

HOST FAMILY RECRUITMENT

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The successful recruitment of qualified host families is a constant, ongoing process. It is not a once or twice a year effort. The clubs that have had the most success in this phase of the Youth Exchange program have recognized this fact and have defined their goals, developed methods, and committed the necessary resources and time to meet the goals. The suggestions detailed herein are by no means all inclusive of what works. They can be modified to reflect what works for your club. **BUT THEY ARE TIME PROVEN TECHNIQUES THAT DO WORK IF USED!**

1. ROTARY CLUB COUNSELORS: As is typical for most successful programs in Rotary, the YE program needs the commitment of the Club President, the Board of Directors, and the Chairman of the International Service Lane, the YE Officer, and his or her committee and particularly the club members. This commitment begins with a thorough understanding of the program by the club members AND their spouses. This understanding is most effectively gained in the involvement of your student with the activities of the club and its members.

2. CLUB YOUTH EXCHANGE ORGANIZATION: Clubs need to commit the resources necessary to effectively get the job done. This means **budget, people, and time.** Budget has not been seen as a substantial problem. However, the job of the YE program has at times fallen to one person, which can result in a problem in the lack of people and time categories. We recommend you spread the load by having a multi member committee in which one member of the committee is designated as the host family coordinator. He or she must agree to do the job and commit the time and effort necessary to do so (emphasize job is “coordinator”, not a 1-person task).

3. INBOUND STUDENT APPLICATION: Inbound student applications should be carefully reviewed to see if the student’s background and / or interests would suggest a potential host family. For example, a Swedish student noted that his hobby is competing in tri-athletic events. He was placed with a family who participated in this type of competition. A Japanese student was an accomplished pianist fit in perfectly with a family active in the local symphony.

4. NEW MEMBER ORIENTATION: The YE committee should schedule a representative to conduct orientations for new members of their club. The YE program should be explained with particular emphasis on how each new member can involve our inbound students with family activities and the requirements of a host family. Each new member should be asked if they would like to have the program explained to his or her family at a date in the near future and then follow up by setting up an appointment to do so. After meeting with the family, take the opportunity to ask if they might know of another family, perhaps a relative or neighbor, that would like to hear about the program. Get their names, have the host family help you make an appointment, and repeat the process.

5. INVOLVING STUDENTS WITH CLUB MEMBERS: The more your membership (including spouses) knows about our students, the better the chances of their being interested to be host families.

a. Have your student attend club meetings on a regular basis. Make sure they meet different members each time and play an active role in the meeting, such as greeting members at the door or assisting the Sergeant at Arms.

b. Have your student give a short (3 to 5 minute) presentation early on in their exchange (within the first 2 months). Do not be concerned if their English is limited; just have them write their talk down and practice with you several times before the presentation. The talk should focus on their background, interests, hobbies, and skills. Follow up with a single sheet biography on your student, including how he or she can be contacted and pass this out to the membership.

c. Involve the student with club projects and activities. Make them a member of the Adopt-a-Highway team or the Christmas bell ringing or gift-wrapping committee, etc. This will require some coordination with the various club committees, but it gets the student involved with members and will lead to host families.

d. Have a fireside each year (written in Alaska) that is devoted to the YE program. Make sure all members of your committee and as many inbound, outbound, and rebound students attend as possible. Suggest that members bring their spouses and any family members that may be interested. Have information on the program available and include the students in the night's formal program.

e. Have the Program Committee set aside one meeting per year when the students can give their "formal" presentation to the club. Think beyond the standard slide presentation for ways to make this more interesting. For example, we have all known students with special talents. Encourage them to use these talents at this meeting.

6. HOST FAMILIES: Approach current and past host families and ask them if they can recommend potential host families to you. Ask them to help you set up a time and place to explain the program.

7. INBOUND STUDENT CONTACTS: The inbound students often have made friendships that lead to host families. Particular care should be taken to qualify potential families, with emphasis on a clear understanding of the relationship between the family and the student.

8. OUTBOUND STUDENT ORIENTATION: The host family program should be covered in some detail at the outbound student orientation nights. Follow through by offering to set up meetings with interested families to explain the program further. The observation is that families may decide that the outbound program is not for them at that time, but they may agree to host an inbound student later.

9. OUTBOUND STUDENT FAMILIES: Families of the students selected for the outbound program should be required to host a student if asked. Note: this does not mean that the family will qualify as a host family; they must be interviewed in advance of placing a student with them. A variation of this requirement is to have the family agree to recruit host families for interviews. This was the case for one Rotarian family that could not host but did find three qualified families.

10. INFORMATIONAL EVENTS: Host family information should be available at all events where the Youth Exchange Program is promoted. Examples are community celebrations, etc. (These events could be used to promote the exchange for potential outbound students as well as for host families.

11. HIGH SCHOOL CONTACTS: High school counselors and foreign language teachers have been a source of recommendations for several clubs. The suggested procedure is to request names and ask assistance of the teacher making the recommendation to set up an appointment to present the program to potential families.

12. ORGANIZATIONS OUTSIDE OF ROTARY: Investigate for potential families:

- a. Church. Talk to the priest / minister / rabbi and ask for their help in identifying potential families.
- b. Fraternal Organizations: Elks, Moose, Lions have active community minded memberships. Ask to address their club and explain the program.
- c. Athletic Clubs: Baseball, basketball, etc are great sources of families.

Good luck in your renewed efforts. Hope to get your input to add to the list of ideas.

Lloyd Morris

NOTE: District 5010, the Alaska District, has a great record of supporting the Youth Exchange Program. The 30 clubs in Alaska and 2 clubs in the Yukon all sponsor or host exchange students. District 5010 extends into Russia east of the Urals and has 6 clubs in Russia that have provided 10 outbounds and hosted one inbound annually since August 1995.