General Electric), one of the United States’ largest corporations, who proudly announced that he was a past Rotary Youth Exchange student.

In his prepared text, John Hewko also referred to his own connections with Youth Exchange. His brother was a Rotary exchange student on the Short Term Program to Spain and his wife was an AFS exchange from Argentina to the United States. He acknowledged and thanked all YEOs for the difference they make to the lives of people around the world. He recognized that, “previously inactive regions such as Africa, India and eastern Europe have become certified and are participating in exchanges” concluding that, “our Youth Exchange programs are alive and well and thriving.”

He believed that Youth Exchange can play a critical role in Rotary’s long term membership strategy because the alumni of Rotary’s youth programs are, “an incredibly fertile ground for recruiting new members.” Here was the challenge – as so many young people have been touched by Rotary or participated in Rotary programs, we should be doing better to keep in touch with them.

The Secretariat, David Jenson said, stood ready to help and he looked forward to a continuing dialogue.

Attendance: 180+

DISCUSSION GROUPS

The meeting broke into about 15 small discussion groups on the topic **effectively managing risk and protecting youth program participants is a constantly evolving process that is affected by local laws, RI Board policies, and the standard of care expected by families in communities**. It was an opportunity for group members to share ideas and experiences on the following topics:

1. Successes had as a result of implementing youth protection and risk management policies
2. Challenges in maintaining an effective risk management policy
3. Better explaining local protection laws and RI requirements to volunteers and host families
4. How a crisis, if it arose, would be managed by local district leadership teams

The summary of the findings of these Discussion Groups is provided in **Appendix A**, at the end of this Report.

PLENARY SESSION 4

The session began with a Rotary Youth Exchange alumni speaker. **Lydia Overbaugh** was sponsored by the Rotary Club of Trumansburg, NY, D7170 to Thailand from 1997-98 where she was hosted by the Rotary Club of Chumpon, in District 3330.. She is currently a mother, a biological anthropologist (specifically a primatologist) and is a Fulbright Student Researcher studying for a PhD at the University of Texas, San Antonio.

She provided an illustrative presentation on her current research in Thailand and how being a Rotary youth exchange student 15 years ago provided her with her current opportunity. She noted, "I can still say that it was by far the most influential year of my life." She gave insight into being a Rotary Youth Exchange student just 15 years ago and the differences which can be expected in the program in just that short time – limited email and computer access, no Facebook, Twitter or blogs. She spoke of coping in Thai society, adapting to her new school and experiences she had in learning a new language. She recognized it took her a while to find her way but once she did, she acknowledged she owed a lot to so many within the Rotary Youth Exchange program.

The **plenary session** concluded with another informative and enlightening presentation from, **Dennis White**, D 6220, USA, entitled **Confronting Ethnocentrism: The Key to Cultural Understanding**. Rotarian White's key points were, "the key to a successful exchange program is the understanding of culture" and "the key to understanding culture is to understand ethnocentrism." Dennis stated that culture matters because the vast majority of failed exchanges occur because of the failure to understand culture and cultural differences. He admitted he has no scientific or statistical evidence to support this and that it was just a "gut reaction."

Dennis defined ethnocentrism as, "the universal tendency of any culture to see its own values and practices as natural and correct." At the very least, ethnocentrism teaches us there is more than one way of seeing something. In illustrating this point, Dennis provided examples of language translation, eating and methods of greeting. Dennis believes here are three ways of looking at many different things: universal, cultural and individual.

There was much more in the full version of the presentation than time allowed and it is available either at the North American Youth Exchange Network (NAYEN) resource website www.yeoresources.org or through the Slideshare site referred to earlier.

Dennis also referred to other tools related teaching an understanding of cultural differences and culture shock including the film *Outsourced* and the 45 minute NAYEN produced training DVD *Understanding Cultural Differences*.

Attendance: 200+

YEO BANQUET DINNER

Venue: Pinnacle Room, InterContinental Hotel

Guests: RI President Nominee Ron Burton and Jetta

Over 300 gathered at the banquet dinner including a number from the Youth Exchange family who had attended other Preconvention Meetings. The start was slightly delayed to allow participants enough time to transfer from the IMPACT Centre back to downtown Bangkok and the InterContinental Hotel.

The President Nominee began by recounting his experience with Rotary youth exchange and his continuing involvement in the program – largely through the constant reminder he received from Jaci Williams, a member of his own Club (Norman, OK - D 5770) and a past RI Youth Exchange student. He has been a Rotarian since 1979. He said that being a Rotarian is what you make of it but we, as Rotarians, have choices we can make and we should take full advantage of the opportunities presented to us.

He didn't inform us of any plans he had for the 2013-14 Rotary year except to say there would be a district governor's jacket and a tie.

Attendance: 300+

DAY 2 (Saturday 5 May)

Venue: IMPACT Centre

PLENARY SESSION 5

Chairman Neil welcomed everyone to the second day of the Preconvention Meeting and introduced the first presenter of the day, **Christopher Thompson**, D 9400 South Africa who addressed the topic of **Finding and Selecting New Host Families**.

From the beginning, Chris acknowledged that there is no right or wrong way in sourcing new host families and that everyone does it differently. "If it works for you, make it happen," was his observation. With illustrations to match (mainly from *The Simpsons*), he posed the question "Does it matter what family you have?" Every family is different and every family brings something different. As society changes so does the definition of "family" and in D 9400, 50% of all youth exchange applicants come from separated families.

Communication between the Host Club and the Host family is crucial and using D 9400 as an example, this occurs one-on-one between the two and regularly.

He emphasized that proper training at every level, whether it is a host family, student, or club YEO is very important. He also emphasized the need of giving a personal touch to the program. This can

result in a better understanding between students and host families and attract more families opting to host the students.

Chris ended his presentation with a word of advice, “you (the Youth Exchange Officer) must do the work.”

REGIONAL REPORTS

1. NAYEN (North American Youth Exchange Network) – presented by “Woody” Angst D 5010

After providing a geographic description of NAYEN and its governance, Woody explained the role of the annual meeting in addressing issues of common concern and the sharing of ideas and strategies in growing the program. A Strategic Planning Committee has the task of developing the future vision for youth exchange in NAYEN. Some of the issues discussed have included:

- The efficient use of technology in managing youth exchange
- A review of the First Night Questionnaire
- Encouraging the use of the Post Exchange Survey
- Ongoing dialogue with the Department of State and the regulatory framework of youth exchange especially in the USA
- The use of the ‘flat fee’ principle for outbound students
- ROTEX becoming more active as an alumni association
- Ensuring insurance policies meet compliance with the minimum standards

2. EEMA (Europe, Eastern Mediterranean, Africa) – presented by Vivi-Anne Åsell D 2350

Provided a brief report on the EEMA Conference held in August 2011 in South Africa and some of the matters discussed at that meeting which included

- Encouraging and developing one-way exchanges with countries and districts in Africa
- The use of the Post Exchange Survey as a means of determining some of the reasons for the increasing number of early returns.

3. RIJYEC (Rotary in Japan Youth Exchange Committee) – presented by Nobumasa Ohmori D 2580

Nobumasa read a prepared statement in which he passed on the thanks and the gratitude of all Rotarians in Japan for their support in the aftermath of the triple disaster in March 2011. In the 1970s, Japanese students wanted to go abroad and study. Now they are reluctant to go abroad and don’t want change in their lives. RIJYEC wants to increase the numbers of students both Inbound and Outbound. “Please send more students to Japan”. Inbound students are only placed in safe areas. Japan currently has 167 outbounds and is hosting 100 inbounds.

4. ABIJ (Brazil) – presented by James Landmann, D 4310 and ABIJ President, with Luiz Spengler D 4470

James commenced with a statistical snapshot of the state of youth exchange in the 38 Brazilian Districts of which 36 are certified to be involved in youth exchange. Trends and issues ABIJ has noticed and been dealing with include:

- More Brazilian students want to go on long-term exchange but the number of Host Districts is declining
- Difficulty in finding international partners
- Finding host families
- Difficulty in finding inbound insurance in Brazil which meets partner minimums
- More interest in New Generations Exchanges
- Support through scholarships to those students who otherwise would not have the chance to participate in youth exchange

5. YEPAUP (YEP Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay) – presented by Jorge Fenucci, D 4290

This is a new regional grouping which was welcomed. It covers 20 Rotary Districts of which 9 were certified for participation in Youth Exchange. Currently there are 300 students in and out of which 20% were Short-Term exchanges. Trends over the past year have shown:

- An increase in numbers
- More Districts becoming involved
- Sharing of trips with other districts
- Greater care in family selection
- Visa problems in Argentina appear to have been sorted out – especially cost. Starting in 2011 most students admitted will find the visa process easier. There will be no need in future for the “brown envelope”

Other issues, especially for Argentina, include

- Argentina is often a student’s second or third choice as host country
- Arriving in Argentina after the school year has started
- A lack of commitment in learning Spanish
- Expensive and compulsory health insurance

Jorge referred to two examples of ‘good news’ stories from the youth exchange program – Matching Grant from the Rotary Foundation initiated as a result of a Short-Term exchange and benefits from a Danish student joining the local Boy Scouts in his host country which resulted in several Argentinian Boy Scouts attending a jamboree in Denmark.

6. RYEA (Rotary Youth Exchange Australia) – presented by Frank Portelli D 9690

Frank put into context the dual requirements of being required to be certified by Rotary International and being administered by state and territorial (there is no national approach) and having to abide by their respective regulations. Fortunately, these government regulations are similar to RI’s Certification requirements but the burden of recording and reporting is too much for some and they (clubs and individual YEOs) have dropped out of the program. Numbers have declined, the result of clubs not willing to sponsor or host and subsequent difficulties in getting host families. Ongoing challenges are training of all involved in the program and how it might be best delivered.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION: Recognising 50 Years of Youth Exchange in Japan, 1962 - 2012

Stuart McDonald, D 9810, Australia

Rotary International President-elect Sakuji Tanaka, D 2770, Japan

Rotarian Stuart McDonald explained the origins of the first Rotary Youth Exchange which occurred between Japan and Australia in 1962 and the role of a blinded airman from the Second World War who became a Rotarian, Don Farquhar, who attended the Rotary International Convention in Tokyo in 1961. Stuart then introduced a DVD which had been produced telling the story of Yoko Miazawa who was the first Rotary Youth Exchange student from Japan and hosted by Don Farquhar’s club, Rosebud, Victoria. The DVD included appearances by Don Farquhar’s son Alan and Yoko.

President-elect Tanaka said he was pleased to be a part of celebrating 50 years of Rotary youth exchange between his country and Australia and the Rotary Youth Exchange Program as a whole. Youth exchange provides young people with what, he said was a, “unique experience.” All of Rotary’s Youth Exchange students have different goals and objectives but for every participant it remains a life changing experience. Youth exchange is the only program which not only gives young people the opportunity to experience a different culture whilst being on a mission of goodwill.

Rotary Youth Exchange teaches the basis of service to others and with Rotary’s core values, we can build Rotary’s great objective, peace, the President-elect said. Stuart then presented the President-elect with a suitably inscribed plaque commemorating the 50th anniversary of Rotary Youth Exchange with Japan which was widely applauded by all present.

Attendance: 200+

PLENARY SESSION 6

As an introduction to the second round of Discussion Groups, **Al Kalter**, D 6970 USA, addressed the topic of **Electronic Communication and Social Networking Best Practices**.

The address began with an assessment of the technological revolution we have all lived through – and that’s just since 1990. Email has changed the way we communicate – some of the impact is positive, some of it negative. In fact, email is looked upon by some as, “the way old people communicate”. Websites can be the official channel for a youth exchange program, social media sites including Facebook and Twitter can be used as a public face and they cannot be ignored.

Al suggested there were a number of challenges Youth Exchange faces with social media. These included:

- Is immersion by the student into the community possible?
- The effect on decision-making (crowd sourcing)
- What’s public and what’s private
- Is the student really there?
- Can social media be ‘legislated’ against – a 5th D “no digital experiences”?

There were ‘buy-ins’ for both youth exchange students and YEOs – benefits can come for both groups as long as the right decisions are made.

The evolution in the electronic world creates opportunities as well as challenges. If used wisely, both students and YEOs can create a positive impact in promoting Rotary Youth Exchange. YEOs must put efforts in getting students and YEOs to ‘buy in’ to the advantages of using the latest online tools like RYE Websites, Facebook, Twitter and Skype. Challenges of overindulgence of these tools by students and parents can be met by explaining to them that exchanges can be GOOD with constant use of them but exchanges will be GREAT if they are used wisely.

Attendance: 180+

DISCUSSION GROUPS

The meeting broke into in excess of 15 small discussion groups on the topic of **electronic communication and social media: adapting to change**. Groups were asked to consider several discussion points:

1. What the terms electronic communication and social media mean to the group
2. Risks identified in these technologies and possible solutions
3. Effect on District rules caused by students and volunteers using (misusing) these technologies
4. Success stories in using these technologies to enhance programs

The summary of the findings of these Discussion Groups is provided in **Appendix A** at the end of this Report.

PLENARY SESSION 7

RI Youth Exchange Program Senior Supervisor **Kate Hoeppel** provided an **update from RI**, an overview of RI support for the Youth Exchange Program, and news from the RI Secretariat. The update included:

- the structure of the Secretariat and the Programs Division
- the role of the Youth Exchange department which was identified as
 - providing support and resources to clubs and districts
 - implementing RI Board policy
 - supporting the Youth Exchange Committee and preconvention meeting
 - serving as general program contact
- program number as reported in the Annual Survey
 - 6000 Long Term
 - 2300 Short Term
 - 200 New Generations Exchange
- Certification update covering number of District certified (88%), annual renewal forms, recertification every five years, program evaluations (4 or 5 a year) and newly certified Districts including one way exchanges for several African countries – Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda and parts of Nigeria.
- Resources and support from the RI Youth Exchange Office included
 - Youth Exchange Directory
 - Youth Exchange Workgroup accessible through Member Access on the RI website (limited to District and multidistrict chairs only)
 - Regular Youth Exchange E-Newsletter – 10,000 sent bi-monthly
 - Webinars
 - A variety of publications – Abuse and Harassment Prevention Manual currently being revised

RI Youth Exchange Committee member **Peter Kaye** provided an update or briefing on the impact of the January 2012 decision of the Board of Directors of Rotary International on **Youth Exchange travel insurance**. Known as Board decision C-9, it establishes mandatory minimum travel insurance limits with full compliance or implementation to occur in the 2013/14 Rotary year. The major benefits are set out in Rotary Code of Policies (RCOP) 41.070.10 which set the minimum levels of coverage. The benefits apply immediately although there is a small period of grace for those insurance policies which have already been arranged as at January 2012.

Peter thanked the “true believers”, members of the two Working groups which had been set up to investigate the proposal and make recommendations to the Board and the RI staff. The whole process has taken four years and has been finalised Board decision of January 2012. “Mission accomplished, sort of, kind of”, Peter concluded.

Attendance: 180+

CONCURRENT WORKSHOPS

Workshop A: One-way Exchanges

Presenters: F. Leandro Araújo, D 4500, Brazil

Peter Kaye, D 9550, Australia

Synopsis:

The workshop provided a review of a number of successful one-way exchanges which have been undertaken by several districts and a discussion on how they were arranged and implemented.

Peter Kaye is a Past District Governor of D 9550 in Australia. District 9550 also includes Timor Leste. Successful one-way exchanges have occurred from Timor Leste (Outbound only) for a number of years. East Timor is certified for Outbound exchanges only. There have been eleven students who have had the opportunity to participate on the program (long-term exchange). Most of the students have been hosted by D 4610 (Brazil). The program has shown significant benefits for the participating students including later educational opportunities (university) and enhanced employment opportunities.

Other points raised or mentioned by Peter Kaye were:

- Two students selected each year for long term program since 2006
- Students continue to travel to Australia for Orientation and training
- D9950 obligations: air tickets, insurance, blazer, emergency fund
- D4610 obligations: accommodation/hosting costs, school expenses, pocket money, tour
- 100% scholarship from D9950 and D4610
- Overcoming communication, visa, training and funding challenges

Leandro Araujo highlighted the one-way exchanges occurring from the NORBEX Multi District since 2000, exchanging young people who had disabilities including those who were vision-impaired, confined to a wheelchair, or diabetic. He also highlighted students who had come from disadvantaged or low income families and identified ways these students could be supported and how their year of exchange gave them an opportunity to further and higher education and a professional career. The experience was positive for all concerned.

Attendance: 50

Workshop B: Establishing a Regional YEX Group for South and South East Asia

Presenters: Dr. Mrungank Merchant, D 3060, India

Devang Munim, D 3060, India

Vikram Sanghani, D 3060, India

Devang Thakore, D 3060, India

Synopsis:

A discussion on the possible establishment of a regional Rotary Youth Exchange group in South and South East Asia.

Issues discussed:

1. Why establish and have a Regional Association?
 - It can offer a required platform for sharing of regional concerns and ideas
 - It can offer additional training to the incoming youth exchange officers
 - It can offer materials and equipment for training youth volunteers, host families, and students
 - It can provide support for safe exchanges for students
 - It can be a bridge between districts, the RI Youth Exchange Committee and district governors to formulate and enforce policies in an effective manner
 - It can promote more exchanges within the regional association among the member countries
 - It can improve numbers and quality of exchange
2. Proposed Constitution of SSARA (South and South Asia Regional Association)
 - Should include mission and objectives
 - A legal document reflecting the legal concerns of the member countries

- Simple and easy to follow
 - Plan for proposed finances to run SSARA
3. Geography, Cultural Similarities, Differences and Concerns
 4. Benefits of Forming SSARA to member countries. Representatives from Taiwan said that seven districts in their country are trying to form one multidistrict and how forming SSARA will benefit them further. The panellists were of the opinion that success of NAYEN and EEMA are a shining example of representing regions to RI Youth Exchange Committee. These forums started small and now through their dedication and efforts have reached the point where RI RYE Committee takes serious note of their collective opinions.
 5. Peter Giese of German Multidistrict liked the idea of forming SSARA but suggested that the first step for Indian Districts could be to form Multidistrict.
 6. The Indian YEOs were very positive in forming SSARA but they also remarked that it should be done without any haste and also by taking all the certified districts together and helping the non-certified districts get certified.
 7. It was also argued that forming SSARA will help the non-certified districts to get certified with the proper training and guidance from SSARA and representing their case with RI.

What was the overall outcome of the session?

In terms of population, SSEA region is huge but the number of exchanges is discouraging. Districts from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Taiwan, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Nepal can come together to form SSARA. Forming SSARA is the right step in the direction of increasing number of exchanges, quality of exchanges, and even peace in the region. Representatives from Taiwan, Malaysia and India gave their opinions and threw questions related objectives, benefits, and other issues. It was discussed that RI listens to regional groups. Some of the great RI Policies are an outcome of recommendations of regional RYE group like NAYEN and EEMA.

Attendance: 25

Workshop C: Early Returns

Presenters: David Anderson D9770, Australia

Vivi-Anne Åsell, D 2350, Sweden

Maria Leticia Ferreira, D 4770, Brazil

Moderator: David Anderson, D 9790, Australia

This topic had been the focus of discussion at the 2011 EEMA Conference in South Africa. There, the idea of a post student survey was explained; the benefits included being able to reach conclusions regarding why the numbers of early returns has been increasing. It has been estimated that the early return rate is currently 8% of all Long-term Exchanges. The session opened with an invitation to view and try the on-line survey and for YEOs to use it in their Districts. Information on the survey can be found on the NAYEN website www.yeoresources.org and clicking on the "What's New" tag. It was emphasised that at this stage the sample of those Districts who are using the survey and the number of respondents is too small to reach conclusions.

During the discussion, the workshop participants identified the following as ways in which the rate of early returns could be addressed and reduced:

- The counsellor – having the right, properly trained person for the role

- Recognizing that there are issues which can be managed but that there also some that are beyond the students control
- Communication is all important – between various different players
- Is age an issue?
- How YEOs counsel students on such personal issues as homesickness and language difficulties
- Proper training an preparation of students – expectations and dealing/coping with problems
- A defined approach in the Exchange Agreement on how to manage a possible early return

Attendance: 80

Workshop D: Youth Exchange A-Z, Part II

Presenter: Alan Wylie, D 5890, USA

Refer to the Report on Part 1 of this Workshop.

Attendance: 25

CLOSING PLENARY SESSION

The Closing Plenary session opened with a presentation on the special exchange of 23 students from the tsunami-devastated region of Japan to Austria. We also heard from **Tadami Saito** D 2760, Japan, and **Christoph Feichtenschlager**, Youth Exchange Committee of the Austrian multidistrict. In August 2011, the Austrian multidistrict with support from the Austrian government hosted 23 high school students from Fukushima, Japan. This was using Youth Exchange in a very different way, as a “first aid method” and reinforced the theme of youth exchange in Austria, “With Heart and Responsibility”.

Christine Schieber, D 1690, France, advised all attendees at the final Plenary Session of the first International ROTEX being held in Bordeaux, France, from 6-8 July. At the time of Christine’s announcement, there was an expectation of up to 250 registrants from 27 countries.

There were few questions from the floor during the Open Forum and Q&A. It was questioned if there would be recognition of a regional grouping in South and South East Asia. **Kate Hoepfel (RI Staff)** noted that the importance of these regional groupings was recognized and valued but there is no official recognition of them by the RI Board of Directors. Youth Exchange staff does, however, reach out to all regional groups. Formal recognition of a regional group would come if it was established as multidistrict to conduct the administration of Youth Exchange in the defined geographic area.

In closing, RI Youth Exchange Committee Chair **Neil McDonald** thanked the members of the Committee, two of whom (Neil McDonald and Peter Kaye) were retiring by rotation. He also thanked the Sergeants-at-Arms for keeping everything on time and the members of the Findings Committee whose work was only beginning. He singled out for special mention the support given by Adam Doty and Kate Hoepfel not just to this pre-convention but also throughout the year in their respective roles.

Before formally closing the 2012 Youth Exchange Officers Pre-convention Meeting, Neil invited **F. Leandro Araújo** as 2012-13 RI Youth Exchange Committee to introduce the members of that Committee and to also invite all in attendance to the next pre-convention to be held in Lisbon, Portugal 21-22 June, 2013. In doing so, there was an expression of interest sought in a pre-convention tour (agreed) and Rotarian Leandro also expressed all our thanks to Chair Neil for his three years on the RI Youth Exchange Committee and his chairmanship over the past two.

The 2012 Bangkok Youth Exchange Officers meeting then closed with a number of informal events to be hosted that evening in various parts of the IMPACT Centre and elsewhere.

APPENDIX A: DISCUSSION GROUP REPORTS

1: Friday 4 May

Number of Groups reporting: 12

Group sizes: 5 – 11

Average size: 8

Effectively managing risk and protecting youth program participants in a constantly evolving process that is affected by local laws, RI Board policies and the standard of care expected by families in your communities.

1: Success experienced in implementing youth protection/risk policies

- Addressing issues including better student welfare not previously addressed
- Better protection and better selection and screening of host families
- Development of crisis management plan and successful implementation (from Japan 2011)
- Improved orientation delivered to all participants
- Protection afforded to both student and Clubs
- Better understanding of Youth Exchange by district leaders (DG, DGEs and DGNs)
- Development of a flowchart to help manage incidents
- Use of non-Rotarians as a resource in training
- More credibility to the YEP
- Better knowledge of abuse and harassment by Rotarians
- Non-compliant Clubs and Districts eliminated from the Youth Exchange
- Likely outcome has been fewer cases of abuse
- Protocols developed/established
- Consistency in protection policies
- “no successes; over done”

2: Challenges in maintaining an effective risk management policy

- Creating an awareness and understanding of risk management
- Keeping control of the flow of communication in an incident
- Having everybody follow established communication protocols
- Monitoring compliance with risk management policy
- Resistance to background checks by individuals and within clubs
- Reluctance of students to report instances of abuse and/or harassment
- Older YEOs failing to appreciate the need for documentation and recording
- YEO turnover arising from additional requirements
- Time taken in training and educating new YEOs in the requirements and processes
- Resistance to the new requirements and the additional paperwork
- Differences in cultural and national approaches
- Ensuring consistency in training YEOs and other program participants
- Getting YEOs to read and understand policies – too many documents
- Impact of government regulations and legislation
- Insufficient training of DGs, DGEs and DNs
- Lack of consistency in applying policies
- Trust
- New Generations Chairs who have little or no experience in youth programs

3: Local law requirements and RI policies which are unclear and solutions for better explaining them to volunteers and host families

- Rotarians who fail to understand why background checks are necessary
- Confusion over travel policies
- Laws should be extended to also cover drugs, alcohol, travel, etc. and not just abuse
- No clarity on who needs a background check (e.g. giving a lift to a student; one day visits not involving overnight stays)
- Variations in different countries on the availability of background checks should be better communicated
- Clear definition of “local area” when students can travel outside the local area
- Independent travel after an exchange ends should not be allowed
- Some local laws (e.g. USA are an invasion of privacy)
- Local laws unclear on insurance availability and incorporation requirement
- No one felt that local laws or RI requirements were unclear
- Online training could help in understanding RI requirements
- More frequent and better communication
- Being aware of cultural and national differences
- Use common sense – would you approve of the situation/event if it was your own child
- Use outside resources/expertise
- Employ outside resource to deal with and process all checks
- Use “Four Way Test” to explain the fairness of the process

4: Effective responses to crises – how have districts responded?

- Groups varied from all districts represented had a Youth Protection Officer to 50/50
- A number of districts had a crisis management team and plan or had a reporting chain
- Hired a professional company to monitor and respond to a crisis or risk management issues
- District Response Team should include non-Rotarian professional
- Use if a non-Rotarian as YPO
- Qualified psychologist on District Youth Exchange Committee
- Some in the team not professionally trained could lead to an ineffective response
- Role of YPO needs clarification – Arbiter? Trainer? Protector? Resource? A dealer in paperwork?
- DG is head of Risk Management Committee
- Crisis Management Team shouldn’t be headed by the District Youth Exchange Chair
- Limited or rotating tenure on crisis management team
- Being well prepared with key people appointed
- Clarify who is the “lead” for the crisis management and the media
- Effectiveness of the crisis management plan hasn’t been tested

2: Saturday 5 May

Number of Groups reporting: 11

Group sizes: 6 - 11

Average size: 8

The last ten years have seen great changes in how we communicate both in scale and medium. From email to Skype, Facebook to Twitter, the landscape is changing and exchange programs must adapt!

1: What electronic communication and social networking means to group members.

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Skype
- Text

- SMS
- Email
- Data base management
- Instant
- Anti-social
- Permanent
- Anonymity
- Lack of personal contact
- Need for etiquette guidelines
- Beneficial
- Networking
- Lack of depth in conversation
- Invades privacy
- Both positives and negatives as a means of communication
- Beneficial

2: Risks in the new means of communicating and possible solutions to managing these risks

- Not learning the 'language'/delayed language acquisition
- Living in two places at the same time
- Not integrating with the new/local culture
- Students anti-social/less social, isolated, disinterested
- Impact on school performance
- Students naïve to the risks of social media
- Competitive – having the most friends
- Loss of privacy
- Personal security
- Homesickness
- Use of language – attitude not as intended
- Parents can't let go
- Bad news, views, impressions, comments easily spread
- Can be checked by future employers
- Impossible to control electronic communication
- Cut off wi-fi
- Disconnect modems in exceptional circumstances
- Use of personal computer in public places only – not in bedroom behind closed doors
- Training on the negative aspects of the new technology
- Set limits on use/time and explain why
- Keep students busy, involved, interested
- Warn not to share personal information
- Use ROTEX as a resource
- Provide reasons and explanation on how and why electronic communication should be properly used – not just a set of rules
- Set rules for both students and parents
- Educate/train students in using the new social media
- Ensure balanced use of the new technology
- Training on the negative aspects of the technology

3: District rules and which may have been affected by use and/or misuse of the new technology

- Limits set on computer time
- Rules haven't been affected much

- Orientation affected
- Agreement required from all host families on common/uniform rules
- Need for a strong first host family
- Outbound students required to sign a pledge
- Have education and guidelines not rules
- Use ROTEX students but under guidance
- No district rules have been changed as a result of the new technologies
- Send technology guidelines to all inbound students before arrival
- Impossible to control electronic contact
- Instant communication can be effective especially in an emergency
- Natural parents sometimes the cause
- Being disconnected may lead to problems
- Skype is the most abused form of instant communication
- Rules/guidelines constantly changing as technology changes
- Use ROTEX to train YEOs in the new social media
- District rules relaxed to make the exchange work for the student

4: Making these technologies work to improve/enhance the exchange program

- Student blog
- ROTEX as a resource and connecting YEOs and youth exchange students
- Easy access to and sharing of information
- District websites and Facebook pages – maintain and update
- Students main communication is text
- Facebook as a tool of promoting the program
- Use of an official Facebook page for communication – with an appointed administrator
- DropBox is a cheap and easy way of sharing files/resources
- Smart phones are no longer toys – used by students as a learning tool/resource
- Maintain contact with program alumni/returned students
- Appointment of a YEO to monitor all student Facebook postings and be alert for problems
- Issue flash drive/memory stick to all outbound and inbound students with all ‘on line’ reporting requirements, forms etc. on it
- Monthly Youth Exchange Committee meetings on-line via Skype/video chat room
- Students to sign and parents acknowledge rules and conditions regarding use of the new electronic technology – possible inclusion on NAYEN/EEMA standard application forms
- Fax obsolete