**How to Find Host Families**

By, Tami Duke – YEO Rotary Club of Durango High Noon

Here is what the official RI Handbook suggests:

* Ask Rotarians to recommend non-Rotarian families they feel are qualified and may be interested in hosting a Youth Exchange student.
* Encourage Rotarians to host students. You may wish to make this appeal during a meeting at which spouses are present or after another student has attended a meeting and has met many of the club’s members.
* Ask the families of Youth Exchange alumni to act as hosts.
* Ask Youth Exchange alumni for the names of families in their communities they feel would make good host parents.
* Make a presentation about the Youth Exchange program to your local parent-teacher association.
* Ask families who have successfully hosted students to recommend other families in the community who would be interested in hosting.
* Keep in contact with Youth Exchange alumni; they may now make excellent host families and future Rotarians.

Beyond the official recommendations, here is what I do:

**INBOUND STUDENT**

* Require your exchange students to attend ALL Rotary meetings so that your membership can develop relationships with them.
* Regularly encourage members to include the students in their activities. Some clubs pass around a calendar for members to sign-up to take the student places. I personally call or email those members who I know can provide experiences the student is seeking like horseback riding, river rafting, skiing, etc. and put them in contact with the student and host family to arrange a date/time.
* If your student’s school has an Interact Club require that the student become a member and attend ALL meetings. Randomly contact them on Interact days to ask how the meeting was to ensure they are regularly attending and participating.

**INTERACT CLUB**

* If your area has an Interact Club contact them to arrange a presentation on both hosting and Outbound student opportunities.
* Ask the Interact Club members to help you select a student.
* Invite club members to greet the student at the airport.
* Basically, help develop relationships between the exchange student and Interactors, as this will help you find host families.
* If your school doesn’t have an Interact Club but has Key Club or some other service type club then utilize that group.

**REBOUNDER/OUTBOUNDER**

* At Local or District Interviews explain to families that they are not required to host however they are required to assist the club in finding host families. Ask them to put in writing their desire for their family to host, timing they prefer, etc. OR list the name and phone # of another family we can reach out to for potential hosting. Keep the piece of paper incase they indicate a commitment to host upon their student’s return as it will remind them of their promises when a year and a half has gone by and their student is now home. Of course we do not want families who do not want to host so use your judgment here.
* Email all of the Outbounders directly when you know which students will be coming to your area the following year. Give them a short bio of each and ask that they contact their parents and let you know if they can host.

**ROTARY CLUB/LOCAL COMMITTEE**

* Email your Youth Exchange Committee and Board Members of your Club immediately upon learning whom your area students will be and ask for their help in finding families.
* Recognize Rotarians with a “happy dollar” upon their commitment to host or once they have assisted you in finding another family. I find that families who have been publicly announced as committing to host a student rarely back out on me.

**HOST FAMILIES**

* As soon as a family has been approved to host introduce them via email to the future Inbound Student and let the student and their parents know the dates they will be with this family. I also find that families who have been in communication with the student rarely back out of hosting.
* Keep a list of potential host families all year long. It’s easy to forget when someone on the ski slopes mentions they may like to host. Come up with a system that works for you to keep track and follow up with all of these families.
* SUPPORT your host families!!!! Call them frequently to see how things are going. If they are having trouble do what you can to make it right for them. Give them proper training and put them in contact with other host parents who can offer guidance and provide temporary housing if needed for a vacation or work trip that they student cannot join in on.
* APPRECIATE your host families!!!!
  + Host a Potluck for all Inbound Students and all identified Host Families soon after the student arrives.
  + Invite and pay for the family to attend your holiday parties.
  + Invite and pay for them to attend a Rotary meeting, especially the meeting where the student presents about their exchange.
  + Have the club membership sign a “thank you” card once they are done hosting.
  + Call them when they are done hosting to find out how it all went. This is in addition to sending the survey through YEAH.
  + Ask the exchange student to do something special for the family like cooking a meal from their home country or making them something in art class. Remind the student regularly to be appreciative and helpful.