

**Rachael meets someone special!***Hi, I'm Rachael Cramp*

*and this is my May report*  
 My Sponsor Club is - **Surfers Paradise**  
 My Host Club is – **Sissach-Oberbaselb it** in Switzerland

Dear everyone, guess what? ! !!!  
 TOMORROW I AM MEETING THE  
 DALAI LAMA!!! ! !

He arrived in Basel today because tomorrow he is opening an art culture exhibition about Tibet!!!! We were at a Rotary dinner and my future host dad came over and told me he was coming, and I nearly jumped out of my seat. And today I went to a public thing in the gothic church where he spoke for an hour. It was sooooo crowded and I didn't get there early enough so I was way up the back of the line.

It was really cool because there were some traditional Buddhists or Tibetans there who I think live in Switzerland, with the traditional hats on and they were burning incense, but it was 50000 packed inside and I got stuck behind a big pillar and couldn't see anything. But luckily he came through the front door and so when I stood up on the pillar I could just see his face. But the whole hour I was soooo hungry cause I had no lunch and it was really hot and I had been standing in the same position the whole time. So in the last 20 mins I got out my pear and in the last 10 mins I sat down on the pillar because I thought I was going to faint, but he spoke really well. First in Tibetan with German translation and then in English. I understood most in German, about happiness and peace on earth and that we are all the same and not different, and about inner happiness not material happiness etc., in English he was really sweet and spoke a bit about the Buddhist beliefs, there were probably 2 or 3000 people there, which was pretty amazing.

And here comes the coolest part. About a week ago Fredi (my host dad) gave me a brochure about the expo, and then when my 3rd host dad told us the Dalai Lama would be there I went upstairs when I got home and looked at it again, and it said down the bottom "this is a private invitation for 2 people to the opening." I nearly died! ! ! All aristocrats and politicians VIPs and the Dalai Lama will be there, and me and Edith (my host mum)! I am going to meet him"" this will be one of the most important moments of my life!! It was given to Fredi's business. I am going to give him a little boomerang pin.

Today the weather was soooo weird. It is still. There is mass amounts of fog so the sky is totally grey and I can hardly see the trees or forest on the hill.

My 3rd host dad is interested in Tibet etc; he went there 15 years ago. He is a wine importer and has a little vineyard in south Switzerland. But I only have him for 2 weeks I think.

I am going to have about 6 host families, my 2nd is for 1 month, before summer holidays

Then in summer hols I have the wine dealer. Then I go to my Bavaria student camp, which will be cool because there are beautiful castles and stuff in south Germany. Then I have the Swiss politician for 3 weeks in summer hols! He has 5 boys! In my age area which is good. And then I think I stay with Edith and Fabienne who will be back from oz when they go to their holiday house. Which will be nice to be with them. Oh yeah, before I got to Bavaria Fredi, Edith and I are going to this special theatre in Austria, which is on the lake. The stage is built on the lake and it is open air and really expensive (120 francs for good tickets).

Anyway, and so my 5th family is another man with girls I think, which is for 2 months or 1.5 months and then I think my last family is a 70 year old man for 1.5 months.

Better go, love

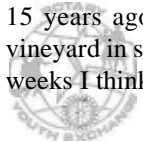
*Rachael*

**Aleisha reports that time has gone crazy.***Hi, I'm Aleisha Wiley*

*and this is my August report*  
 My Sponsor Club is -  
**Mullumbimby**  
 My Host Club is – **Dortmund H rde** in Germany

Hi Everyone, Wow what a crazy week, sorry that I haven't been able to keep up with all of the emails, but this week

has just been crazy, but fun. Well finally my 6 week summer holidays have ended, they were so awesome. The whole holidays was basically just one BIG party. My host sister came back from her exchange in Aust, so finally I got to meet her — she is SO nice, we had so much fun together. I even went camping for the 1st time in Germany; I must say I was impressed. I was also on an island in the North Sea for a week, which was SO cute. Then of course I was in a few nightclubs, where I met a "big soccer star" -but hey that's a WHOLE other story ;). Ahhhhh yeah after all of that I was kinda looking forward to going back to school - don't worry I am not sick, it was only cause I wanted to see all of my friends here again at the same time. So anyway now my 1st & only school week for this term is over! I am heading off on Sunday on my Rotary Euro tour!!! !!! (I am not at all excited, yeah right). We start off in Germany (Just thought I'd state the obvious), then we head to Holland, Belgium, France, Monaco, Italy, Austria, then back to the October beer fest in Germany! Ahh yeah, then I am home for a day & a half before I head off on my class trip to Venice -then when I get back from that its holidays! (*With a schedule like that – how do you ever find time to fit in any schooling?* Ed.) Maybe I am making another 1 week tour the day after I get back from Venice, but I am not sure yet. So anyways the next time probably that I'll be



able to write is the 25th of Sept or if not then the 14—15th October.

I hope that you are all having fun “down under”, don’t worry it aint too long know till I’ll come back & join you all. (*Is that a threat – or a promise? Ed.*)

Love

*Aleisha*

### Johanna Reports - Wow – What a start

Hi, I'm **Johanna Preu**



*and this is my August report*  
My Sponsor Club is - **Mettmann**  
in Germany  
My Host Club is – **Palm Beach**

The last weeks have gone so fast, I can hardly believe that I have been here for 7 weeks already. The last month was great. I moved from my host family to my club counsellor for about 10 days because my host family had gone into the snow. I had a great time at my counsellor’s house and discovered a new passion: rugby league! Wow, this game is so cool, it’s a shame we don’t have it in Germany. It’s so much fun watching it, though I don’t really understand all the rules. (*Don’t worry about that – neither do the players. Ed.*) I just like watching the big fellas tackling each other and scoring.

During my stay at my counsellor’s I also went to the first camp to Byron Bay, which was good fun. It was nice getting to know other exchange students from different countries and I’m looking forward to going to the next camp. You guys from Rotary and ROTEX did a wonderful job, thanx a lot! The day after I returned to my host family (it was nice to be home again) I went to the Goodwill Games to Brisbane with my school. I got a free ticket and it was SO much fun! We saw high jump, long jump, triple jump, walk, mile, javelin, shot put and the 200m of the men. Javelin and the 200m were the best! Me and my mates from school dressed up in Ozzy wear and painted our faces. I wore Australian boxer shorts, a red top and I painted my face in green and yellow saying “Go Ozzy”. I also took my German flag, so I sort of supported both countries. The atmosphere was just amazing, we were dancing and shouting all the time. *Ozzy, Ozzy, Ozzy* - (your turn :o) - and so on. Gee, that was sooo much fun!!! (*See what fun you can have – dress up looking silly – paint your face – and really shout. Ed.*)

I also went to the Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary to see the Australian Wildlife and that was fantastic. All these kangaroos and koalas, they were SO cute! Last weekend, I went to the rainforest to Mt. Cougall (or something like that) and it was so beautiful. I had never seen something like that before, so I was just amazed by all the green trees and everything. WOW!

School is all right, the teachers are nice, the subjects are not too hard (except physics) and I’ve got to know lots of people. My subjects are physics, English, P.E., geography, legal studies and maths. We went to Brisbane on a legal studies excursion to see the Law Court and to go to a former prison. The time at the Law Court was pretty good, I sat behind a murderer and the prison was exciting, but scary, too. On Monday we had a prison guard and two prisoners at our school to tell us about their life in prison. That was really interesting!! My host family is great too! They are so nice and really make me feel as I was a member of the family. So I like them lots.

The Australian animals, especially spiders, snakes and sharks, are quite scary I suppose. A few days ago, my host dad caught a snake and showed it to me, scary. Yesterday I found a big, hairy spider in my room. It looked quite dead, but to make sure it was, I dropped a heavy box on it. Looked quite flat after that and I flushed it into the toilet, just to make sure it wouldn’t just act like it was dead. Well it is now I reckon. (*Now I know that Australian spiders are tough – but they are not that tough. Ed.*) I haven’t met a shark yet and I hope I won’t when I go surfing more often. And I had a small lizard on the loo, who gave me a big fright, but he was cute and I caught him and carried him into the garden to feed him to the cat (just kidding, I carried him to the garden and put him into the grass. Oh and last week, two magpies attacked me when I was riding my bike to a basketball court. I was so frightened, I nearly fell off my bike... However, we have two nice ones in our garden who always come and eat bread out of my hand. So I had quite a lot of experiences with the Australian animals.

Today was my first time swimming in the sea and surfing. Surfing is so much fun and I had never done it before, so I was falling from the board rather than surfing it. But well, I still have 10 more months to go... It was so good, I’ll go for another surf tomorrow. The sea was so great and warm (compared to the North Sea in Germany). I couldn’t believe my host brother thought it was freezing. It was fantastic! I’m already thinking of asking my mum for money for my birthday so that I can buy a surfboard. We’ll see...

Love,

*Johanna*



**Sibylle - My First Month in Australia***Hi, I'm Sibylle Kuhn*

*and this is my August report*  
My Sponsor Club is - **Zürich-Limmattal** in Switzerland  
My Host Club is – **Alstonville**

I'm here at last!

G'day guys

I have been in Australia for one month now. I settled in very well. After a few days I felt like I had been here for a few weeks and that was because I had so many people who had welcomed me. Of course the main persons were Alison and Tim. Thank you very much for your frankness and your help.

I have also been to school for one month. The school is very different to the school in Switzerland. We have more subjects and the school day is longer. It is good to see how it works in other countries.

There are a lot of things that I have experienced in this month which I want to tell you about: A few times I went to the Ballina beach. I am very glad that I am so near to the ocean. That was a big dream that I would not be far away from the beach.

On one Sunday I visited the Light House on Byron Bay and I was on the most eastern point of Australia. There I saw Dolphins.

On one other Sunday I went to the Byron Bay market. I have never seen such a crazy market before. It was good to look at all the people and Tim and I had a sugar cane drink. It smelled very sweet and hiked it.

One fortnight before we went up to the Gold Coast to Suffers Paradise. It was a great weekend. On Saturday morning I had a swim in the water. I think all the people thought that I am not normal because no one else is going for a swim in winter. The water was 18 degree and that is quite warm for me. Tim came with me and he was rather frozen. We went to Pacific Fair later and looked at all the shops, I had never been in such a big shopping centre. On Sunday we went to a wildlife park where I saw a lot of Australian animals. I saw koalas, kangaroos, emus, Tasmanian devil, dingos, wombat, crocodiles and lots of birds.

My birthday was a really great day. In the morning my parents phoned me. After the call I had a bubble bath that was very relaxing. Then we went to the Ballina Beach to Shelley's and watched the waves. I love sitting at the beach and watching the waves. It is never boring. In the afternoon a lot of people visited me. I was very glad to have so many people who came for my birthday. And of course I had my first legal glass of champagne.

But the Wednesday evening after that weekend was also very great because there we celebrated my birthday again.



Thank you very much for this real Aussie Hat. I am very proud that I am now an owner of a hat with real crocodile teeth. And I was so surprised about this big, big birthday cake. I have never had such a big one. Thank you so much for this evening.

Last weekend I was in Sydney. On Saturday morning I did the Harbour Bridge Climb. It was fantastic. It was a sunny and no wind and I saw over Sydney and a little bit more. After that nearly unbelievable experience I went on a ferry to Darling Harbour from where we drove to the Fox Studios. I went also to China Town where I felt like I was in China. Later we went to the Bondi Beach. But there I did not swim because it was too cold for me also.

That was the first news from your exchange student and I think that I will have a very good time here in Australia. Thank you all for your support.

*Sibylle Kuhn*

**Philippe bowls them over!***Hi, I'm Philippe Dupleix*

*and this is my September report*  
My Sponsor Club is - **Vichy-Doyen** in France  
My Host Club is – **Ballina**

Hi - I have passed a magnificent month. I have lot of friends at school. At Ballina 10 pin I go with school on Wednesday afternoon.

I have speak on part of the Rotary club and of my English class about me and my city. I am going to a meeting at Newcastle when I have learn lots of things. Last weekend I am going with my club counsellor on the Gold Coast.

*Philippe*

**Sibylle reports on a busy month***Hi, I'm Sibylle Kuhn*

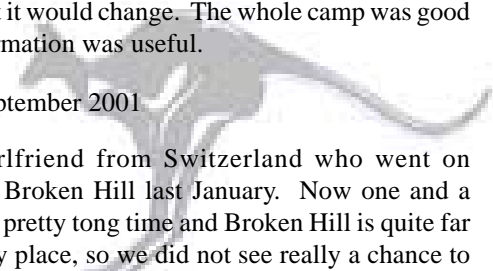
*and this is my September report*  
My Sponsor Club is - **Zürich-Limmattal** in Switzerland  
My Host Club is – **Alstonville**

1 and 2 September 2001

We had the first inbound camp. It was interesting to see the people from all over the world. A lot of them were very shy. But I think that is because you are not really sure what you should do. At this stage I hoped so that it would change. The whole camp was good and the information was useful.

10 till 12 September 2001

I have a girlfriend from Switzerland who went on exchange to Broken Hill last January. Now one and a half year is a pretty long time and Broken Hill is quite far way from my place, so we did not see really a chance to



meet each other. But then they came for a holiday up to the Gold Coast. So I visited her there. We went to Movie World. That is a very funny park and I was never on such a scary roller coaster like that. And I never screamed like that either. On one evening we went to the Vanessa Amorosi Concert. It was good fun.

15 September 2001

My fourth host family has got a few horses. Because I love horse riding I am excited since I heard the first time about it. So on this Saturday I went to their house and we went for a horse ride out in the most beautiful area around Alstonville. It was so great to see the rainforest and to go through the Macadamia Tree fines. Unfortunately one of the horses kicked out on my foot. It was al little bit blue.

18 till 21 September 2001

Claire my oldest host sister was coming to Alstonville. We spend the whole week on the Surfboard and in the water. I love surfing and I would like to do it as much as I can while I am here so closed to the beach, On Friday I could stand up a few times and I really like it. I drank also salt water. Yuk!

23 September 2001

Tim had birthday. We went to a Golf course. That was the first time in my life P tried to play golf. It was funny, but I wasn't very good. I think I laughed a lot about myself. We had a good day all together.

25 till 27 September 2001

We had our second camp organised by Rotex. We met at the Bus Station in Surfers. From there we drove to Toowoomba. We had there a little look around before going the next three hours. Around six we arrived in Condamine. We ate some dinner in the local pub. After that we went to the Stallmann's Farm about 30 Minutes away. It was already dark. But that was no reason to hop in the pool. It was good fun and the others were a lot more open then the first time we met. After the swim Christina (the other Swiss exchange student) and I were surprised about this strange smelly water. Yuck Bore water. Of course we slept outside. It was quite warm because there were clouds and that kept the temperature high.

The next morning we got up half past five and went on a little trip for watching kangaroos. We saw a lot and that was good because most of the other exchanges haven't seen kangaroos before. Around Lunchtime we went to the Condamine River and we had there a bush tire. We made a special Aussie bread and cooked a beef stew. In the afternoon we went back to the Farm and had fun around the pool. The sad thing was that all students except Christina and I went in and watched a video. It was such nice weather. In the evening we had a BBQ. It was good because family Stallmann invited other local people and

it was interesting to talk with them about their live outside for me: in middle of nowhere.

After a very cold night outside we packed up our things and drove to Miles. That's a historical town. Very interesting to watch how the people lived hundred years ago in Australia. Also interesting was to compare Europe with Australia.

27 September till 1 October 2001

After the camp family Heading picked me up from Toowoomba Bus Station. Their daughter is going out to Switzerland and that was the reason why I met them. We drove down to Stanthorpe where they live. At that time Amy didn't know where she is going in Switzerland.

On the Friday we went out to a Berry Farm. There we met Sam, he went to Switzerland last year. We talked a lot and than he said that he was hosted by the Rotary Club of Duebendorf. I said: Oh, that's the Club from which my friend in Broken Hill is sponsored. So they knew each other back in Switzerland.

On Sunday Alison and Tim came and we climbed a rock called Pyramides. We have a lot of high mountains in Switzerland but it never goes up so dangerously. Never so straight and with such a flat ground. But it was very exciting to climb it and the view on top was wonderful.

Monday morning Amy opened her email box and there was a mail in it she didn't know. She screamed and I ran straightaway to the computer. At once I saw that it was my Club from back at home, Zurich Limmattal. We both were excited and surprised. It was unbelievable. That means that we will be her host family.

4 till 7 October 2001

Christina visit me down here in Alstonville. We went up to Byron and had a Surf lesson together. We really enjoyed it. On Sunday we went to the beach in Ballina. It was pretty hot and we are now quite tanned. But we did slip, slop, slab!

*Sibylle*

**Erin seems lost – wonders what happened!**

*Hi, I'm Erin Smith*



*and this is my September/  
October report*

My Sponsor Club is - **Amherst** in  
Canada

My Host Club is – **Grafton**

Where did the past month go? It seems like just last week I was writing my last report.

This month has been a very busy one, so many things to see and do; time flies when you're having' fun!! I've had a few what some people might call "first-hand



experiences" this month, including: seeing a bit of the Aussie Out-back and trying to catch a wave (rather the wave caught me.) Along with most of the other Inbounders over holidays, I packed my bags, (and swag of course) and headed out west. We had great time, saw a few hicks at "the" pub... chased some kangaroos, (something we don't do everyday), especially in Canada!! I also experienced something I'll never forget, picture this; ME, of all people, (keep in mind that on my list of "things I hate most", camping would probably be in the top 5- right mom?) sitting near "the river" (which was sooo dry from drought, the river actually stopped, then 5m's down the track continued...) on the hard, ant-infested ground, trying to eat lunch. HOLD ON! It gets better. Another thing I absolutely despise are bugs!! And boy were there bugs. Flies. I never realized how much I hated flies, until that very day when I was sitting beside the river, trying to enjoy my lunch, having to grasp the bowl between my legs, eat with one-hand, and wave the flies off my food with the other hand all at the same time. Lets just say I was not a happy camper. (*Erin – Just think – When you return at the end of your exchange – you'll be an expert at the "Great Aussie Wave" – and the secret of enjoying a sandwich "sans" flies is "Exhale" whilst putting into mouth. Ed.*) This month I also had a very enjoyable visit to the Gold Coast to visit (and of course shop) with Rodney and Audrey (my district counsellors). Two other exchange students accompanied me, Ashley and Jen. We had a wonderful weekend, of course did some shopping, and tried, for the first time, surfing. For all you non-surfers out there, it may look easy, hah. We must have been very amusing to the people up on-shore, I think most part of the beach got some free entertainment that day. Don't get me wrong, it has to be one of the funniest things I've ever done, (besides go on "Tower of Terror" at dream world) and I'm going to take a crack at it again as soon as I get the opportunity. Also this month I moved. It was a big move, I must admit; I do have heaps more stuff than I came with (including 3 more pairs of shoes; I know dad, I know.) but it was a very convenient move, considering it was only about 70 meters up the street!!! I did get a few awkward glances as I moved, pushing my clothes up the street in a wheel-barrow. I do have photos if anyone would care to have a few laughs. (*Yes please – the Hopping Mag greatly appreciates pictures with which to adorn these pages. Ed.*) I've been with my second host-family for week today, and its fabulous! I've had so many new and exciting adventures and so many wonderful opportunities, since I've been here in Australia, thanks again Rotary for making my dreams come true!

I leave you with this, "The sad truth is that opportunity doesn't knock twice. You can put things off until tomorrow but tomorrow may never come. Where will you be a few years down the line. Will it be everything you dreamed of. We seal our fate with the choices we take, but don't give a second thought to the chances we take."



Gloria Estefan

*Erin*

### Philippe works at his exchange!

Hi, I'm **Philippe Dupleix**



and this is my October report  
My Sponsor Club is - **Vichy-Doyen** in France  
My Host Club is – **Ballina**

Hello.

I tried to keep a diary because I'm sure it's a good thing but I am very tired. I have a lot of chores because I live in the farm what in France I don't know. I tried to write in English some stuff. I am happy when I am in Internet and can write, read and the understand on MSN all go in English web site and understand everything. Now I can leave home without my dictionary and I have not problem. When we went to Condamine I was happy to meet and other time the other student exchange. Often it was the...??? And the 12th of Sept my 16th birthday, I am going to play golf for the first time this day; now at school I'd passed my exam, today I have passed math and history geography. I have shown my slide at my Rotary club they have found this good. I have something I want to do is to burn the dictionary and to write a little thing about sugarcane and one day write more than one page for this month report.

*Philippe*

### Visitors from Denmark

Hi, I'm **Sibylle Kuhn**



and this is my October report  
My Sponsor Club is - **Zürich-Limmattal** in Switzerland  
My Host Club is – **Alstonville**

9<sup>th</sup> till 12<sup>th</sup> October 2001

We had some Danish visitors in our house. Arne and Brigitte were a few years ago the host parents of one of my host sisters. We showed them the area and took them to the Gold Coast where we stayed a night. On the Friday we went to Brisbane. There they took the plane and went home. It was good to have some European people and talk about the different things you discover in other country.

14<sup>th</sup> October 2001

I changed my host family. Now I stay in the Club Presidents house. It takes a few day till I settled in but that was no problem because they are very nice people and look very good after me.

Then I had some familiar weekends, which I really enjoyed doing not as much as I have done in the lost time.

31<sup>st</sup> October till 4<sup>th</sup> November 2001

Grafton Jacaranda Festival was on for all the exchange students! We went down with a bus and in (3rafton lots of nice host families picked us up from the bus station.

On Thursday we went to Susan Island and had a walk to the rainforest and afterwards a swim, and some people a longer swim back to the other shore. In the evening we had a bush dance night in the Tate. It was very funny and very good organised night. On Friday we went to Yamba where we had lunch with a part of the Yamba Rotary Club. In the afternoon we went to the beach and had a swim. In the evening we went to a kind of presentation from the local people where they danced and sang. The next day was a big day. We decorated the float for the parade. We had lots of fun on the float. Everyone was yelling and singing and screaming. Then we had a BBQ by the Race Course. We had also some little presentations about our countries. On Saturday we went to the Clarence River. It was a boat organised with a plastic raft on the back. It was very funny to sit in this ring and moving through the whole river. Christina and I screamed a lot. I was very tired after this big weekend and thank you very much to all the people who made it possible to have us all. *(It sounds like you were lucky to still have a voice – after all the screaming. Ed.)*

6<sup>th</sup> November 2001

Melbourne Cup Day. It was so interesting to look how in this few seconds whole Australia is standing still and watching the Race. I really enjoyed it. And of course I bet (my first time) and I won a little bit of money.

*Sibylle*

### Aleisha remembers that she forgot!



Hi, I'm **Aleisha Wiley** and this is my November report  
My Sponsor Club is - **Mullumbimby**  
My Host Club is – **Dortmund Hörde** in Germany

Ooopps, I know it's been a while (actually a few months) since I have written — yes sorry about that... But it has turned out to be the MOST amazing few months. First up I had the perfect lot of 6 week summer holidays, which was split between my two host families. I was first on an island off the coast of Germany (called Juist). It was such a cute place. Which still had horses and carts — no cars! Then I packed up and went back to my first host family for the remaining five weeks of my summer holidays. My first host sister had just come home from her year exchange in Australia and I wasn't sure if she'd really want me there or not, but as it turned out we got along really well and ended up doing everything together. It seemed like we've known each other all our lives. After my perfect summer holidays (filled with sun (something seldom here),

swimming, parties and camping), I headed off on my four-week rotary "Euro tour" which was unexplainably AWESOME!!!! We travelled (39 exchange students, 21 which were Australians) throughout Holland, Belgian, France, Italy, Monaco, and Austria, and then finished off at the "October Fest". After that I had two days at home before I took off on my class trip to Venice. I was a bit worried that after not seeing my friends for about a month that things may be a bit strange. It has turned out to be the opposite, we became closer than before, and making the one-week class trip to Venice the best trip to Venice that anyone could hope for.

However the holidaying adventure wasn't over just yet... The day after returning from Venice, I set off on my next trip (yeah, yeah, I know that I'm a very lucky bugger). This time it was a rotary trip to East Germany, once again with a different bunch of people — this time us Aussies were a minority. A bit of the shock after the Euro tour. On the East German tour we visited an old concentration camp which has been turned into a memorial. Being there at the actual stage where so many terrible senseless acts occurred really hit home. I think it was important that I got the chance to go and see it though, as it is still today, a major part of German culture. After travelling through Weimar, Dresden and Berlin the one-week tour was over. Thus bringing to an end to the amazing 1 1/2 months of tours which I had just experienced.

Ah yeah. Back to normal German life again, trying to squeeze as much as possible into what little time there is of this year.

Tschüs

*Aleisha*

ps. Sorry if this report is a bit all over the place. English isn't exactly my strong point at the moment — the other day in English class I switched from English to German mid-sentence when answering a question — rather embarrassing, but my class thought it was pretty funny.

### Brittany cooks up a storm!



Hey guys, here's a pic of Julia - an American and I cooking a feast for the other exchange students in a tiny Taiwanese kitchen for thanksgiving. It was awesome - we had broccoli, mashed potatoes, turkey and all sorts of things I haven't eaten this year.

I'll try and send more soon. *(Good – I hope the message gets out to those*



other YEP type students – that unless I get photo's – they don't get in here. Ed.)

Peace and love

*Brittany*

### Ben is floored by it all!

Hi, I'm **Ben McJannett**

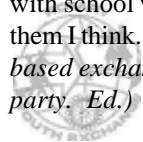


and this is my November report  
My Sponsor Club is - **Tamborine Mountain**  
My Host Club is – in Finland

Well here I am sitting on the floor typing away into my laptop while listening to Rob Zombie being played through its speakers after reading moments ago an email from Don saying my report is late when it isn't even the 15th of the month yet. Unbelievable, Rotary expects so much of people these days. (Ben – you could be right – we do expect a lot – we expect our YEP students to be goodwill ambassadors for the program, to keep the program alive and vibrant, so future YEP students can enjoy the sorts of experiences that you are currently experiencing. If your sponsoring club feels it was a waste of time sending you away, then they won't consider participating next year, and that doesn't just impact the hopeful applicant who was hoping to go away next year, but will also impact the student who was hoping to come here, after all – it is an exchange. So your actions don't just impact a single person, it affects two people each year. Think about it – we do all the time. That's why we request regular reports, and attention to the ideals and rules of the exchange. Ed.)

Anyway November has been a little bit weirder than most months for me. It started with snow falling about a week into the month and people started talking about Christmas. Firstly it just seemed weird to me that snow represented Christmas when I am so used to enjoying the summer at this time of year. Anyway at about the same time a new shopping centre opened in my town which was a big event seeing as it is “so big” and there is nothing else really like it in good old Forssa. Although, I must disagree with them. I mean after all the gold coast has Pacific and Australia Fair and not forgetting the places which I can't quite remember due to me not wanting to think too hard on the subject. Well it is rather nice in there but not much for young people to do with only a few new shops and not much in the way of a place to hang out.

School is as pointless as ever, but then again so are all schools, and there isn't much for me to do there anymore because I am going home in 29 days as of today (12th of December). However for the last two weeks of November test week was meaning all my friends were too occupied with school work to come out and play...not very nice of them I think. (And here I was thinking that this was student based exchange program, silly me, it must be a year long party. Ed.)

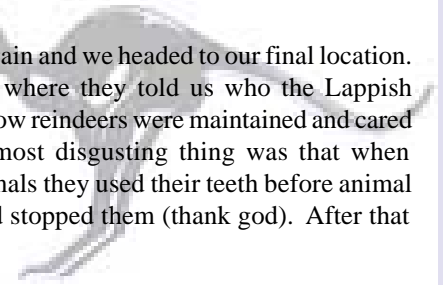


Which then brings me to the end of the month. And of course the final Rotary trip... Lapland. Probably the best trip cause none of the other countries get to go there. And it is the best place to go for skiing and such. I prefer what is a relatively new extreme sport called snowblading (look it up on the net if your really that curious and want to know what it is). The first day there we were offered ski school (I was there for five minutes) and the chances to go on the big boy hills, as I appropriately titled them. I think by the end of the day my favourite run was the half-pipe followed by the freestyle trick hill. I ended up getting so good grab tricks of the jumps but I was too scared of landing backwards and breaking my skull open to try any spins.

The second day was spent entirely on the slopes with the option to learn traditional dances or play volleyball in the afternoon. However because I was having such a great time on the slopes I skipped them both. Ooohhh I almost forgot, on this trip we got to meet all the newbie exchange students who arrived in August. Most of them were nice and stuff but I didn't get to really meet or get to know all of them but I became pretty good friends with a couple of them.

On the third day we went to do a bunch of things. Firstly I was late for the bus because I was asleep. I was punished for this later in the peace. Firstly the bus I was on (there were four of them) went to a small art gallery and due too my lateness we didn't spend that much time there (10 minutes instead of 20 ha, ha) but no one seemed to care. (Is that really true, or was it that no-one voice their complaints. Ed.) The next stop was for a few activities. This was also the longest stop of everything we did that day. Or second longest... I can't quite remember. Anyway we were split into four groups of ten and then proceeded on. First up for my group we had a Reindeer sled driving. Which was fun but the reindeer I was on went really slow and no matter how much I cursed yelled and whipped the thing it wouldn't go fast. But I must admit it decided to go to the bathroom halfway round. Interesting. Next up we got to use those funny snowshoes. The half work. Problem is mine fell off when I was almost waist deep in snow. Next we got to sit in the Finnish version of a tepee and eat Makara. After our little snack we enjoyed trying to lasso Reindeer (except they were just antlers stuck in the snow), however I decided to picking up the antlers and place them on my head and let my friends try and catch me. BAD IDEA. I ended up being caught tied up and thrown in the snow. Wasn't very pleasant. Next we were supposed to do sledding however we ended up fighting in the snow and tackling each other. I was feeling cold after that.

Back on the bus again and we headed to our final location. A Reindeer farm where they told us who the Lappish people lived and how reindeers were maintained and cared for. I think the most disgusting thing was that when castrating the animals they used their teeth before animal rights came in and stopped them (thank god). After that



we were treated to some coffee and “pullo” (kinda like a small bakery treat thingy).

As soon as we arrived back at the hotel we had dinner followed by a short information briefing and then enjoyed all the splendours of a disco which kind of sucked because the DJ was only 14 years old by the look of him. Afterwards everyone of us that arrived in January had a group photo. On day four it was time to go see the real Santa Clause however first we had to stop at a souvenir shop on the way to get everything we needed to take home. I mainly got gifts to give to everybody when I get back in Australia and nothing for myself. And who says I'm selfish.

We got to Santa's workshop at about 14:00 and I have to admit I felt like a little kid again. I even got get a photo with a couple of friends and the big guy. I have to say that it was one of the coolest things I have done this year. He said that we would get new cars for Christmas if we behave (as soon as the word behave came up I kissed the idea good bye). When we were done we bussed back to where we came from with a stop for dinner along the way. As soon as I got home early Tuesday morning I went to bed and slept all day.

So that's it for November, stay tuned for December which will include information regarding parties, Christmas and even new years because hey if the report doesn't have to be in until the 15th of the month I can wait until I get back in the merry old land of Aus to send the next one. Ha, ha.

Catch ya all later and have a Merry Christmas

*Ben*

**P.S. SANTA RULES! (we know – isn't it great! Ed.)**

### Christina professes her true love!



Hi, I'm **Christina Häfliger**  
and this is my November report  
My Sponsor Club is - **Luzern-  
Wasserturm** in Switzerland  
My Host Club is – **Parkwood**

I love my subject. Marine studies at school, because this term we do snorkelling. The first few lessons we went to the cool. Just to learn all the skills. But last week we went the first time to the seaway. Although it was freezing it was so amazing how many different fish and other animals we saw.

Start of November was our camp in Grafton. We left on Wednesday for 2 6-hour bus trip and when we finally arrived they split us up because we all stayed with different families. Thursday we went to Susan island where we had a guided tour in the rainforest and at the end where able to swim back to the other bank. On Saturday we had the parade where we had our own float to decorate. We

had much fun during the parade and I think at the end a few have lost their voices... Anyway!

The most enjoyable evening was Saturday, because we had our country of origin presentations and it was so funny that all the different countries prepared. But I think we had a bit too much cake because Stephanie also turned 18 on this day and of course we had to celebrate that.

Yesterday afternoon we had a koala in the tree in our backyard that was so cute, but when my family told me that this was the koala who always causes the noise in the morning I didn't think he's cute anymore... (Now – that was a short and sweet relationship. Ed.)

*Christina*

### Derume reports a moving experience!

Hi, I'm **Perrine Derume**



and this is my November report  
My Sponsor Club is - **Dottignies-  
Val d'Espierre** in Belgium  
My Host Club is – **Robina**

This month, I had moved a lot! After the camp in Grafton, I went back by bus (5 Hours). When I arrived in Surfers Paradise, my new host family waited for me. So, when we arrived at home, I spoke about me and my country for 30 minutes because I was so tired with the trip and the camp! I stayed 2 weeks in this host family. I had spending a good time with them. All the time they ask questions and when I speak to them they're always interested in what I have to say (this wasn't the case in my last host family) and we moved a lot. I had a very good relationship with them. After these 2 weeks, I went to my councillor's home. It was good but I felt very uncomfortable with them. The time went fast because I went to the school after I put some pins on my blazer, I wrote some letters... I had no exams at school, so I didn't have school from the 18 November until 23 November! It was cool because it was schoolies in Surfers paradise. I went to schoolies 4 times, one time with Anne (from Denmark) and we have seen Ylva (from Sweden) and Christina (from Switzerland). The second and third times was with Kelly. She's Outbounders and she's going to Canada in January and she's my host family for December. It was so great with her! Then I go with her, I have a lot of fun! I'm very lucky to meet her! The last time, I went with Geraldine. She's an exchange student too, from Belgium. Normally, she stay's in Adelaide but she was on the Gold Coast for holidays for 1 week. So I had a good time with her. There were so many people at schoolies! You can't find somebody or if you find somebody, you're very lucky! A lot of bands with different styles of musics: techno, dance, rap, rock... After schoolies, I went to the beach with Geraldine. I spent a couple of days with her. After this, it was my last week at school! So, we did nothing, just speaking... I do a lot of sport: tennis every week, horse riding 2 times per week, run... The last day at school, they didn't have many

student! I was the only person in my math class! After school, I changed my host family. Now I'm staying at Kelly's home. Since I've been with her, I have had a good time! That's all for this month, see you later, Perrine

*Perrine Perrine*

### **Eva-Maria storms Grafton!**

*Hi, I'm Eva-Maria Bode*



*and this is my November report*  
My Sponsor Club is - **Königs Wusterhausen-Zossen** in Germany  
My Host Club is - **Mudgeeraba**

The best thing in the last month was the Rotary camp in Grafton. We had a few problems with our first host family there, but the Rotary club of Grafton solved it fast. The jacaranda trees were beautiful and it was nice to catch up with the other exchange students. I think we had a lot of fun. We arrived in Grafton in the evening after a four to five hour bus trip and went to our host families. On Thursday were on the jacaranda festival and visited the market and the shows.

After this we had lunch on Susan Island and went for a bush and rainforest walk, which I really enjoyed. It was very interesting and the guide was very good. On Friday we went on a bus trip to the beach and had a fabulous lunch provided by the Rotary club of Yamba. On Saturday we decorated our float for the street parade and in the afternoon we were in the street parade. In the evening there was the "country of origin" presentation. It was so much fun to see the presentations and interesting to. We also celebrated Stephanie's birthday. We spend Sunday at the river and I was sad that we had to leave. I'm really looking forward to the next camp in Mt Tamborine. I think we had a lot of fun and will have even more them.

*Eva-Maria*

### **Kristine is having it "Good"!**

*Hi, I'm Kristie Wells*



*and this is my November 12 report*  
My Sponsor Club is - **Surfers Paradise**  
My Host Club is - in Sweden

Last month for me was really good and busy. I can't really remember so much of what happened at the beginning of the month. I had a Rotary weekend which was organised by one of the exchange students in my district. That was really cool, we went go-cart racing and went to this university.

I also went up to Stockholm for about a week. It is so nice up there. Some of us exchange students organised to go to the Stockholm tennis open. It was pretty good, but not as much atmosphere as in Melbourne. I stayed

with my exchange student friends up there so that was pretty good to meet up with those who I hadn't seen since the Europe tour. It is really expensive in Stockholm so I was kind of happy when I was on my way home to Vetlanda.

I have also has a week of holiday just lately. I didn't do so much during that week, just met up with friends and those kinds of things. Well I am not changing family until the week before Christmas. Maybe I am going back to my first family for those last few weeks but I am not so sure. I have been doing speeches in many classes at school the past week.

Tomorrow I have to do my speech to my Rotary Club. I think that will be fine, hopefully. It has started snowing here which is really cool, I hope there is much more before I go home. Anyway I think that is all that has been happening up here in the Viking land.

So see-ya later

Love

*Kristie*

### **Patrick professes he's hungry!**



*Hi, I'm Patrick Sondowski*  
*and this is my November report*  
My Sponsor Club is - **Friesoythe-Artland-Cloppenburg** in Germany  
My Host Club is - **Kingscliff**  
G'day, how are you.

I am great. I had a wonderful trip to Grafton. I had a lot of fun with the other exchange students, especially with the French guy Phillip. He is really funny. In two weeks, I will have a formal but after that we are driving to Sydney and Canberra with the school.

School is still fun. Last Monday and Tuesday with a big examines on and I was not allowed to do them and could stay at home. On the first the 2nd January I would change my host family. It will be very difficult for me because I really like the Hill's. It is nearly like at home. I feel very, very comfortable. But I will go through that. I got some really good friends at school and a girl who often talk to. I am still playing soccer every Thursday. That's heaps fun. I don't know what also can talk about but you told us to write anything that we know. I will do that. Today was a Thursday and I played golf but I couldn't spend the afternoon with my friend because I will go shopping with my host dad. On Saturday it is my host mum is birthday, and I have to buy something for her. At the moment she is in Sydney because she has to work there.

The only thing I don't like in Australia is that they eat at different times because after school I'm always starving.

But I love the rest of Australia.

That's it for this month.

*Patrick*

### Philippe reports progress!

Hi, I'm **Philippe Duplex**



*and this is my November report*

My Sponsor Club is - **Vichy-Doyen** in France

My Host Club is - **Ballina**

Hi!

This month I have done the school examination. It was pretty hard but next year I go to year 11 at Ballina High. Now at school we don't work lot, we begin the subject of year 11 and everybody think at the tenth of December because it's the last day of school. In my family everything is all right. I help the farm work. I'm going to Grafton, the jacaranda festival. It was good. I was over a great family. I have passed some time of month the TV for the French movies, the sport match France/Australia. I have been to the beach with my host family. I am going to do a lot of things during this holiday.

*Philippe*

### Sibylle goes for a spin with Inner Wheel!

Hi, I'm **Sibylle Kuhn**



*and this is my November report*

My Sponsor Club is - **Zürich-Limmattal** in Switzerland

My Host Club is - **Alstonville**

Saturday the 17th of the 11th: Inner Wheel organised a fun races for blood cancer. We had an event called high tea. We met all at a property and had an afternoon tea. Some friends and I modelled some clothes from a woman's boutique.

Thursday the 22nd of the 11th: that was the formal night. It is very special for me because we don't have anything like that when we finished school at home. Nobody is dressing up it isn't that big. I enjoyed it.

Saturday the 27 of the 11th: a friend of mine has had her 18th birthday. We had a pool party and lots of fun. Oh you know the girl: Hannah, she's going to Belgium, good luck!

My mum has had a birthday on the same day.

Wednesday the 29th of the 11th: we had with rotary a theatre night in Ballina. It was funny how everyone laughed and yelled.

Saturday and Sunday the first and second of the 12th: the camp in Mount Tamborine! It was great to see everyone again and everyone the last time before the big year. The sessions were informative and we had a good time

altogether. Thank you to everyone. The place was also beautiful.

Sunday the 9th of the 12th: we had the Christmas party at a park in Alstonville with rotary. I was Santa Claus and it was lots of fun. We also had a junk auction.

Wednesday the 12th of the 12th: I had my presentation at my club. I did it on PowerPoint and everything worked. I hope it was interesting.

I wish you all a merry Christmas and good luck for the New Year!

*Sibylle*

### Alexandre sends greetings.

Hi, I'm **Alexandre Sneessens**



*and this is my December report*

My Sponsor Club is - **Hannut-Wararre** in Belgium

My Host Club is - **Ballina on Richmond**

Hello everybody;

I hope everything is all right!

MERRY CHRISTMAS and Happy New Year. To everyone about me everything is all right during the end of the year.

I feel very strange to celebrate Christmas in the heat, it's really different but I think it good to experience different thing then at home and I'm sure that every student do.

During the holiday, who have just start for me (NSW). I'm learning surfing, so I try to go everyday, it's really hard but really good to!

I feel a little home sick at this time of the year but I hope it will be better after New Year so I try to be always busy so I don't think too much about my family and stuff.

But it's not because I'm home sick that I want to go back home because Australia is a great country and I look forward to discover it during the Safari. I'm sure it's going to be great!!!

So Merry Christmas and best wishes for the year 2002 to all of you.

*Alexandre*



**Brooke takes the easy choice!***Hi, I'm Brooke Bowland*

*and this is my December report*  
My Sponsor Club is - **Alstonville**  
My Host Club is – **Hümmling zu Sögel** in Germany

Hi all! So less than four weeks to go now, I'm so incredibly excited about coming home, But so sad to leave my great host families, friends and my second home, Germany.

So with my final report I don't wish to bore you all with what I've been doing, instead present you with an e-mail I received which is so incredibly sums up youth exchange.

**“FOREIGN EXCHANGE”**

Exchange is about learning. It's not as simple as learning whatever it is that's taught in school, though. It's about learning how to listen, how to speak, how to think. Learning who you are, who your friends are, the type of people you want as friends. Learning how to trust your innermost feelings, and how to find those feelings in the first place. It's about learning what's really important to you, and learning what you really don't give a damn about.

Exchange is about how to tolerate, how to accept, how to like, and how to love. Learning how to give as well as you receive, and how to trust that everything will even itself out on it's own. It's about learning that your mom and dad do have the right answers sometimes, and that your kid sister isn't such a dumb little kid anymore.

Exchange is about learning how to treat people as people, not as stereotypes. Learning that sometimes a kiss isn't just a kiss, sometimes it means more, and sometimes it means less. Learning how to achieve, how to succeed, how to accomplish. It's about learning how to not come in first place and still be proud, and about coming in last and learning how to admit that you could've been better.

Exchange is about learning that large parties don't necessarily mean a good time. Learning that loneliness doesn't go away in a crowd, and that sometimes it's okay to be by yourself on a Friday or Saturday night. It's about learning that your lunchtime crowd does not constitute your popularity, and that popularity is all a matter of perspective. It's about learning that boredom is simply laziness of the mind, and watching 3 hour of TV every night is not quality relaxation time.

Exchange is about learning how to pack a bag and how to pack a room full of way too much stuff. It's about learning that people probably like you a whole lot more than they'll ever tell you, and that it's your responsibility to make sure your friends know how much you appreciate them.

It's about learning that simply doing what you're supposed to do isn't enough, you need to put forth twice that effort



in order to full grasp whatever it is that's sitting in front of you. It's about learning how to make people smile.

Exchange is about learning how to miss people enough to not stick them in the past, and how to not miss them so much that it keeps you from moving into the future. Learning how to motivate yourself and how to motivate others. Learning what the phrase “make do” means and how to use it to seem as if you're not simply “making do”. It's about learning 25 different ways of saying, “we made out”, and how to swear in all the different languages of all the other exchange students.

Exchange is about learning... **LEARNING HOW TO LIVE**

So that is it, my year is nearly over. I would take this chance to say thank you to my mum and dad for making this year possible, And thank you to everyone that made my year what it was, and a big thank you to rotary for having such a program.

Auf Wiedersehen!

Love

*Brooke*

**Christina Kicks Up Her Heels!**

*Hi, I'm Christina Häfliger*  
*and this is my December report*  
My Sponsor Club is - **Luzern-Wasserturm** in Switzerland  
My Host Club is – **Parkwood**

Yabadabaduh!!! I'm on holidays! I can't believe it. I've never had

holidays for two months...

Last Tuesday I had my speech at Rotary about Switzerland! I was nervous at the beginning, but after a while I really enjoyed telling all those people about my native country and these 20 minutes went past so fast...

I also went lots out with my friends and we had so much fun. It means so much to me that they just accept me in a group and treat me like their friend.

This weekend (beginning of summer!!! Hold on... I thought it was already summer in August?) We had the outbound camp on Mount Tamborine. It was so good to meet all the Outbounders. We were listening to a lot of speeches. Had some activities and spoke to the students going to our country. I can't believe it: the guy who's going to Switzerland is in my club and goes to the same school and the girl who's going, Is in Sybille's club and stays with her family. So we are both looking forward to show them around when we get back. At this camp I could really feel how excited everyone was and I was getting nervous to. I'm a bit jealous because their year hasn't even started and mine goes so fast. At the last

meeting at this camp we thanked everyone and then there was a sad moment, we had to say goodbye to Ayumy who's leaving back to Japan in January! It was so emotional and mostly everyone started crying. I hate saying goodbye to someone. But I think I have to get used to it, there'll be lots of those moments especially at the end of the year. Can't we all stay longer??? (*Now – why on earth would you wish to stay longer – anyone would think that you were enjoying yourself. Ed.*)

Oh yeah... There's another thing I wanted tell you. We had an assembly at the last day of school and I really couldn't believe that when they called my name and had to go up on the stage and shake hands with the headmaster. I won an award for my subject. "Marine studies"... (*Congratulations Christine – well done. Ed.*)

*Christina*

### Eva-Maria is in love!

Hi, I'm **Eva-Maria Bode**



and this is my December report  
My Sponsor Club is - **Königs  
Wusterhausen-Zossen** in  
Germany  
My Host Club is – **Mudgeeraba**

In the last month I have changed my host families twice. I stayed with an older couple for a week. They are retired, and very engaged in the uniting Church. The lady worked in the OP shop a few days over the week and I came along to help her. I sorted books and priced them. I've loved this. I love books and have finally the chance to read again. I met a lot of nice people there and on Friday of this week they invited me to their Christmas lunch. My new family has three relatively young kids. I sometimes need a lot of patience. But they are very nice.

This month I also got my bronze medallion in surf lifesaving and also the club has also asked me to go on patrol for them.

I really love Australia so far.

*Eva-Maria*

### Johanna is finished with school!

Hi, I'm **Johanna Preu**



and this is my December report  
My Sponsor Club is - **Mettmann**  
in Germany  
My Host Club is – **Palm Beach**

All right, what have I been doing in the last four weeks?

First of all, I finished school in the end of November and I'm on holidays now, which is quite nice. I got good results for my subjects but I also changed two of my subjects because I wanted to try something different.

That's why I'll do surfing instead of legal studies next year. I think that's a really good choice, though I can hardly stand up on the board, but who cares. I want to get into the surfing spirit.

I'm really happy with my school and my friends. Everyone is so nice and I have made SO good friends at school, which is great!!! They're so nice and we always have heaps of fun. I think having good friends is one of the most important things when you're on exchange. (*You have that right. Ed.*)

I have already got to know so many people, it's incredible. The only difference here is, that I don't have as many male friends. I think in Germany boys and girls are more mixed up. It's not like "Oh, Look, there's a boys group and here's a girls group." Everyone just goes everywhere. I like that better.

On the first and second of December (I know, that's not November, but anyway) there was another camp, this time for Inbounders and Outbounders, In the Tamborine mountains. It was really good fun, But sometimes a little boring because the Inbounders have already heard about most of the stuff before they left their country. But it was cool and we had a good time. The only thing I didn't like was the heat (yeah, I know it's getting even hotter...) And all the Mozzies. I got seven big mozzie bites, they were so annoying! But it was a good camp and to all you Outbounders: enjoy your time; you'll have a GREAT year!

See you all very soon.

*Joh*

### Kate seeks gifts aplenty!

Hi, I'm **Kate Ranclaud**



and this is my Christmas report  
My Sponsor Club is - **Ashmore**  
My Host Club is – **Eniwa** in Japan  
HO, HO, HO! MERRY  
CHRISTMAS!!!

Well as I've already said I'm going to school tomorrow but that just means I'll have to have an extra big one next year and as Santa doesn't know my address this year I should get twice the pressies! Tanoshiminidane! Well I hope everyone has a good Christmas, get lots of pressies and don't miss me too much. (*OK – We won't. Ed.*)

Smile Love

*Kate*



**Kristie just can't believe it!***Hi, I'm Kristie Wells**and this is my December 7th report*My Sponsor Club is - **Surfers Paradise**

My Host Club is – in Sweden

G'day there Don I am writing this report and I can't believe I only have just over a month left before I will be back in that country of warmth. November just went so fast. I don't think I did anything so special. I talked at 2 Rotary clubs and gave my speech. I think they enjoyed then. I ended up on the front page of our newspaper here, the biggest photo I have ever seen. The paper interviewed me about my year here and that kind of stuff.

Well it eventually has snowed again which is just so nice. I really love the snow, so much fun. I think I have had a snow fight nearly everyday for the past 3 weeks. I am right now doing work experience. That is okay, next week I am off to Stockholm to work in the Down Under Restaurant. I think that should be really cool.

School has been really cool, it seems like I don't have many lessons. I change families again just before Christmas. I am going back to my first family for those last few weeks.

Well I think that is all my news.

See - ya later

*Kristie*

**Nicola asks - Where has it gone?***Hi, I'm Nicola Paterson**and this is my December report*My Sponsor Club is - **Grafton Midday**My Host Club is – **Brande** in Denmark

Another month has gone by and less than one month left to go. Ahhhhhh it's gone so quickly that I can't believe it's been a year already. Everything for Christmas is here and I still need to buy all my presents. Its been a fairly busy month and I've hardly had any time to think for myself. I've settled in to my last host family and they're a really good family. I've seen even more on Denmark by taking a couple of trips with them. We went on a little weekend tour to their summerhouse by the coast. I was on the most westerly point of Denmark where there used

to be a big German base. It was kinda fun seeing all the old bunkers on the beach, which some artist had made into amazing statues. Even though it was a freezing cold weekend the beach was packed with everyone walking along bundled up in clothes, Strange Danes.

I got the chance to go up and see an Ice Hockey game in a nearby town with one of my 1st host brothers. It was great seeing it live. I've only seen it on TV and really liked it but when you see it live its excellent. The atmosphere was exciting. Unfortunately our team lost and I got a cold because I didn't realise how cold it is inside because everything has to be cold for the ice to be good.

I've been on some shopping trips and then also partying with some exchange students. One weekend I went up with both of my host sisters to a big town to go shopping and then stay with the one that lives up there. It was good shopping and great to be in a big town again. When you live in a town of 6000 its good been able to go to the City sometimes and just sit in a cafe. I just didn't get all my Christmas shopping done. All my Christmas presents had to be sent before the 1st so I was running around just trying to send things home for Christmas. I spent a weekend with Exchange students up in one of the biggest towns in Denmark. We decided to have a leaving party and some joint 18ths at the same time. I think there was about 30 of us. It was a great weekend just sitting around talking English, watching the castle and then been able to laugh at good Aussie jokes. We met most of them in the street, which is a famous going out place in Denmark where all the pubs and clubs are just along one street. I don't think they close until at least 6am. The strange things about Danes are the way they party. If you go home at 3am in the morning then you went home early. I get so tired going out with Danish friends because we always come home late and then have to sleep the next day. Besides that everything is getting ready for Christmas with it getting colder and colder. They predict that it will definitely snow for Christmas so I hope they're right. I'm really hoping for a white Christmas.

Last weekend I went to visit a living museum with my host family that was all set up for Christmas. It had old houses and farms that have been moved from around Denmark to one place. It goes right from the middle/stone ages up to the 1800's. It's actually interesting seeing how people lived in olden days. All the people that worked in there had olden days clothes on and then were cooking olden meals and things like that so you could buy them. It was so fun. Other than that I can't think of anything else interesting to tell. This is my last report and I keep thinking how much I've done in a year. It amazing that a year has gone and I've done so much. I'm just waiting to get back to an Aussie summer so I can finally get rid of this cold and see the beach. That's all for this month.

Love

*Nicola*



**Nicole bursts into song!**

Hi, I'm **Nicole Van-Bael**



and this is my December report  
My Sponsor Club is -  
**Murwillumbah Central**  
My Host Club is – **Kawaguchi** in  
Japan

“I’m dreaming of a white Christmas... just like the one I’ve never known...” it may not be white here on Christmas day but it will definitely be freezing cold!!! Something different to experience, I hear it was nearly 33 degrees in Murwillumbah the other day..... no sympathy from me! Sorry!

This month has been, well, there’s no word to describe it as other than hectic. Out of my 6 farewell speeches I have only performed 2, yet already I feel like a saying goodbye professional. But wait a minute; I am getting ahead of myself. Let’s start with this month’s points... well, I went to school... a lot. This is quite rare for me as I usually have a meeting to go to or the students have tests and I don’t, but school is worth it, even if it is only for friends, lunch and socialising. My host mother took me to Disney Sea (it’s a new theme park, unique to Japan and really a more mature version of Disneyland, not too cheesy-happy but mysterious and intriguing) and we had a fabulous day together! It rained the whole day, but this made the day better as hardly any people were there and the longest we had to line up was for 40 minutes and only because someone had dropped their belongings accidentally on the track of a high speed ride... oops!

Mainly though, I have spent this month writing and re-writing good-bye speeches. At first I went for the dramatic soapy effect, but found that comedy was much easier to write, much easier to read and apparently much easier to listen to. My speeches so far have gone well, they (by they I mean Rotarians) love it when I get to the part about adding an additional 10-kilo’s to myself and saying that I’ll have to try at dieting when I get home. Now really, is there anything funny about that? (*Yep – heaps. Ed.*)

Last Sunday at the district farewell party I had to play Koto in front of everyone, big mistake! It seemed as though there was a war between my fingers and the strings as I hardly hit one right note while playing! It was embarrassing and I thought it was the absolute worst thing that had happened to me whilst being in Japan, but now I look at it and say if that’s the worst, then I’ve had a fabulous year! I have too.

Yesterday I went to the movies with friends to see ‘Harry Potter’, when I returned home that night I noticed I didn’t have my purse with me. So naturally, I freaked out for a while, turned my room upside down looking for it and

then after talking with my host family and searching the house and nearby roads, decided it was time to call ACE insurance’s SOS line (very convenient!), I was then put through to MasterCard in America and cancelled my credit card. All of this was a bit scary for me! I had only just gotten some money out that day too! BUT the next day after school I went back to the city and looked for it, the last place I looked, a police box under the train station had information for me and so I write this email with a much lighter feeling than last night. My purse had been handed in, nothing stolen! My MasterCard had been cut in half by the police, but that’s all... oh and the purse needs to be replaced, it was run over by a few cars.

So, everything is fine now I guess, but it was very scary and I felt so irresponsible and not to mention frustrated with myself! Life goes on though and now I have to busy myself with writing some more speeches and maybe even practising them a bit!

See you all soon! Oh and MERRY CHRISTMAS!

*Nicole*

**Neils - World Record Cake**

Hi, I'm **Niels Andersen**



and this is my December 15  
report

My Sponsor Club is -  
**Bangsbostrand** in Denmark  
My Host Club is – **Murwillumbah**

Hello everybody!! How are you? I am fine. Sense the last report I have experienced a lot of exciting things amongst them my 17th birthday on the 10/12/01 and I will like to thank all the exchange students and the councillors, from whom I received a birthday greeting. Anyway I got heaps of presents, both from Denmark and from my host parents. I got a pair of Billabong boardies, a quicksilver T-shirt, undies with Garfield, \$80, another T-shirt, an esk of chocklets and at least a banner of Australia to hang all my pins on, home made by one of my several host mums.

At Rotary the 10th of Dec. I received as a surprise one of the biggest birthday cakes I have ever seen, with my name on it and 17 small candles. The same Monday I did my talk about my home country, and it went all right. Except for that I have been to the beach a couple of times. And then yesterday I did the big change over, yes you have guessed right, I have changed host family. Which means that I now have left the country, the farms and the cows, and got closer to the town, the beach and the surf. One of the more exciting, interesting, and different things about my new family is that they have forced me to live in a PINK room for 3 month, I don’t know how I am going to survive with a girl colour on my wall for so long time, any way if that is the biggest complaint I have I might consider the life in Australia as being good.



We are getting closer to Christmas, and therefore I will here by wish every exchange student, councillor and committee member a Merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

All the best from the Exchange student who is more busy than Santa Claus HO, HO, HO!!!

*Niels*

### **Perrine makes a change and faces a "snack attack!"**

Hi, I'm **Perrine Derume**



*and this is my December report*  
My Sponsor Club is - **Dottignies-Val D'Espierre** in Belgium  
My Host Club is - **Robina/South Tweed Heads**

I changed host families on the 30th of November. I stayed in Kelly's place for the month (Kelly is an Outbounder and she's going to Canada this year). The first weekend of December, we went to Tamborine where we had a camp. This camp was very good for me because I meet Devii (she's going to my place in Belgium). I think, it was great for us (Inbounders) to speak about experience and staff... After this weekend, I went to Brisbane for a couple of days. We stayed at Kelly's father's place. I visited Brisbane... One day, we went for ride on a bicycle and I saw my first snack!! It was a brown one! I was so afraid that I screamed! (*Perrine - it was only a brown snake - I mean - anyone would think it was dangerous. Just because it's deadly, very poisonous and sometimes quite aggressive - what's the problem? Ed.*)

I went to dream world with some friends and we had fun! After this, we went back to the gold coast. The day after was my birthday. I received a lot of presents from my host family, my Rotary club, and my family in Belgium... and for the evening, my host family took me out to a restaurant.

I had some BBQ, I did some shopping, I went on the beach, and I did horse riding, swimming... I invited Steph and Alex at home for a couple of days. After this, I did some Christmas shopping! I cooked some crêpes for my host family. For Christmas, I went to Brisbane with the family. We had a big breakfast and a big dinner. It was so hot on Christmas day! I stayed the day in the swimming pool. This Christmas was a very good experience for me! All was different! Weather, food, people... I'm very happy to be in Australia! On the Boxing Day, we went to Kelly's father's place and we had a big lunch. We stayed all the afternoon in the swimming pool. After Christmas, I went to some party with friends. For New Year, I went on the beach to see the fireworks and we stayed there for another party. This month was the best for me! I loved my host family and I had so much fun!



I love Australia and I'm very happy to be here! See you next month and happy New Year!

*Perrine*

### **Philippe experiences time warp.**

Hi, I'm **Philippe Dupleix**



*and this is my December report*  
My Sponsor Club is - **Vichy-Doyen** in France  
My Host Club is - **Ballina**

Hi guys, the time passed so fast it's like if I have right to last monthly report two day ago.

Now I'm in holiday. I have passed some exam. I have just finished the exams, almost I have assembly and it's over.

I had plenty of problem for write the Christmas card because I had 50 to send (lot for France) but I have finished all of them and now I just buy plenty of presents for Christmas.

I don't miss home lot. I think I just don't think at them a lot.

*Philippe*

### **Lisa is struck by NZ**

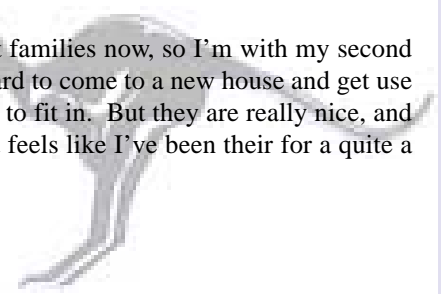
Hi, I'm **Lisa Ringqvist**



*and this is my December 20<sup>th</sup> report*  
My Sponsor Club is - **Aneby** in Sweden  
My Host Club is - **Jimboomba**

I'm sitting in New Zealand when I'm writing this. This country is really beautiful, with all the hills and all the green stuff. The only thing I haven't liked so far is that it's bloody cold here. I'm freezing my skin of, and it's raining everyday, brrr... anyway, its alright with jeans and a jumper!! I've been here for about two days now, we've been doing things around Auckland, like been in the sky tower, and a museum and Piha and and and, we do so much over the days. By the time the days is over you just crash in to bed! We are four people that are travelling around, and all of us are staying in with a Swedish family, with his non-Swedish wife and two-year-old son, so it is really a full house. Anyway this is great; we have a busy timetable all week!

I've swapped host families now, so I'm with my second one, it's always hard to come to a new house and get use to their habits and to fit in. But they are really nice, and after a few days it feels like I've been their for a quite a while.



To be on holidays is really nice, you get so much time to do what you want to do. I went down to stay with Ylva for a couple of days, we were meant to go to the beach and everything, but it rained almost everyday (it always does when I go there!! Ha, ha!). But we had a great time anyway, we did a whole heap of other stuff, like made bread (that only we liked), (*I must have the same recipe. Ed.*) went to the movies, yeah, well that was a few days with a lot of fun.

Oh yeah, and by the way, that camp up in Mt Tambourine was SO good, Its really nice to meet up with everyone!!!

Well their calling on me, we're gonna go to a zoo pretty soon.

Talk to you later - Love

*Lisa*



### Gam's Late News

Hi, I'm **Navitta (Gam) Sopajaree** and this is my December 21 report

My Sponsor Club is - **Tamai** in Thailand

My Host Club is - **Broadwater Southport**

Hello everybody I had a great experience on school holiday in October but I forgot to tell you in the last report. My host family took me to Bundaberg for 6 days. We stayed in an accommodation. My host dad 's sister and her family live there so they could visit them. Bundaberg is not as big as Gold Coast but it is a nice place. Peaceful! You will see lots of sugar cane farms. We went to the beach and rolled a surfsky. Then we went to Bundy rum factory and tried some things... Another day my host dad, brother, sister and I got a one-day trip to Lady Musgrave Island it was in Great Barrier Reef. I wasn't feeling well on the boat. It took 3 hrs to get there. We saw fish, a turtle and corals in semi submersible and grass bottom boat. Then we had lunch (seafood) and went snorkelling. It was a beautiful world under the water. I think I had a really good time. Anyway the school 's exam is coming. I do not prepare much coz I am too tired to do. And I had a good time again at 11 Nov. My host family took me & friend to the concert in Brisbane. They waited us at their relative's place. We got home about midnight. It was very good. I will never forget it. Well, this is my experience this month.

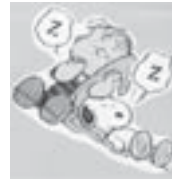
See u next time

*Navitta Sopajaree*



### Tarja asks -Who turned up the heat?

Hi, I'm **Tarja Ylitalo**



and this is my December 11<sup>th</sup> report

My Sponsor Club is - **Someron** in Finland

My Host Club is - **Grafton Midday**

Good day, mate!!

In the beginning of December it was sooo hot!! It was so awful to sit in the classes at school when the skirt just sticked to the chair and you were sweating all the time. Well, I was. But luckily it's not that hot anymore but it'll be when Christmas comes... I don't like when it's too hot but I'm just trying to think positively that I maybe won't have this kind of summer ever again so this is new and different experience.

During this month I visited first time Sydney. I went there with my host family when they went to see their relatives. It was just a weekend trip so not very long but still - Sydney! Because almost all their relatives live there we spent most of the time visiting them and didn't have time to see lot of sights. But I still saw the Opera House and Harbour Bridge in the night-lights and also the nightlife of Sydney while driving through it. The city is so big!! I never thought it would be so big with all the suburbs etc.

Next week I cooked two days at school. I was making food to the year 12 Ball. I also got to go to the party to serve food, which was nice. It was interesting to see what kind of party do the students have when they finish High School. The boys looked handsome with suits and girls had beautiful dresses. I guess it's quite big to thing to year 12 to celebrate finishing (finally) the school.

29 of November I moved to my third host family. This host family includes parents, 14-year-old Vincent, 5-year-old Emily and 4-year-old Nicholas. So now I get the idea what it feels to live with little children. Every host family really teaches you in some way and with each of them you get to experience something new and different. And that's good. This host family is really nice and I enjoy living with them.

The very next day of changing host family I went to the exchange camp to Tambourine Mountain. We left Friday 'cause otherwise we should have left so early on Saturday morning and that actually wouldn't have been so nice... The camp was to us, inbound students but also to rebound and outbound students with their parents. It was nice to meet the people who are going to your home country and tell them everything of your country. We already planned with Anna-Stiina to do something nice with Rick and Amelia when we arrive back home. That'll be fun!

The second night I slept with my new host family I experienced something really awful: early in the morning I woke up and wondered what feels in my leg! I lifted the blanket up and saw a cockroach! Oh yak!! I jumped up

in that second (it probably was a new world record) and shaken all sheets. After that my host mother sprayed my room and since that I haven't seen any of them, luckily. I just hate those awful creatures!! But, here I just have to deal with them. Well, just a new experience, though it isn't very nice one...

6.12. I went to Movie World with drama class and other students. I had so great day!! The place is just fantastic! And it's so big that I probably didn't see properly even half of it. I was really impressed of how well the themes of all the movies were showed. There were very nice little details. It was just a pity that the Harry Potter theme wasn't there yet.

Last Sunday I went to try, first time in my life, water-skiing. That was so much fun!! I really got exited of it and want to do it again!! At the same time I got to go, again first time in my life, sailing with a little boat. That day was so great! Unfortunately I burned myself a little bit which wasn't nice at all. A little remind of the hot and very powerful sun.

It's so funny to think that soon is Christmas. It's just too hot to be Christmas! I don't feel like a Christmas very much although I like to sing Christmas songs. This Christmas will be vary different - not snowy, like usually, but sandy. But actually it's just nice to see other kind of Christmas than what you're used to, though I'm missing snow and coldness. I'm gonna have that kind of Christmas next year and the year after it etc. so I'm now just trying to enjoy this really different Christmas as much as I can.

I guess that was all for this month. I'd like to wish very Merry X'mas and Happy New year!! - Sunpoint.net antaa vihjeen:

Osoitteesta [www.sunpoint.net](http://www.sunpoint.net) löydät riittävästi sopivan kokoisia operaattorilogoja komistamaan matkapuhelimesi näyttöä.

*Tarja Ylitalo*

### Amelia suffers and finally gets relief!

Hi, I'm **Amelia Parkins**



*and this is my January report*  
My Sponsor Club is - **Mt. Warning Murwillumbah**  
My Host Club is - **Hamina-Vehkalahti in Finland**

Having finally survived the long and tedious flight it was a great relief to get off the plane in Helsinki and find my baggage awaiting me. I spent my first week in Finland at Karkku Evankelinen Opisto. It was a language and culture camp, which all exchange students arriving in Finland in January had to attend. This group was mainly Australian with a couple from New Zealand, South Africa, Argentina and Brazil. It was really good to meet up with a whole group who were in the same position as me. During our stay

here we learnt the basics of the language and culture, which has since proved very useful.

After the camp I spent three days with my counsellor and explored the area surrounding Hamina where I am to spend the next twelve months. The biggest shock was the temperatures and amount of snow. It was also strange for the first little while as the Fins drive on the right of the road and on both snow and ice. I am very glad to have gone to the camp where they explained the shy nature of the Finnish people. In a couple of instances walking around Hamina I have smiled at people as they walk past but they would all just stare back. If the tutors hadn't explained this aspect of their nature, that they are both reserved and inquisitive at the same time, I would have believed they were simply rude.

I have been to my school a couple of times but begin properly on Tuesday. Language I think will be the only problem in most classes but with the help of the English teacher and my host family I'm am working on the problem! I have also agreed to act as a tutor for my English class, which will hopefully be a good opportunity to get to know my classmates.

Bye - Love

*Amelia*

### Amelia explains what she's been up to!

Hi, I'm **Amelia Ramsay**



*and this is my January report*  
My Sponsor Club is - **Surfers Paradise**  
My Host Club is - **Chatel-Guyon in France**

Dear Oz,

So my first months here (or two weeks) and you want to know what I've been up to. Well starting right from the beginning at the airport I think I was one or probably the only person who cried at the airport. Or at least I was the only one really sad to be leaving. So I guess my reports will be a little different to the rest. I had the worst case of homesickness ever imagined my first week here.

On top of that I was sick and couldn't sleep. Not understanding anyone didn't help either, my five years of French at school made little improvement on that. The culture shock was incredible. The food, language, people, surroundings, everything was different. But I knew I had to get through it, so I slinked around my first week and tried to make the most of it. I'm telling you. It was HARD! But then they sent me to school. Which I never thought I'd say but I love being at school. It's the best distraction from anything you miss. The people you meet a fantastic. Maybe not the teachers but that's expected. The students what to know everything and anything about you. So calling on my trust the Gold Coast magazines and books and my photo collection and showed everyone

my home. I can't explain how much they loved it but for my first week I don't think the book stayed in my bag for longer than five minutes. Again everything was different (not worst all better just different, *Thank you ROTARY*) at school. My family is fantastic. I have a host sister my age, and older brother and two older sisters. I made some fantastic friends, got to know my town pretty well, blended in at Rotary meetings and am making new discoveries every week. (*See, the light at the end of the tunnel, wasn't the headlight of an on-coming express train. Ed.*)

C'EST SUPERB! - Thank you ROTARY!

*Amelia*

### Amy makes a major discovery!

Hi, I'm Amy Heading



and this is my January report  
My Sponsor Club is - **Warwick & Warwick Sunrise**  
My Host Club is - **Zürich-Limmattal** in Switzerland

Oh my God! This is so cool. My host family is really nice. They make me feel so welcome and are helpful in getting me settled. They are doing so much for me, which makes me feel so welcome. My host mum took me on Saturday with a friend of hers to see art on ice (an ice skating performance with live music — it was awesome). I saw Gloria Gaynor!! I couldn't believe it! I almost fell off my seat. She sings a song "I will survive". And I absolutely love it! Well, that was my first really big outing. I have language school for three weeks and I'm having a ball. We are in classes of just exchange students, so that is really nice. My host club bought me a yearly train pass which allows me to go anywhere in Switzerland for free (including on buses and trains). That is so great. Each morning I catch the train to Zurich to language school. My success stories, well I can't say this is one, but it was so fun. I tried curling with my rotary club. Curling is this cross between lawn bowls, ice-skating and gymnastics — except for me it included crawling to! Well, its winter here. Some days it is slightly cold (like the day I arrived at it snowed) and slightly hot on others. The food is GREAT. I love the cheese, bread, potato, chocolate and of course the sausages! Hopefully I won't put on weight... But with this diet??? For Australia Day I cooked a Pavlova... (*OK Amy, where's my slice. Ed.*) It was great (even with the imported strawberries from Israel!!) I have cooked dinner twice so that is kind of cool! My German is improving. (*And I assume that your host family is doing the same? Ed.*) I just need practice! (*That's what they told me. Ed.*) Everything is so different here that is all special in its own little way!

*Amy*

### Anna\_Stiina found it different!

Hi, I'm Anna-Stiina Sirviö



and this is my January report  
My Sponsor Club is - **Tuira-Oulu** in Finland  
My Host Club is - **Mt. Warning AM**

This has been quite a different month compared to others. Maybe the biggest reason is that I went back to school after two months holiday but it wasn't the same school as before holidays I had a change.

I didn't know what to think about it at first but after having a chat with a few Rotarians I thought that change would a good opportunity because before I had to travel a couple of hours everyday to get to school and back and naturally I'd like to have a host family during my last three months here.

So I dressed up in my new uniform and felt a little bit nervous I did not know what was going to happen..... I didn't know where to start. But everything went well and after my first day there I'd say I had found "My best friend" since then we have been really good friends. What is the best thing is this cos' I'm having fun at school but luckily I'm also having my last host family

During this month I've also done few really interesting things. Beginning of this month I spent a day with 45,000 people at Big Day out concert festival... I went up there with my host sister, Neils and his host sister and also a New Zealand bloke.

It was a beaut day listening to good music and I suppose that everyone else did too !!!!!!!I spent one day with Rotex (or actually with Guy, Neils, Anne, Lisa and Ylva) at Wet and Wild and it was really a great day and even the three hours bus trip back didn't spoil it. Thank you Rotex. (*Somehow - I think Rotex kind of enjoys doing such things. Ed.*)

Also I visited at Tropical Fruit World It was really interesting day because we could taste some different fruits and I love it! As almost everyone knows how much I love Mangos, 1 for breakfast, 1 for lunch and 2 for dinner!!

On Australia day I also went to see celebrations here at Murwillumbah. I found it interesting to see when people became Australians.

Couple of weeks ago just before school started when I was staying at my next host families place, Natalie took me twice to a horse ride - first one was just a little but next one was one and half hours! It was first time to me on horse, really in six years, and guess what my bum was really sore day after that.

Last month have been excellent and full of things to do. I've been really busy girl, which makes things funny! I love being here but unfortunately time is running out - so I've to make rest of my time here even more fun.

Hugs from

*Anna-Lina*

### Anne reports that her club wants her!

Hi, I'm **Anne Bædke**



and this is my January report  
My Sponsor Club is - **Roedby** in  
Denmark  
My Host Club is – **Southport**

My club wants me to come to all the meetings, so I am coming to almost all of them but due to the Christmas

holidays I have not attended meetings lately. My sponsor Club sent me a Christmas present with a little card they had all signed. And my father, who is president of my sponsor club, keeps me informed of what is going on at home.

I changed to my 3rd host family the 15th of December and my experience with this family is just so great also. I have noticed that with some host families it takes a little longer that with others to adapt to their family and I have had the, good experience I think, to try almost every possibility. With this host family I stay with now, it was just great from the very beginning! I felt like calling them “mom” and “dad” from the day I walked in the door and I absolute LOVE my new “brothers”! I have never in my life had brothers nor little siblings so that was quite an challenge in the beginning with all the noise little boys make! (*Little Boys – Make Noise – Bah Humbug – Never! Ed.*) But it is just great now, and I really start getting nervous if they are too quiet!

I have done a lot of things with my host families (I have barely time to sit down and relax or be with friends.) But I enjoy it as much as I can! They have taken me to Wet'n'Wild a couple of times and I just love it there. It really helps too that I enjoy spending time with them! And my “aussie-christmas,” what can I say? It was great! I enjoyed every bit of it. We had 15 guests staying overnight for three days so there was always life everywhere! But that was just great for me! I was so lucky to get six new “cousins” my own age that I had a lot of fun with. What else can I say! I was really having such a different Christmas that it probably will be the only time in my life that I will ever experience a Christmas like that. Seafood instead of roasted duck, pork and caramelized potatoes, and opening presents in the morning instead of Christmas eve! It was quite funny to open presents Christmas morning. It was so different! Everybody woke up early, had breakfast from the barbeque and them straight in, before anybody was dressed or anything, opening the presents! What can I say? I had an unbelievable unforgettable and very different Christmas! (*Anne – that's one of the great things about the YEP – it enables you to participate in, and enjoy, experiences like this. Ed.*)



*Anne*

### Daniel - Life is just a blur!

Hi, I'm **Daniel Lake**



and this is my January report  
My Sponsor Club is - **Surfers  
Paradise Central**  
My Host Club is – in Switzerland

Well, my year has started off faster and more busy than I first thought. I arrived at Zurich Airport on Saturday 1 9th January and since then it has not stopped. Although I feel as though the last 2 weeks has gone extremely fast, because it has been filled with so much, I feel as though I have been here for a month!

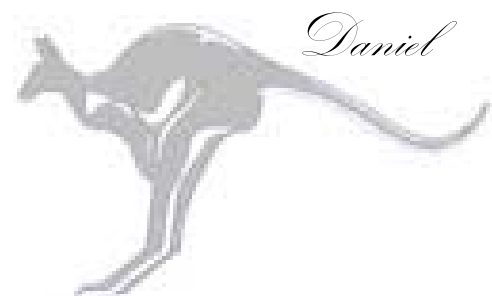
My first weekend was quite a culture shock. While I was told when I got off the plane that it was not very cold (a warm 3 degrees!!) I walked outside in only my Rotary uniform and was hit with the icy wind. I spent most of Saturday organising things with my host family - doing the grocery shopping, buying a warm jacket and backpack etc. That afternoon it snowed and I went nuts. Where as I had been to the snow in Australia, I had never seen it actually falling from the sky. (*Great stuff that. Just between you and me – did you run around trying to catch snowflakes on your tongue? Ed.*)

After seeing my reaction to the small amount of snow that fell in my home town of Kastanienbaum, my host parents decided to take me to see some real snow on Sunday. We travelled for about an hour to an area in the pre-alps called Frutt. This made any snowfield in Australia look like a patch of snow. Every single patch of ground was white and I could even walk across a completely frozen lake! (*Beats trying to walk on unfrozen ones! Ed.*)

Since then I have spent most of my time at language school with the other exchange students from Luzern. I had my first lesson of actual school on Thursday and although I stared blankly at the (German) philosophy text for an entire hour, I met some really nice people. Right now I am on holidays for two weeks. My plans are to go snowboarding in Engelberg, to go to Lugano (in the Italian part of Switzerland) and to Italy. This is made very easy by the fact that it only takes 1 or 2 hours to get to these places and the very nice people at Rotary Switzerland have given the exchange students a GA (which allows them to travel on any train or bus in Switzerland for free.)

Well, that's about all I can say about my first two short but jammed packed weeks in Luzern, Switzerland.

Tschüss



**Derume reports on her new relationship!**

Hi, I'm **Perrine Derume**



and this is my January report  
My Sponsor Club is - **Dottignies-Val d'Espierre** in Belgium  
My Host Club is - **Robina**

On the 1th of January, I changed host family. Now I live in Ashmore. My new host family're very cool and I have a very good relationship with them. I have 3 host sisters and 1 host brother. One of my sister's in England for 1 more year and the other one is in Japan (Renaë Matheson) so at home I have just one sister and one brother. My host sister's 15 and my host brother's 13. I had a couple of days with Renaë before she leave and she's a very nice and funny person. So in my holidays, I did the same of everybody: movies, sport, swimming, horse riding, beach, ...

*Derume*

**Elizabeth's credibility is stretched!**

Hi, I'm **Elizabeth Mullan**



and this is my January report  
My Sponsor Club is -  
**Murwillumbah Central**  
My Host Club is - **Eniwa** in Japan

Hi everyone!

I have had a good week. It is hard to believe that only a week ago I was on the plane and not really sure what was ahead of me. They say that you learn more in the first four years of your life than at any other time and now I believe it! What with learning to walk and talk and a myriad of other things besides, I'm not surprised that it adds up to more learning than all the maths, science, English etc at school and beyond. I have done an awful lot of learning this week - I have learnt how to walk (on ice, which is surprisingly difficult) and am learning to talk (in Japanese). I guess it's good that I love talking because it means that at least I am attempting to use the language a lot, even if it is rather stilted and all the verbs etc are around the wrong way! Speaking of verbs, I wish I had paid more attention to all the ones I learned at school because they seem to be what makes the language go. I am slowly picking up Kanji at a rate of about two a day as well. I find it fascinating and try to pick out a few to look up in the Kanji dictionary I borrowed from school. Unfortunately in Biology yesterday they were learning about the kidney, so the Kanji I learned probably won't ever be of any use to me!

It's weird being in a country where I understand so little of the language. I often can't understand where we are going before we get there - we ended up in the City Hall on Tuesday where I thought we were going to pick up my Alien Registration, but when we arrived we were led into a rather stylish room with some other Rotarians, so I thought maybe it was a Rotary meeting because I had

been told to wear my blazer. Then an important - looking man walked in and everyone bowed really low. It was lucky I had brought a few meishi (business cards) with me because we exchanged them and I realised that he was the Mayor of Eniwa and the lady in the corner taking photos and notes was a journalist! They talked for a while (mostly about me and the weather, so I understood a bit) and, sure enough, the next day I was in the local newspaper, although I can't actually understand what it says!!! I am able to understand more when they are talking about me. No one seems to speak much English; even the English teacher's speech is stilted, so I guess I will learn a lot more this way.

I started school yesterday and everyone is so friendly - they all cheered when I came into the classroom and yelled "Riz, Riz" which is what they call me. I don't think it is a very academic school - the students in my class are 15 and 16 years old and about the equivalent of the end of year 10, I think. When they got back their Japanese and English tests, the students around me were like "Wow! I got 7% or 16%" or around that mark! It's such a different world to the one I'm used to. Mind you, I am sitting at the very back of the room where the students appear to be less studious. There are 42 students including me, and in my row they all sleep and talk and put on make-up and pluck their eyebrows during the lessons! They keep telling me how good looking all their teachers are, too! There are only five boys in the class and they are very shy. My favourite subject is still maths (surprise, surprise)! The teacher is so funny. Yesterday he wrote out a whole speech in English for me about how he is "a mathematical teacher `on` this classroom" and that he wants "to go to the country of the English - speaking world in future", and then he gave me a textbook. It was the only subject (apart from English) that I understood. They are doing the sine rule and although! Couldn't read the Kanji I could work it out from the numbers. They kept saying "atama ga ii" which I think means I have a good head (?) or something because I could do the questions! I got out my normal scientific calculator and they all said, "Ooh, wow, it does sine and square root"!!! Imagine if I had brought my graphics calculators!!!

This morning I caught the train to school but I didn't know any of the students so I just followed the uniform and hoped I was heading towards the right school! It is a sailor-suit type uniform and mine is being washed and will be ready on Monday. My sports uniform is size XO which apparently means extra ookii, or extra large! Oh dear! I haven't put on any weight yet, which is a relief, and I can't afford to now because my uniform belonged to the previous exchange student and only just fits.

The food is very healthy. We had sashimi (raw fish) for tea last night and it was surprisingly yummy! I especially liked the raw scallops and prawns. I can't get over the slurping noises, though, which are a must when eating noodles and soup!



This weekend I am going to Sapporo (the capital of Hokkaido) to meet all the other exchange students and to go ski-walking. I have also been to a traditional tea-ceremony and will begin learning Japanese calligraphy next week, and hopefully Kendo too. So many exciting things to look forward to! I have a feeling that this year will just fly.

On February 1, I will move to my first host family (at the moment I am with my councillor and his wife) and I will be there until May 1.

Well, until the next episode of Elizabeth's exciting adventures in Japan...

Sayoonara!

*Elizabeth* :)

### Kathryn can't believe it!

Hi, I'm Kathryn Lovell



and this is my January report  
My Sponsor Club is - **Ballina-On-Richmond**  
My Host Club is - **Rødby** in Denmark

I can't believe it! I've been here for almost a month! That means that there's only 11 months left! And if they all go as quickly as this one has... IDON'T WANT TO LEAVE ALREADY!!! I guess it's pretty obvious that so far I'm having a great time. But seeing how quickly time is passing brings a sense of urgency to my everyday life, and there just doesn't seem to be enough time to do everything! But anyway, onto the good stuff. Leaving Australia was both one of the most exciting and saddest days of my life. Just before I left I broke into a blubbing mess, but as we walked into the departure lounge I got that butterfly feeling in the pit of my stomach and just couldn't wait to get on the plane! 8 hours later I couldn't wait to get off the plane! But it was pretty cool in Singapore seeing so many exchange students from all over Australia jetting off all over the world... When we FINALLY arrived in Copenhagen, the first things I noticed about Denmark is that it's really COLD and FLAT!! The cold was a novelty for about 5 minutes but then I was glad for the warmth of the bus. All the exchange students were split into 2 groups and then we attended language school for the first 2 weeks. My group was in a city called Odense, the 3rd largest city in Denmark... Needless to say, with 40 exchange students (the majority from Australia! But also NZ, South Africa, Brazil and Argentina) we had soooo much fun! Lauren (\*Cheerleader\*) from 9640 was also in Odense so it was great having a friendly face! But by the end of 2 weeks everyone had made so many close friends, it was actually really comforting to have people around you who were experiencing all the same emotions you were... But also, being exchange students, everyone is fairly crazy and there are heaps of funny stories about cheerleading and Mexicans and the Australian Bar (our Rotarians told us

to go there on Australia Day... so we did!) and shopping and ice skating (let's just say that the ice and I are well acquainted) that crack me up every time I think about them... Also, I stayed with a wonderful host family in Odense that I absolutely loved. I think that the combination of this and the exchange students made my transition from Australia to Denmark really easy - I have just been so busy that I have not had time to be homesick. While in Odense I got to see some amazing sights - where Hans Christian Andersen was born, a cathedral where a Danish King was killed, a pig farm (smelly!), ice hockey, snow for the first time! My family also took me around the island Odense is on so I've seen some proper castles! And let me reiterate - DENMARK IS REALLY FLAT! Oh, and it has lots of windmills. But also amazing cheese and Danish pastries (drool) and coffee and I'll stop before I get hungry! After my first 2 weeks, it was time to come to my real host town! I was actually pretty nervous because I'd settled into a nice routine in Odense. But the day that I left it was the first really sunny day that I've seen since I arrived, so that had to be a good sign! I'm staying right down the bottom of Denmark (as in, the ferry to Germany leaves from my town!) in a pretty traditional Danish farmhouse, which is lovely (have I mentioned heated floors! Yay! Everyone has them!). Also for the first time in my life I have a brother and sisters (13, 18 & 19) but so far I am really loving it. I have adjusted really easily to being in a new family, and find them all really easy to talk to. My host sister (Rikke) was also an exchange student 2 years ago, so she's fantastic to talk about stuff to. I only went to school here for 2 days before winter holidays, but already my class has been great - invited me to the movies, for a sleepover, to the local pub & disco... School here is really different to in Australia, kind of like a senior high school. And you have the same class who do all the same subjects. I've been put in the mathematics line (the horror! I hate maths! Luckily they said I don't have to do it) but we still get to do subjects like Spanish and Music. And I really love the school so far, everyone is really nice and it's a school where everyone just does their own thing and no one else seems to mind. It's much smaller than schools in Australia (about 300) so everyone tends to know each other, which is really cool. Well, that's about it for this month! I hope that everyone else is having an amazing time like I am. One thing - I now know what exchange students mean when they say that you really get to learn to depend on yourself and know who you really are. Being on the other side of the world to everything and everyone you've ever known and not being able to speak the language sure is a scary thought, but it is also the most incredible experience and I can't wait for the rest of the year!

Love to everyone (and a special shout out to Loz in the Odense Crew!)



**Kelly – Takes Leave!***Hi, I'm Kelly Bartlett**and this is my "I'm about to leave" report*My Sponsor Club is - **Robina**  
My Host Club is – in Canada

Hi everyone, Its Kelly Bartlett here. Only one more sleep until I'm jet setting off to Canada. Before I go I'd just like to take the opportunity to thank you once again for this wonderful experience. I'm also very thankful for all your help leading up to this once in a lifetime adventure. I will be keeping in touch while I'm in Canada so you should expect to hear all about what I've been up to. Speak to you all soon via e-mail.

*Kelly***Kelly reports she's fine!***Hi, I'm Kelly Bartlett**and this is my January report*  
My Sponsor Club is - **Robina**  
My Host Club is – in Canada

Hi everyone, well everything here is great. I did make it here safely, though I have to say that it was the longest few days of my life. Luckily I spent overnight in a hotel at Vancouver with a very comfy bed. A few of the other exchange students and I got to spend the day in Vancouver, which was really nice. It's a very pretty city when it's all lit up. Anyway I did eventually make it to Charlottetown airport and there was a whole crew of people there to greet me, which was a little overwhelming. I wasn't expecting so many people. I spent the first few nights with my counsellor who is really a ball of energy. She's really looking after me. After spending a few days with Donna I moved in with my host family - Eddie and Arlene. They're great! They're very nice - always making sure that I'm happy and that I have something to do. They also have a dog that's 17 years old and he is the most adorable thing I've ever since. This dog has character. I'm going skiing today with some of Ellen's (Eddie and Arlene's daughter) friends, which should be interesting since I am yet to attempt it. Tomorrow I'm off on a ski trip to Windsor, Nova Scotia with Rotary. Anyway this was just a quick note to tell you that I have settled in nicely and that everyone is looking after me. I have been to two Rotary meetings so far. They have 165 members, just a little bigger than the Robina club. Everyone there is very interested to hear about Australia.

I'll be in touch soon.

*Kelly*p.s – thank you Norm for the photo (*What Photo - where is it? Ed.*)**Kelly reports an infection!***Hi, I'm Kelly Bartlett*

The Smile Starter!

Smiling is infectious; you catch it like the flu.

When someone smiled at me today, I started smiling too.

I passed around the corner, and someone saw my grin.

When he smiled I realized, I'd passed it to him.

I thought about that smile, then I realized its worth.

A single smile just like mine, could travel the earth.

So, if you feel a smile begin, don't leave it undetected.

Let's start an epidemic quick, and get the world infected!

*Kelly***Kylie reports a shocking experience!***Hi, I'm Kylie Burton**and this is my January report*

My Sponsor Club is -

**Murwillumbah**My Host Club is – **Köln um Rhein**  
in Germany

Well I made it! I am now in Köln, Germany and let me tell you going from Australia's summer to Germany's winter is quite a shock to your body! (*Now you know how the supermarket dudes that restock the frozen food sections feel. Ed.*)

So far everything is going great! I can hardly believe I have almost been here a month! Wow! It's going so fast. I'm sure someone has sped up time because it really doesn't seem as though there are 24 hours in each day! It seems like only yesterday I stepped off the plane.

My host-family is wonderful and I felt right at home from the first day. I had no problems settling in - the 1st night questionnaire really helped! Our apartment is on the 5th floor and there is no elevator. This meant that my host-father had to carry up my 27kg suitcase up many, many stairs! But it was ok! He smiled and laughed the whole time. My host-sister is also great. I have never had a younger sister before but I love it, she is 14. We go shopping and ice skating together.

The food is good too. It's "different" but still very good. My host-family don't like blood sausages so that was a bit of a relief but we do eat a lot of other sausages.

School is going ok too. It's also "different". It is very exhausting because I must concentrate very hard just to understand and even then I only understand 2 words out of every 500! Also, because the teachers speak so quickly and with big words it becomes a monotone that sort of hypnotises you into a sleepy state. But it's getting better

as my German improves. I take French, Latin, German and English so I have languages coming out of my ears!

Speaking of the language its getting there although slowly - my host family speaks English so sometimes we are a little lazy and communicate in English but most of the time we speak German. I wish I could learn faster there are so many words I want to be able to say and for the first time in my life I am forced to be the quiet one that only says a little! I realise I must be patient with myself as I can only push myself so far and so many words into my brain each day!

Karneval has also just been on so I have only been to a week of school because there were public holidays for Karneval. Karneval is like Halloween but it lasts for a month well three months actually but everyone dresses up in costume and just goes crazy! It was a lot of fun. I dressed up as an Australian in our flag and my whole body was nothing but the Union Jack and the Southern Cross and I had koalas and kangaroos stuck to me and an Australian flag tattoo on my face! It was fantastic!

I have also baked ANZAC biscuits for my family while I have been here, I thought I'd wait a bit longer before I try to tackle the pavlova I don't want a disaster!

I guess the biggest challenge so far to date has been the language. I think Australians take for granted the fact that for most of us everyone around us speaks English and that you grow up only having to deal with one language and so communication is something that we just do. However, on exchange you are thrown into an environment where you can't always say what you necessarily want to say and to communicate takes a lot of effort. I now know what it is like for immigrants in foreign countries who come not knowing the native language.

In Europe so many countries border one another and so hearing multiple languages on a day-to-day basis is the norm. In Australia, no matter how multicultural we may think we are the majority still only speak English so it is quite a large shock to suddenly be around people your own age that speak anywhere from 2 to 5 languages fluently and see this as nothing special. I think people are ignorant who expect others to speak English just because they do.

So I guess what I am trying to say is that already my eyes have been opened to a society I have not before experienced, and I love that I have been able to observe, interact and to experience first hand something so different to what I am used. Already my experience has changed the way I see things and for this I am grateful.

I am loving my exchange and wish that time would slow down so I could stay here longer

With hugs and kisses



*Kylie Burton*

## Lauren is Dumb Struck!

Hi, I'm **Lauren McElhinney**



and this is my January report  
My Sponsor Club is - **Coomera Valley**

My Host Club is - **Roskilde Ostre**  
in Denmark

What can I say! I'm having the best time here and so far nothing has gone wrong. I love Denmark and the people even more. I have not met one person that doesn't want to help me or talk to me. There have been a few problems, but nothing that I couldn't handle and that would change my wanting to be here. Thank you so much Coomera Valley RC for making this happen for me!

I have my first Rotary meeting on Wednesday and they want me to do the whole speech in Danish! I have been working on it with my Danish teacher and its much harder then I thought. Seeing as they told me that they didn't want anything to do with me till I can present it completely in Danish I thought it was a good idea to practice. (*Wow - Talk about goal setting. Ed.*) Kurt Jensen, my counsellor, is great and has been helping me with anything I need to have done. He also speaks very good English as do the rest of the Danes. Students at school have been learning English for many years now and I can't believe how good they are. One of the problems I have had in the past month is trying to get all the students talking to me. There were about 5 people in class that didn't want to talk because they were scared that I would laugh at their English, (*Make a pact with them - you won't laugh at their English - Providing - They don't laugh at your Danish! Ed.*) but they were wherever I was, listening to me and laughing with me as well at the other people I was talking to. The second I would turn to them and say something they would run off. I knew this wasn't a good thing, at first I didn't know what was wrong until I asked some of the other students. I went up to each of them and asked them if they could help me with some Danish. There was only one girl in the class that still feels uncomfortable talking to me, but they said that she never talks anyway. My goal is to make her my friend!

I started school 2 weeks ago now and am on holidays now! Yay! The thing that made me feel really good about being here is, in last lesson at school today all the students in my class asked me to put my phone number up on the board so they could call me if anything is organized for the holidays. I knew they liked having me around, but I really didn't think I was going to hear from a lot of them. I just received a call from one of the girls in my class asking me if I wanted to go to a movie night at her place. Everyone from our class will be there! I think I'm going to take over a Pav., just to give them the taste of Aussie life! Last Friday one of the girls in my class had a B'Day party and I met so many new people. It's amazing how far an Australian accent will go! I met a guy at the bar and he's leaving for Australia in September for a year! He's really excited and was glad to have someone to talk about it with.

The only real problem I have with school at the moment is sport. After each sport lesson everyone goes into the showers together. They all just stand there naked and talking as if its not big deal. It isn't a big deal but I have never done that before. I'm not comfortable with standing there with nothing on washing myself and talking to the person next to me. So far I have been going in the stall to have a shower and stuff. I think it's going to stay that way, but you never know I could change maybe... don't count on it.

Yesterday (Thursday) I went to the schools international meeting. There were other students there what had gone on exchange before or are from different parts of the world. They had asked me to join their club, so I'm going to a 'Welcome To Denmark' party on the 14th of March. I'm really looking forward to that and I think I'll take another Pav. (They all love them and keep asking me to make more, it's requested every time I go to someone's place for dinner. Oh and I made the best ever Pav the other day!). I have made good friends with some of these students although they are at least one year older than I. Its good to know I have someone that I can talk to about problems at school. They know what its like and they have been in the same situation as me before.

Now about my host family! They are the nicest people I have ever met in my life. They have been helping me with my Danish, my homework, and taking me out keeping me busy all the time. We went to a city call Copenhagen last week and they were showing me around the theatre there (right next to the Queens castle) and I asked them if they liked Phantom of the Opera. Oh yes we love it, they said. They asked me if I had ever seen it and because I haven't and I have always wanted to the next day my host Dad handed me tickets to see it. And it's the same screening as the queen! Ahhh how exciting is that! I was ecstatic about it and was hugging and kissing everyone. They told me that it was going to be a nice evening and I needed to dress up a bit. I had a skirt that I could wear, but no top so they said they were going to buy me a new one! I didn't know what to say or do about it so I wrote them a little card and made dinner for them. They said they enjoyed it but I think they were just being nice about it. I also have 2 host brothers 13 and 17. The older one is on exchange in Australia at the moment so I have his room for now. But the other one is so cute. His name is Mathias and we get along great. I have made him his own email address so he could keep in contact with Malte and he's been sending an email everyday so far. He's a great kid and I can tell it's going to be so hard leaving at the end of the year.

On March the 1-3 all the exchange students in Denmark are going on a camp to a small island in Denmark. We are all really looking forward to that, as we haven't seen each other for 3 weeks. They have a fun filled weekend for us when we get there. It will be up at 5 and to bed at 12 so I'm sure I will be very tired by the end of it all.

Well I have been here for a month now and the saying 'Time flies when you having fun' is the only way to describe it. There are many more things I could talk about, but I would be here for hours and I think this is long enough already.

Thank you Rotary for everything you have done for me!  
- Hugs Rotary hugs and kisses,

*Lauren the Dane!*

### **Leigh blinked and missed it!**

*Hi, I'm Leigh Borovina*



*and this is my First report*

My Sponsor Club is - *Surfers Paradise West*

My Host Club is - in Thailand

WOW! I can't believe I have already been here one month. It has gone so fast, equal to the speed of one blink of an eye.

This scares me because in just 12 more blinks my exchange is over and I am going to have to return to Australia. Australia. it feels so distant, even to say it, because I feel like Thailand is my home now. I am settled and I don't think I will ever want to go. I like it here; in fact I love it here. The people, the places and the food. oh the food is soooo very good. I know that it won't be long until the reflection that I see in the mirror is carrying an extra ten kilos, strangely though, I am not so worried because I have never had so much fun getting fat!

The experiences I have had here are endless in detail and it is impossible for to me to ever give them the credit they deserve through words. You have to see it to believe, feel it and smell it I just can't give my life here justice through words. How do you explain the misplacement of a fully-grown elephant in the city streets, amongst the cars, trucks and strange motorcycle contraptions! I even went to dinner with an elephant! I was eating dinner when I felt something touch my leg. I thought it was one of the many stray dogs in Thailand that are present in most out door restaurants. However when I bent down to move the dog by my leg I discovered that it was not a dog, rather it was a long grey leathery mass. Following this grey 'thing' up I realized it was the trunk of an elephant. A big beautiful elephant with tiny black eyes and a friendly curve to its droopy mouth! An elephant at dinner, now that is something you don't get everyday in Australia!

Lets go back to the start, the plane trip, the excitement and the glorious mystery. After a sad but happy farewell, with tears streaming down my face, I boarded the jet that would take me far away from home, from everything that was boringly familiar. This was the ride that would take me to the depths of the unknown and introduce me to the travel bug, something I had always been eager to catch! With twenty other exchange students we were in a class of our own. Setting heads turning with our green and beige uniforms of Rotary Youth Exchange. To say the least, I was nervous. What if I didn't like Thailand? What

if Thailand didn't like me? What if my host family hates me? What if I am overcome with hysterical homesickness? What if school is horrible? The "what ifs" haunted me for the entire first hour of the flight. But after three hours of endless talking and one movie we finally arrived in Singapore. The airport in Singapore was so different to Australian airports. The security guards here walked calmly with huge machine guns in their possession without disturbing the peace. This I found extremely strange since Australian security, if they have any kind of weapon, only carry a small gun. I was no longer nervous, now I was just plain excited. I had never left the safety of Australia before. This was my first time to leave the country and I didn't want to miss a thing. After two hours in Singapore the nine of us (YES) continuing on to Thailand boarded, for me, the second international flight of my life. I watched the plane depart the brightly lit Singapore Airport and before I had time to realize it I had slipped into heavy sleep. Being awoken by the hostess I realized in a panic that we were landing in Bangkok and I still hadn't changed out of my denim skirt and Rotary polo shirt! This was not how I wanted to greet the many important Rotarians that would be waiting for us at the arrival gates!!! So after a mad rush to the bathroom I was back in my formal attire and strolling towards the arrival gates, towards Thailand.

After arriving in Bangkok after many handshakes and warm and welcoming smiles we were piled into a car and on our way to Korat (city three hours away) at 140kms/hr, sometimes 150kms/hr, in true Thai style. There are very limited road rules here and the drivers on these crazy roads take full advantage of that, dodging in and out of traffic fearlessly, as though they were driving dodgem cars! Not long after entering the car we seem to get out again in Sriptana Hotel in Korat, already I was experiencing the sudden increase in the speed of time that all exchange students do. It was now 3:30 in the morning and I was too excited to sleep. We met the twenty other, mainly American, exchange students and had a great night. Finally we went to bed and woke hours later to tour the streets of this strange new world. I had already been told of the absurd manner in the way people would treat me because I am white and blonde but nothing could warn me for the dramatic attention that we did get. People looking, pointing, whispering and one word that was repeated in the conversations they had amongst their friends "FALANG". This word I have come to experience a lot in Thailand especially my city where I am probably the only white person. Falang means white person, or alien. Actually it is a white fruit but the meaning has been changed to include the likes of myself and many other foreign visitors to Thailand. Unlike Australia it is not rude to address someone by their race. So until people get to know my name I am called falang, or Baxidar which is Lao for falang.

So after many fun nights out with the other exciting exchange students the day had finally arrived. I was going to meet my host family! I was scared, really scared. I was told that Thailand was a conservative country and

despite my efforts in trying to conceal the fact I am not a conservative person, I was still not what you would consider a 'lady', but I was hoping I would get credit for trying. It was strange though, because during the briefing conference host parents started to arrive, I had not seen any pictures of my host family, but the moment I saw this man and woman enter I just knew that they were my parents. They both noticed me staring at them and directed a friendly smile at me which confirmed what I already knew. They were my family. I couldn't help the enormous smile that began to consume my face and, thankfully, dissolve my nerves. Now all I had to do was formally introduce myself to them. The introduction ceremony had the two parents seated at the front of the audience and then I had to walk to them get down on my knees and present them with a traditional reef of flowers. After that I was supposed to wai (Thai greeting whereby you place your hands in a pray like position and bow your head) to them but my family stopped me before I had the chance to wai and lifted me to my feet where they hugged me! I was shocked because hugging is not part of Thai culture, but I thought it was great! I said goodbye to my family of exchanges students and was on my way home to Buriram, my home for the next year.

Well it turns out that my family is fantastic and we get along really well. They have welcomed me into their home like a daughter. They trust me like they have known me my whole life! We get along so well that my father asked my club if I could stay with this family for the entire year, of course this was not permitted since it is a Rotary rule that I must have at least three families.

When I arrived in Buriram I was shown straight to my room on the fourth floor of my family's six-story high city apartment. My room is really big with a bathroom (American standard which I thought was great!), air-conditioning and a great view of the whole city. The house is huge, every floor is like a small house! I feel very spoiled.

No sooner had I arrived in Buriram I was leaving again, this time to the big smoke - BANGKOK!!! Bangkok was amazing I spent a week there staying with my cousin. She has become my closest friend in Thailand. She took me to all the tourist places like Jatujak Garden (a massive market full of falangs), Siam Square (a popular place for Thai teenagers), Cou San Road (another falang hangout with many clubs and markets) and Wat Prakerl. Wat Prakerl is the most beautiful temple in Bangkok, if not the whole world. It was the most beautiful building I had ever seen in my life, so much detail and meaning I relished in the beauty of the Wat. However while enjoying the beautiful sights I had to be extremely careful because being a Wat there were many Monks and being a female I am not allowed to have any physical contact with them, or even eye contact. Physical contact includes accidentally touching them as you walk by. Being surrounded by monks there were a few close calls but I managed to leave Wat Prakerl without offending Buddha in any way. While I was in Bangkok I attended Manhidol University with

my host Brother, Nack, who is really great also. I helped teach an English class there. That was really interesting and gave me a chance to learn a little more Thai.

After spending a most amazing week in Bangkok I returned to my country town, Buriram. I arrived in Buriram on the Sunday and started school on the Monday. School was totally different to what I had expected. Buriram Pittayakhom School had made a really big deal over my arrival. I was introduced to the entire school (population 3000) on assembly where I gave my principle a large bouquet of flowers. After presenting her with the flowers I went back to standing beside my father. My principle said something to the students in Thai, so of course I did not understand it. Then everybody looked at me and my father whispered to me "Speech Ladda (Ladda being my new Thai name), speak to them in Thai". So I stepped up to the microphone and blurted out the only Thai I knew, stumbling on the complex tones of the language. After the ceremony I was escorted to my class where I had to introduce myself again, this time in English so it was a little easier. After a few more classes and introductions it was lunch, my first taste of falang admiration. Students everywhere calling my name, or falang, or baxidar and saying phrases like "I love you!" and "hey you!" and hundreds of students introduced themselves to me all of which I cannot remember their names and basically it was just crazy. At the end of the day I was utterly exhausted! So that was school and everyday seems to be like my first day, the students still can't believe that they have a falang at school!

In my third week in Thailand my Rotary club took me and the other exchange student, Momoko (Japanese YES) five kilometres out of Buriram to a remote school that was extremely poor. Forty children attended the school and they were all extremely thin and very dirty, despite their impoverish conditions every student was equipped with a large toothy smile. The children there were just beautiful. For most I was the first Falang they had ever seen and they were frightened of me. So that was really funny for me because I wanted to get a photo with them but none of them would get close to me! That was a really valuable experience for me because it made me realise how lucky I was to have been brought up in such a fortunate environment, never being hungry or dirty, being given every chance to get the best out of life. These children have not been so fortunate but they don't complain they make the most of what they have got and they are happy with that. At first I was shocked because we just don't have a school in Australia where all the students are starving, but in Thailand it is not that uncommon. It was a most memorable day in my exchange!

Unfortunately the drastic change in the environment between Australia and Thailand took its toll on my body and I came down with a dose of the flu, so that had me in bed for a few days. After I recovered from the flu my parents took me to a party, a really big party! That was really fun I met a lot of new people and was invited to

dance with my aerobics instructor, Thai dancing! This I looked totally ridiculous doing since I don't know how to Thai dance at all! Despite my ignorance in this style of dance I had a great night laughing, eating and dancing.

The next day my Rotary president, Si Surang, took me to her school where she teaches. There I taught English to three different primary school classes. That was extremely funny and by teaching them English I got to know a little more Thai. Thai children are so sweet and they are obsessed with falang! So everywhere I walked in the school I was followed by a brigade of Thai children, it was a lot of fun and a great experience!

My family has Chinese ancestry so we celebrated the Chinese New Year. This holiday is celebrated by the giving of money from adults to children and also eating a lot of food! My family drove us to Korat City and we had lunch there and did some shopping it was a really relaxing day out with the family.

Every year Buriram has a 15-day festival called Garshar. It is equivalent to the Brisbane Show. It is a really big deal and many famous bands come to play there and there are hundreds of stalls selling food, clothes, fake watches and toys. It is heaps of fun and I went there whenever I had the chance. My Rotary club had a charity function at Garshar that I went and sold tickets at one night. I met some wonderful people who are devoted to improving humanity through charity work and it was really good fun. During the evening I was invited up onto the main stage at Garshar and interviewed in Thai. This was really funny since my Thai is still very limited so a common phrase that I used through out the interview was "Cow toht, chan mai cow jai khah", sorry, I don't understand. I had a lot of fun, it was a great night.

My friends at school are involved in helping improve living conditions for poor children. They have invited me to a charity conference in Surin City next week so I am looking very forward to that. My friends are really great and very kind, they really look after me. School is just about on break, at the moment my friends are all sitting an entrance exam for university, therefore I don't have any classes for a week, so I really miss not seeing them everyday. The senior year at my school has graduated and I am about to be a senior at Buriram Pittayakhom School! Everybody in my grade is really excited and there are going to be many parties next week so that should be a fantastic week.

On the weekend I went to a Thai wedding that was really different to a Christian wedding. Marriages here are still, mostly, organised by the parents of the groom. His parents ask his girlfriend's parents if he can marry their daughter, very old fashioned. The bride and groom both wear traditional Thai clothing which is very beautiful and for the entire ceremony they are linked by adjoining reefs that they wear on their head. Food, alcohol, and cigarettes are offered to the gods. I found the offering of cigarettes very strange but I guess like humans even the gods enjoy

the occasional smoke. Then every guest pours water onto the hands of the Bride and Groom to bless their union. It was really different to any other wedding I had been to and it went for twelve hours!!! We had a 10 course meal basically we just ate all day and danced and it was a lot of fun!

On Tuesday it was mâakkhà buchaa, a Buddhist holiday that celebrates the preaching of the Buddha to 1250 enlightened monks who came to hear him without prior summons. My family drove to a remote town 1.5 hours from Buriram and celebrated the day with about 40 monks and about 300 other people. Everybody was given a piece of metal with their astrology scratched into it, then everybody placed their metal sheet into a bowl that was placed into a fire. The metal is melted down into liquid form and then young boys climb up onto an unstable wooden frame and pour the white-hot liquid into moulds of the Buddha. It was really scary because they don't wear protective clothing and I was just waiting for one of them to fall into the boiling liquid metal! While this is done everybody who is attending the festival holds on to a long piece of sting and prays to Buddha while the monks sing a most haunting and soothing song to the gods. It was a magical day and I learned a lot about the Buddhist religion and the beauty of its teachings. While I have been in Thailand I have purchased several Buddhist books that I can learn a lot more about the religion. I feel that it is important that I learn about the religion since it is such a big part of Thai culture and maybe the sole reason that people in Thailand are always smiling despite their life situations. 90% of Thai people are Buddhist so I am really determined to learn about it and hence learn more about Thai people and their beautiful culture.

Next weekend I am going to Udon Thani for a Rotary conference so I am really excited because I will be able to see all the other exchange students, I miss them heaps so I can't wait to see them again! After Udon Thani I am going to Surin City to stay with my cousins, sister-in-laws sister, what a mouthful, and also with my exchange student friend from America. So that should prove to be a great week. After that I am going to Bangkok to stay with my cousin for two weeks, Pattaya and Chantaburi with my family for a few days and then onto Phuket for the Rotary tour! So I am going to have a great school holiday seeing the countryside. Well that is all for now, sorry about the length but this is actually the altered draft the first draft was even longer! I have just had so many experiences that deserve to be mentioned! I will try to keep the next one a little shorter!

Thankyou District 9640 and especially the Rotary Club of Surfers Paradise West for giving me this most amazing experience! I have experienced something that most people only get to do as an adult because you have given me the chance of a life time, you have given my a head start in life and I am very grateful to everyone involved Rotary International Youth Exchange for making my Exchange to Thailand possible.

Thankyou Rotary.

Sawaat dii khah LOVE ALWAYS LEIGH BOROVINA.  
or LADDA PRAYADRAT as I am known here.

### Lisa reports on her luck!

Hi, I'm **Lisa Ringqvist**



and this is my January report

My Sponsor Club is - **Aneby** in Sweden

My Host Club is - **Jimboomba**

I'm writing this from Louisa Rebgtz house, I've been here almost a week, or 5 days to be correct. We've had so much fun, they got a few surfboards that we took out the other day! She also had a farewell party this weekend. And now Ylva is here as well, so we are teaching Louisa a few words and telling her all these things you need to know about Sweden.

It has just been too hot the last three weeks. Lucky I was on the coast most of that time. My parents were here most of that time, we didn't see much really. Or well we did a lot of travelling around so I have seen more now than before, but since it was so hot all we could do was stay inside with the aircondition or go out in the pool or too the beach, but sometimes it was even to hot for that. My hair turned green from all the swimming in the pools. We spent the hole Christmas week in Surfers, it was really nice to have it with my parents, even though it didn't feel like Christmas when it's over 30 degrees!!

We went up to Fraser over New Year but because of the storms we hade to stay in Hervey Bay, but its was all good, just a bit hot!! Well Fraser was beautiful, and the sweet water was just great to swim in!

My Rotary club had a welcome party for my parents which turned out to be really, really fun.

We stayed a night in Brisbane before my cousins went home, and then me and my parents were on our own. We just relaxed and spent time together for the last few days, we were meant to go to Byron Bay but it was all full booked so we went to Ballina instead, and then back to Brissie again for a few nights before they left for Bali, and Singapore and Europe. And now I'm here!

Well a better go so Ylva can write her report - ca ya later!

*Lisa*

### Louisa is in love!

Hi, I'm **Louisa Rebgetz**



and this is my January report

My Sponsor Club is - **Parkwood**

My Host Club is - **Luleå-Nyckel** in Sweden

Well, I have only been in Sweden for about 4 weeks, but I already love the place and its people. The journey here was very long, yet quite amusing. Frankfurt airport was

fun. Seeing twenty exchange students from Australia walking through the biggest airport in the world in search of a terminal is an experience in its self.

I arrived in Luleå and was greeted by an overwhelming amount of white snow and a very nice family. My first night in Sweden however, was short lived when jetlag hit me. My host family are extremely nice. Maritha and Leif, my host parents, are very busy in their work and day-to-day lives but they very kindly find time to keep me occupied. I have now been to an ice hockey game, which was great because Luleå won. I have also been to about three basketball games including Sweden vs. Yugoslavia. I like going on exciting outings and experiencing the different sports Sweden has.

After being here a week it was then time to travel to Boden to meet my District Counsellor and the other exchange students. These were two very fun weeks and although it was meant to be a language course, we left knowing much more about each other than the Swedish language, but I did pick up some very helpful phrases and words. There were six other Aussies and two Kiwis, so we all got on very well. On the Saturday and Sunday we were joined by other exchange students who have been here since June and we were amazed at their excellent Swedish. That will be me soon!!! (*Yep – it certainly will be if that's your goal. If its got to be – it's up to me! Ed.*) We had a great weekend - going swimming, sauna, eating pizza and driving snowmobiles (I mean being a passenger of course. Whoops!!) (*But of course – we wouldn't think otherwise! Ed.*)

I started school two days ago and it is so different. No uniforms, no discipline, no detentions - what a life!!! My class is really nice and I was greeted to cake and soft drink for a welcoming party at my first lesson. They all speak such good English which makes it really easy for me to talk to people and they are all so so nice. The friends I have made took me for coffee and cake today for my birthday tomorrow, which was very thoughtful. I think they are planning to take me out on Friday, which could be dangerous!

I am very happy at my school and in my family and am enjoying every second of my exchange so far. I did not think it would be this white and this beautiful. My town of Luleå is an old town but very rich in culture and beauty, which makes it, an amazing place to live. Until next time

*Hej då Louisa*

### **Marcus is overwhelmed!**

Hi, I'm **Marcus Jones**

and this is my January report  
My Sponsor Club is - **Ashmore**  
My Host Club is – in Sweden

MAAAATTEEE, Well here is my first report and findings of my Swedish adventure. Sorry but I have been rather

overwhelmed by everything, I have also not been getting the fifteen hours a week sleep I was used to so I am rather worn down when I get home. I cant really remember any outstanding event so I will give you a basic rundown of my adventure so far - Well, Ok, Sweden is really fun and the first four weeks have been really cool. The plane trip here was bullshit long, 26 hours, the constant and incessant 'would you like some more tea sir?' from the little waitress peoples running around in the Singapore Airlines didn't make things any better but at least they had Nintendo to pass the time. As soon as I landed in Stockholm I knew the place was going to be awesome, as soon as I stepped out of the plane there was a short stunning blonde putting a teddy bear around my neck and saying 'velcome velcome' and showering me in hugs and kisses (they call it 'puss and cram' here. ). But anyway she just turned out to be a screwball and she ended up kissing all 150 passengers. Then I met the family in Lidköping and they were unbelievably nice and considerate. Annika, Calle, Karen and Nils are awesome, just like my home. (*Marcus – I must admit that this statement amuses me somewhat – it's the first time that I have ever heard of a group of people being referred to as – "Just like my home." Ed.*) The nature and atmosphere in this place is amazing, everywhere is like a small charming villages, with log cabins, happy neighbours, happy siblings, happy strangers, and even happy garbage men. The house that I stay in is two stories and I share the top with my host brother Calle, he is cool but listens to metallica.... It is also very cold, the average is 0 degrees not too bad, but cycling to school is hard when the road is ice. The houses are so COZY, everything is lit perfectly there are cushions everywhere and it is always toasty warm when you come from outside. It is exactly like you picture snow resorts, people skiing the slopes all day then coming home sipping hot chocolate and sitting by the fire singing songs. Other people are very important and conversation is everything, especially in this weather were it is dark all but 5hours a day. I have to ride to school, which is Ok, it's amazing how much you enjoy the little things when you are in a new place - change is wicked. School, is really cool. The schools are much like US schools you see on TV, just buildings and hallways - nothing compared to OZZY schools but the people inside them are good. I have made a lot of new friends (everyone comes and talks to the crazy Aussy) in the past two days and have had much coffee, that is what they do here for socialisation, coffee and a cookie. They eat heaps of cheese here as well - whoopass. I would be getting fat if it wasn't for all the exercise, at the risk of sounding Morbidly obese 'it provides so much comfort'. OH, and yes I drink much coffee now and wear sweaters and am starting to notice European man growing on me - I am getting stubble, I wear turtle neck sweaters, I am growing 2-inch-thick chest hair, I am wearing tight jeans, and I'm starting to call myself Silvio Riviera. I have met a lot of girls here and they are all really cool and challenging, but I will take my time here and just have fun. I am really happy here, I just need to get Swedish down pat, and then everything will be sweet. I am on holidays now, its something called 'nature week';



all students get a week off school to do sport or exercise or do something outdoors, its a great idea and helps to build appreciation for nature - OZ could learn a lot from Sweden. well, I hope you are all having fun without me. If you have questions please bother to ask them.

HAVE FUN - LOVE YOU

*Marcus*

p.s: if my humour is too crewd don't hesitate to delete

### Marion thought it was a holiday!

Hi, I'm **Marion Grunert**



and this is my January report  
My Sponsor Club is - **Balina**  
My Host Club is - in Taiwan

After 10 minutes into my arrival at Taipei's airport, my Rotary smile began to falter. The other Australian whom I had shared flight with, was greeted immediately by 3 awaiting host-families with hugs and flowers. I was alone. None-the-less, with much frantic gibberish and urgent phone-calls, I arrived at my 1st host-family's place. (So there - some of the preparation for the trip - paid off. Ed.)

In the now, I still feel alone, yet my host family is absolutely wonderful, the few friends I've made seem promising and the weather is warming.

Today is my 2nd day of school, and this report is late. (So - who's marking the role? Ed.) School has evoked a new kind of tragedy in me and this is the feeling of not knowing this extremely difficult language and I realise, kind of helplessly, that I must begin to press my learning. (Atta Girl - get your teeth into it - you're not alone - and you're certainly not the first Exchange Student to feel this way - what makes the difference - is the student who says - "This won't beat me." - and it doesn't. Ed.) The three weeks of language school (of the promised 2-months I was supposed to have), helped me learn as much as I knew from the word 'go' - not much.

Anyway, besides the many challenges I am constantly faced with, I have experienced a share of fun. Dinner parties with drunken hosts, night markets, shopping (heh), visiting many Buddhist temples (with my Buddhist parents), climbing mountains, eating strange foods and observing fascinating practices of doctors, psychics and Chinese medicine.

The squat-toilets never came as much of a surprise to me (as much as "going-bush" never has). The air pollution is a bit disturbing and so is the "people pollution". The thing I crave most is to find a quiet and natural place where I can just lie in peace once in a while, (maybe I should visit the parks they have around here?).



I have been here for a month and it's gone quick and no doubt so will the rest of the year. Each day I feel stronger from conquering the day before.

*Marion*

PS: This is not the holiday I thought I could make it. Ha!

### Natalie warms to it!

Hi, I'm **Natalie Kerr**



and this is my January report  
My Sponsor Club is - **Southport North**

My Host Club is - in Japan

hello ( yes I am still alive!)

So far I have had I great time! my host family are absolutely wonderful and have been very kind! School is interesting but I have found it extremely tiring ( 6 days a week) and the classes are hard to understand and I am very bored most of the time. Also there is only one lunch break. I am the only exchange student in my school. I only have 1 lesson a week as a study lesson where I am expected to go to the library. I only have computer access after school which makes keeping in contact really difficult and if I do stay back after school I get home really late because of having to catch a bus then a train then walk for 20 mins! But I'm sort of managing - I have had one or two teary phone calls home. the only thing that is bothering me is school here is a bit of what I have been doing:

On Saturday my host parents and I went into Nagoya ( 40mins by express train) for dinner at an Italian restaurant and then on to an "oldies bar" where there was a live 8-person band and 2 girls singing all the music from the 50s and 60s. That was an eye opener watching all these Japanese twisting to Rock around the Clock and Elvis songs etc... but it was great fun!

On Sunday I went back to Nagoya (this time on my own) and was met by a Rotarian from my club and we caught another train into Gifu city (20-30mins) to go to a hotel where I and 7 other Australian exchange students had our orientation meeting. It was great to meet them and we will all be going to the ski school together. After this the Rotarian and I went back into Nagoya and met up with his 23year old daughter who was very nice and she showed me around a few shops and then we had dinner at a very "young persons" trendy restaurant and had a feast!!!! Then back on the train to Yokkaichi and then a small train to the station closest to my house! It was great! Monday was a bit of a relaxing day and my host mum and I went out for lunch, then onto one of the famous 100\ shops (like \$2 shops at home) which sell really decent stuff for 100\ (plus tax) and then we went to a craft store and had a lesson in making a bracelet out of beads which was fun and I think I will be making a matching necklace on this coming Saturday after school (on Saturdays school finishes at 12:45pm). That night my host dad came home

and had just bought the 3rd Jurassic Park DVD (he is the president or something of a book/cd/dvd store chain) so after dinner we sat down and watched that.

On Sunday the 17th I went to a theme park in Kuwana called Nagashima Spaland, which was heaps of fun but really, really cold. The theme park has the largest and highest roller coaster in Asia called the Steel Dragon but unfortunately and fortunately we didn't get to go on it as it was closed due to rain. I went with 3 girls from my class at school and 3 other exchange students and one of their host brothers.

the Ski School is on this weekend and I cant wait! It snowed nearly all day today and I had a snow fight in PE with the class and the teacher, which was fun!

Managing to keep warm .... (*Warm is good. Ed.*)

*Natalie Kerr*

### Niels makes important discovery

Hi, I'm **Niels Andersen**



*and this is my January report*  
My Sponsor Club is -  
**Bangsbostrand** in Denmark  
My Host Club is – **Murwillumbah**

Hello again every buddy. This month has revealed a lot of new things, none of us knew were there. For me it has

been as usual, a total terrific month where I amongst other positive experiences have been to Wet 'n' Wild, visited a friend of my parents who live at Victoria Point just south of Brisbane, visited a RYLA camp, and what that is I will explain further later on. Have been surfing, but had a small accident, went to Rotary Stanthorpe camp with you guys. The trip to Wet 'n' Wild was arranged by Guy, (rebound student), and a member of Rotex. We had a good time, and I was quite impressed myself, because it was my first time in that theme park. I liked all the big waterslides etc. and off course the good company, with you guys (Anna-Stiina, Ylva, Lisa, Anne, and Guy). Straight after that Jan Simonsen, a friend of my parents, who is a Dane, came to pick me up. And I spent a couple of days at his place at Victoria Point just south of Brisbane. I had a good couple of days in the Danish spirit, with plenty of Danish food, sweets etc. And before it was time to go home I had been to Brisbane museum, sailing catamaran, been to Coochiemudlo island, and I went fishing. After that the school holidays had to have an end, and it was straight back to school. And the workload has increased in yr. 12. It's still all good at school, but it sort of begins to become everyday life just as school is at home. The first day I was back at school I went surfing in the afternoon, and was cruising along on my board, but had a small accident, and dislocated my collarbone. But it is getting better all the time and I will soon be out there again surfing the sweet waves. A week later I was invited along to a RYLA camp and the reason for that was because my Rotary club had sponsored a girl to

participate in the camp. What RYLA is all about is to make young people between the age of 17 -25 more self-confident, and help them out if they for example are stuck somewhere in the education-system where they don't want to be etc. Personally I think it is a good program, and I proud of my Rotary club supporting it. From the 15th to 17th, we all went to the Stanthorpe camp, and that was something I enjoyed, good set-up, good accommodation etc. It was really good to get the final information about the safari, and to go abseiling. The winery and the fruit plantation is definitely also worth mentioning. And all I have left to say now is thanks guys, for another good time, and I'm really looking forward to go on the safari.

Regards

*Niels*

### Time has run out for Noel.

Hi, I'm **Noel Needham**



*and this is my January report*

My Sponsor Club is -  
**Jimboomba**  
My Host Club is – in Belgium

Dear Rotary lads,

Here it is, the final monthly report!

January 2002 Noel in Belgium.

Well, its one week until I find myself back Down Under, sitting in the pool, in the sun and having a Barbeque. That's a whole lot scarier than it sounds...

Its scary that one year has passed already, the time I had has gone forever and can never be recaptured, but it is also amazing that I here at all, so what should I be feeling?

As I look around me, at all the things that will get packed and will be left behind, it all look like one chapter of my life has gone, though I doubt it shall ever fade. Because, in years to come when I look upon the story of my life, this is a chapter that shall remain always one of my favourites. It has it all, cheers and tears, wins and defeats, gains and losses, but one thing is for sure, though the chapter has finished, the book is only getting started, and after this chapter, I have nothing but anticipation as to what the rest of this thing called life has to offer.

So what will I remember? The places, the people, the food, the drink, the smiles and the laughs and Europe. Just Europe. It's been a blast.

And before I leave, I remember myself before I came, a lifetime away though it may seem. I remember people asking me if I was ready for Europe, to which I replied in my own cheeky style 'is Europe ready for me?' Well, all I can say that I learnt a lot about myself this year. In answer to that question, no, I wasn't ready for Europe, but now, I think its safe to say that I am ready for anything, so bring it on!

And if this year was just the start, the sky's the limit!

So, as I am sitting in my pool, in the sunshine of Queensland, eating a few snags off of the barbie, I know that there will always be a part of me longing for that frosty little country stuck between Germany and France....

Belgium, I salute you. I will be back, and you know it.

Cheers for everything.

This is Noel Needham, from Raignes, Belgium, Signing out.

*Noel*

### Philippe enjoys Christmas

Hi, I'm **Philippe Duplex**



and this is my January report

My Sponsor Club is - **Vichy-Doyen** in France

My Host Club is - **Ballina**

I have pass a fabulous at Christmas. It was 40 degrees Celsius.

I had been to the cinema with my host mother because she was in holiday. I have pass New Year's Eve much my family and a lot of friend of them. I had been to Byron Bay with my host sister and my host mother.

We have swim everyday my host mother and me!

I have realised I have passed already more than half of my exchange. It's very dry here and I'm not a water tank person so we have nearly run out of water but it's rain now so it's all right.

When I saw all the grass nearly yellow I found it's very dry and like everything dead.

*Philippe*

### Rea was lost for words!

Hi, I'm **Rea Barr**



and this is my January report

My Sponsor Club is - **Surfers Paradise**

My Host Club is - **Sheboygan** in USA

Hey Guy's Well, well, well what can I say? (No really, what can I say?) January has disappeared already and my time here so far has been jam-packed full of fun and excitement! Well it's been two weeks now and I am finding America to be surprisingly very different from home. From school to the way you spend your time here, and the slang they use, it is hard not to feel like an outsider. Here I start school at 7:30 in the morning and finish at around a quarter to 2, we do the same subjects every day in the same order- I start my morning with information processing then study

hall, then psychology, then history, then phyz. ed, then (finally) an 20 min lunch, then Acct, then American Literature then to finish off my day I go and work in the child care centre that is in our school.

So far I have been to Chicago with the other exchange students, been sledding twice and snow boarding once, lived through my first snow storm, been to a couple of parties (which by the way are completely different from the ones we through at home), made my first snow-angel (*Cool stuff - Eh. Ed.*) - I haven't yet had to time to make a snow man, but that is definitely at the top of my list, had my first delayed school day due to snow and had a couple of snow ball fights which are really fun- until someone gives you a face wash! And have been to two different Rotary club meetings, at which a lot of the Rotarians invited me to do different things with them, so like we were told to do at the camps I flipped out my planner and made arrangements. So far I am going snow mobiling, to a interior decorators conference or show thing (I'm not really into that stuff, but there is no way I am going to let any opportunity pass me by), (*Good Girl - just get involved. Ed.*) to a couple of people's houses for tea and the president of my Rotary club and his wife have seasonal tickets to the plays in Milwaukee which they said they would like to take me to. So as you can see I have been extremely lucky!!! Another exciting thing that is happening is that my host family plan to take me to Florida for the spring holidays, which I am really looking forward to!! I can't believe how blessed I have been just to be here let alone all the wonderful things I have been doing, and am going to do. For this I have Rotary to thank!! (*Rea - don't forget to thank your parents as well. Ed.*)

Thank you all!! - Love

*Rea*

### Tarja - Life's full of new experiences

Hi, I'm **Tarja Ylitalo**



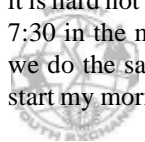
and this is my January report

My Sponsor Club is - **Someron** in Finland

My Host Club is - **Grafton Midday**

Good day!!

Last month was full of new experiences. Firstly summer holiday (funny to think that it's summer holiday on Christmas time!) began. In the last week we had an activity week at school, which lasted 3 days. I guess I was the only senior student attending the activity week... Well, it still was fun. In the mornings I did inside sports playing soccer, basketball, cricket etc. In the afternoons I did Tae Kwan Do which I really found great fun! We were taught a little bit of self-defence, wristlocks etc. and also some kicks. The kicks, I reckon, were the greatest things we did!



In Grafton they had a competition of who has the best Christmas lights. A couple of evenings we spend driving around, watching "the pretty lights" like the kids called them. Many houses were so full of lights. It was so different to what I'm used to. At home people just put a couple of light things, not using every room of your garden or wall. I reckon all the decorations were over exaggerated but at this way people can light their city and it doesn't look so dark any more in the evenings.

On the 22.12 I went with my host family to a beach holiday to Woolgoolga. I had so much great time there! My host father's parents were there too and some relatives stayed couple of nights in their van too so we had plenty of company. It was nicer to be on the beach getting the sea breeze than in really hot Grafton... It was fun to be in the surf though the water just is too salty. But I like the waves (when they're not too rough)! I tried to skee which I found great fun. I was fine paddling ahead through the waves but coming back to the beach trying to catch the waves was harder. Many times I just splashed to the water...

A couple of days we had some blue bottles in the water and those were the days I didn't go to the surf... I heard that rarely they get so much blue bottles down the beach. Perhaps I attracted them like I do with all the mossies (I get bitten so easily) and the flies (they just buzz around me all the time)... Some days we got a little bit of smoke and you could also see some ashes in the water because there was a bushfire about 10 km away. We were in total fire band and some water restrictions were on but it didn't affect much our holiday. I heard that three houses were burned in that fire and actually we drove through the fire going to spend Christmas day in Grafton. On the Christmas Eve evening it was just about to start and on Christmas day evening it wasn't very big any more. We were lucky to drive through that road because it was closed during the Christmas day and opened just before we left Grafton. The scenery after the fire looks so sad, it looks like dead or something! Not nice at all.

Like I already told, we went spend our Christmas day in Grafton. In the morning we opened the presents lying under the Christmas tree. Well actually under what was left of the tree because the kittens (two of them) just loved to climb in the tree and play with the decorations... I was patient and waited till Christmas day morning and then opened my presents. It was quite funny because I'm used to open presents in the Christmas Eve evening. But now I had my presents under the Christmas tree where they haven't ever been. All in all it was fun and I reckon it was good to be in a host family with little kids on the Christmas time. *(Tarja – that's one of the magic things about the Youth Exchange Program – you get to experience a different country and culture. Great – isn't it. Ed.)*

After that we went to my host father's parents house where we had a champagne breakfast. (No worries, I stucked to juice 'cause I prefer it to champagne.) There were many

relatives, cousins, aunties, grandparents, little cousins etc. They always gather together in the Christmas day to celebrate it together. It was new to me who just spent Chrissy with small family, all the four of us plus a dog. A little bit later we had a Christmas tree. Now there were heaps and heaps of presents under the tree and after unwrapping them the floor was just full of wrapping paper. You had to watch carefully where to step so you didn't step on a present.

Then we went to see host mother's parents. A little while we just talked and then moved back to crowded house where we enjoyed a Christmas meal. It was noisy event but I enjoyed it. During that day many bottles of wine and champagne were drunk. I've noticed here in Australia people drink so much wine. That's one thing that's different in my country - we don't drink so much of wine.

I didn't have a Christmas feeling at all. I'd sung Christmas songs but still it didn't feel like Christmas. Well, the biggest reason for that was that it just was too hot to be Christmas. I'm used to have cold and white Chrissy and I prefer that one. On the Christmas day it was about 40 degrees!! The hottest Christmas I've ever had! Well, it is the hottest temperature I've ever experienced, too. But I reckon it was good me to have no Chrissy feeling so I didn't get home sick. And all the people around me helped too. But now I can say I've experienced the Aussie Christmas!

The New Year started very quietly and peacefully. We just spent time on the beach and host mother's parents came down to celebrate the change of year with us. Some people had told that there'll be fireworks on the beach but when the midnight came nothing happened. It was boring 'cause I'm used to have fireworks at home which we shoot up in the sky. Na well, next year then.

6.1. We came back to Grafton which was quite shocking - it was so much hotter here than in the beach. Luckily the following day we spent down on the beach celebrating triple birthdays - my host sister's, her grandfather's and his sister's grandson's. And again heaps of relatives were there. After that I've just organized my things etc. Now I'm packing things to send home because I've too much stuff and not enough room in my bags... It's shocking how much stuff you collect after a while! *(Tarja – I hope other exchangees learn from your experience – it is simpler to pack and ship during the year – than pay a fortune in excess luggage at the airport. Ed.)*

This was all of my last month. I hope the next one would be as much of events, experiences etc. It's nice when you're all the time doing something or going somewhere. I like it. But, til next month! And all good for this year!!

Love



**Ylva takes the easy way out!***Hi, I'm Ylva Festin*

*and this is my January report*  
 My Sponsor Club is - **Norrköping**  
 in Sweden  
 My Host Club is – **Surfers Paradise**

I am writing my report via email; this time, coz it's easier. And I have Internet access, which is always good, I have had a really good month, I have met so many nice new people and seen so much,

First I changed host family, and I am really happy in my new one, and it is no hard feelings with the old one, we still talk and see each other, I moved just before Christmas but it didn't bother me coz, I mean, x-mas felt so strange anyway so I didn't think of it as x-mas at all. Coz for me x-mas is relatives and family, and snow, and none of that is here so... I just enjoyed my self in the heat, went to the beach everyday, and had a great time with friends and family.

New Years was quiet, I spent it with my host family.

Then I went to Brisbane over a day with friends from school, and we swam at the beach up there, and we went to the museum, and had a great time. Then Lia and I went to the beach, just before I went on my little holiday.

On the 4th of January I flew to Canberra, to meet Selina Thomas who is going to Sweden on Saturday, to my town and my family. I met them in Canberra and we saw Parliament House, the National Library, the Art Gallery and the Swedish Embassy, and of course just the city, it was very strange, the way it is planned, I have never seen anything like that. Then we went to Wagga Wagga, over the Snowy Mountains and I saw the highest one, but the spelling of the name is something I am gonna stay out of. I know that u know which one I mean... (*Oh – that one – I thought for a minute you meant the other one – but now I know you meant that one. Ed.*)

In Wagga I met her whole family, a lovely family with 3 girls and one boy, the house was full of people. I taught Selina heaps of Swedish, and our national anthem as well, and I learns the whole, 'Advance Australia Fair' and 'Waltzing Matilda' them we saw the sites of Wagga, among those, Wagga beach. I thought that was funny... (*So do I – a beach at Wagga! Ed.*) then on the Thursday me, Selina, her mum, and her little sister (in my age) Roanna, took the CountyLink train to Sydney. We stayed at a hotel at Gleebe Point Road. We saw Darling Harbour, the big pedestrian bridge, the aquarium, the Opera House, Harbour Bridge, Sydney Tower, Manly Beach, and China Town and museum of Sydney as well. We had the best time, laughing, and running around, and when the time came and it was time to fly home to the Gold Coast, I was so sad. I got really emotional and everything, coz I had to leave them and all. But I will meet Selina again, in 6

months and them she will move in with my family so ... there u go...

Kram

*Ylva***Amelia plays Pinocchio***Hi, I'm Amelia Ramsay*

*and this is my February report*  
 My Sponsor Club is - **Surfers Paradise**

My Host Club is – **Chatel-Guyon** in France

Dear Oz,

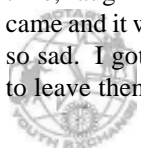
Well things have definitely settled down and in turn I've settled in. I'm up to the beginning of my third month (March) and things are travelling smoothly. I've really only been here a month and a half which is strange think also because it's gone so fast! I guess 'only' isn't the word to use. Please ignore the previous sentences!!! Starting up again: time is flying by so fast, must be because I'm having heaps of fun. Schools great! I'm still not understanding much but it's getting easy everyday and my friends are heaps of fun and that always learning some of my Aussie vocab! Oh well here is a story. For my first week here I got a bit tired of the same old questions and answers. After readjusting any thoughts on eating koala, riding kangaroos, and wrestling crocodiles, I found I can spice things up just a little more if I turned life in Australia right around. Now I know you told me not to do this Rotary, but I just couldn't help myself. You have to imagine my faces when I tell them I have Sunday barbecues of roast koala, with the local aborigines and then get up Monday morning and I'm off to school on my kangaroo, like any normal adolescent on a school day. With my books in the front pouch and reigns (???) Attached to a collar around the neck I merge into the main kangaroo Lane on the highway and it's off to school. At school for fun we have crocodile wrestling competitions and play 'tiggy' with boomerangs! Don't worry I finish it all off with... No... Of course it's all true!!!

Best wishes

*Amelia***Anne was moved by it all!***Hi, I'm Anne Bædkel*

*and this is my February report*  
 My Sponsor Club is - **Roedby** in Denmark  
 My Host Club is – **Southport**

It has been a busy month for me... I moved, that was a bit sad 'cause I grew really fond of my old host family. They became like real family for me even though I only stayed



there for seven weeks. But, obviously I am really lucky with host families 'couse my new one is fantastic too!

I have a new "little sister" and a new "little brother" who is just dying to play with me all the time. I have never had smaller siblings before (my real sister is only 1 1/2 years younger than me) so it is quite a challenge that I (surprisingly for my self) is happy to take up!

I have started school again too, and for the first time I think it is a good thing, I have something to do in the daytime and I get to spent a lot of time with my friends in school, I have hardly no homework so I am just cruising through without worries! I finish school at 1 o'clock every day so that gives me heaps of time to go to the beach with my friends and have fun after school!

Last weekend I went to a Rotary camp and had lots of fun with my friends! We did not get to sleep much at night and we had a tight program in the day so I am still pretty tired, they told us about the safari! It is going to be SO good I am looking SO forward, the best thing is that everybody is prepared to have the BEST time and see as much of Australia as possible... so, I am sure that is what is going to happen!

But overall...I have had a busy but good month of my exchange year! (*And it's such a pity that you aren't really enjoying yourself. Ed.*)

*Anne*

### Ann-Maree reports – she's a disaster zone!

Hi, I'm **Ann-Maree Heggie**



and this is my February report  
My Sponsor Club is - **Coomera Valley**

My Host Club is – **West Olympia**  
in USA

Howdy partners, from the natural disaster zone of USA - West Olympia, Washington State

My adventure is still pretty amazing - snow storms, ice rain, power crunch and an EARTHQUAKE. The EARTHQUAKE was a high light - I was home alone, just finished emailing home to except to be bridesmaid when I return home, for my closest friend. It was 6.8 and the epicentre was only 11 miles away from my town - when it started it sounded like an old coal train screaming by you, then the ground started to role and the walls started to shake - it lasted 45 seconds / it felt like a life time, the power went out and the phone lines were busy. 40 mins after the earthquake I was able to contact my third host dad (after starting from the top of my phone list) he came and got me, and I spent the afternoon with his family and got some cool photos. The whole experience was awful..... But,

I'M A LIVE, I'M WELL AND I FEEL GREAT

This week we will have finals at school and then start spring trimester - I will pick up Art and Intro. Marketing. Basketball season is over and now to soccer, baseball and fast pitch - will be able to go and see some cool inter school games.

Last month attended the District 5020 Rotary Exchange Student Inbound Orientation, It was great fun, 65 students from 24 countries / 3 other Aussie's all from the West Coast / only 7 of us arrived in January. The high light of the trip was the day at the snow for a day and did our best to learn how to ski and snowboard - - More practice required... but enjoyed making snowman and angels!

I have visited an Elk farm on the east of the Rocky Mountains, been to a basketball game at the University, shopped in Portland incl. Nike Town, production of the Odd couple and watched a day of racing at the Portland International Speed Way. Enjoying the cold, wind and wet weather, but dream of the sun and the sand. . .

Short, Sweet and too the point.... Look after yourselves!  
!!

Lots of love with heaps of hugs and kisses

*Ann-Maree Heggie*

### Christina is wet behind the ears!

Hi, I'm **Christina Häfliger**



and this is my February report  
My Sponsor Club is - **Luzern-Wasserturm** in Switzerland  
My Host Club is – **Parkwood**

Well, the New Year started very well.

I participated in a four-day scuba diving course, which was just fascinating. I had three-theory day. One pool dive and finally four ocean dives. We drove with the boat to Wave-Break Island where we jumped in the water and enjoyed the incredible underwater world. It was unbelievable how many different creatures, fish in every colour and shape and also octopuses, eels and other funny things. Now I've got my PA01 certificate which I have always wanted to have and I'm already looking forward to when I can go on my next dive. I think I'm addicted. (*It sounds like an addiction with unexplored depths. Ed.*)

For the long Australia Day weekend. I was able to go down to Lennox Head with my fourth host family. I also invited Sibylle and we had a cabin near Lake Ainsworth. We had a great weekend with windsurfing, kayaking, swimming in the brown Lake, and going to Bangalow markets and to Byron Bay. But the following I had to start school again. It wasn't as bad as I thought it would be. It's just hard to have around again after two months holiday-Aussie holiday.

One weekend I went ice-skating with my friends from school. It was really funny and I finally saw snow again.



What a good feeling, He, He, He. Last weekend Sibylle came to visit me and we spend some lovely days together. We went to Australia Fair, to the movies, playing tennis, relaxed at the pool and talked and laughed a lot. Last Sunday I went on a boat with my first host family and we anchored it at Wave-Break Island. Where we went snorkelling and drove around with the Jet Ski.

Two days ago we had swimming carnival at school. It was a great evening, mainly because our "green" team won at the end. Go Girraween!!!

*Christina*

### Elizabeth is confused!

Hi, I'm **Elizabeth Mullan**



and this is my February report

My Sponsor Club is - **Murwillumbah Central**

My Host Club is – **Eniwa** in Japan

I was wondering if you wanted me to write separately for Hopping Mag or whether you will just use my group emails? I am quite happy to write separately if you need me to, because the other emails might be too long. Please let me know.

Thank you.

*Elizabeth :)*

*(Elizabeth – I'm quite happy for whatever you wish to have published within these pages. I do very little editing of the letters; I rarely 'trim' them down – what's the cost of an extra page or three in the magazine. As long as you are happy with what you send, then I'm happy to publish it. It's your magazine, I just have fun putting it together, lampooning those I feel deserve to be lampooned, making fun, where I feel it's appropriate, culling derogatory terminology or expressions, and removing abbreviations where they could cause offence to some readers. How I handle a report, depends upon my state of mind at the time, especially if I find something amusing contained within the text. You have been warned. Things I do like to see in a report – First and foremost – I like to know which month/s this report will cover – It's sometimes difficult to work that out when there are no 'clues' as to when it was written. I like to know your Sponsor Club and Host Club. Sometimes I don't get this information. As you read the reports within this copy of the magazine, you see missing club names. Lastly, but not of the least important – is your full name. A report simply signed – Anne – may be from one of three or more different people, I have to search the report for clues as to whom it may be, and I'd prefer to be right, than say a report is from Anne 1 – when in fact, it was from Anne 2. Ed.)*



### Kelly's having way too much fun!

Hi, I'm **Kelly Bartlett**



and this is my February report

My Sponsor Club is - **Robina**

My Host Club is – in Canada

Hi everyone, well I can't believe I've been here for almost 2 months now. Things are truly just flying by. You know what they say; time flies when your having fun. And that's exactly what I've been having - fun. *(And I thought you'd gone over for a serious exchange. Ed.)* I've just got back to my original host family because they just went on a trip to France to visit their daughter who is on exchange at the moment in France. While they were gone I spent two weeks with two different families. Both families were really good to me. I have to admit I was pretty spoiled for a couple of weeks. I can't help but feel a little guilty. I really had a good couple of weeks because I got to know a couple more Rotarians a little better. Because the Rotary Club is really big I've found it quite difficult to get to know them really well. There are a lot of names to remember that's for sure. The second family that I just stayed with have offered to take me for another week in the summer at their cottage, which is in a place called North Rustico, north of Charlottetown. They have a boat, which they're going to take me out in and do some water skiing. It's hard to believe that I'll be water skiing in water that is frozen over at the moment. Apparently the waters here are the warmest waters north of Florida which I'm finding pretty hard to believe since it is just ice at the moment. Anyway School's going pretty good. My counsellor went along to the parent-teacher interviews yesterday and you'd be glad to hear that there were only good reports, so Donna says. I've made a really great group of friends at school as well, which has kept me pretty busy too. Its March break at the moment and everyone goes away for the break. Everyone seems to be going south. I think everyone needs a break from the cold weather. It has actually been pretty mild the last little while which has been a bit of a relief. Now when I say mild, I mean only about -5C. I can't believe I actually said that that was mild but it is in comparison to what we were having. A lot of the snow had melted but there was a fair bit of snow that came down last night, which has made everything white again. I was pretty excited to see that the snow was back cause its pretty sad when it melts plus it means the ski season is almost over. Well as for homesickness goes I've been pretty good so far. There's only been the odd day where I think about home and get a little sad. But every time I get sad I just think that I only have 12 months here and I don't want to waste any of it. Anyway I'd better go I'm just starting to babble now. *(Babble on McDuff - we enjoy it! Ed.)*

I'll be in touch real soon. Thanks Bye Bye From the Aussie in Canada

*Kelly*

**Louisa plays in snowstorms!**Hi, I'm **Louisa Rebgetz***and this is my February report*My Sponsor Club is - **Parkwood**My Host Club is - **Luleå-Nyckel** in Sweden

Well I can't believe that I have now been here almost two months and what a busy month this has been. From playing in snowstorms to travelling to great snowboarding slopes, I can't fit getting home sick on my schedule. (*Good - I'm pleased. Ed.*) I was only at school two weeks where I was just getting use to the complete differences to Australia before I was on holidays. They call it 'Sports Holiday' and I am thinking of introducing it into the Australian year. This is a week to go skiing or something sporty to do with snow. I went snowboarding, which at first was very painful, but I now have the hang of it and think I am quite good. I went with another exchange student, Matt and his family. Matt is from NSW, which took me a little while to except, but I suppose he is an Aussie and that is good enough! Anyway, we had a great time and played like 5 year olds in the snow, which was amusing for the Swedes.

I have also tried cross-country skiing and let me tell you, it looks a lot easier than it is. The Swedes thought I would be a natural at it coming from Australia who had recently received it's second GOLD medal at the Winter Olympics. I was very popular during the Olympics but mainly just to laugh at for our miraculous ice skating gold! So I gave the cross country skiing a go as I am determined to try everything while I am here. However, I just became extremely frustrated as my host sister, Martina, who skated past me saying 'Come on Louisa, it is easy!' She goes in all the competitions so of course it is easy for her.

My host family continue to support me in whatever I want to do and are always taking me on different outings. I enjoy watching the basketball team whose best player is an Aussie and going out on the snow mobile. They are also a great help in telling me I am not wearing enough warm clothes as I forget it is -18 outside after sitting in a T-shirt in the house because of their incredible heating systems. Although it sounds cold I really thought it would feel much more colder than it is. The only time when you avoid going outside is when there is a snowstorm almost blowing your house away. They are fun to watch, but only from the inside. I had to walk to the bus stop in the snowstorm and I hadn't got very far when my eyelashes were covered in snow and I literally couldn't see one foot in front of me. It was an experience all right and I did eventually made it to the bus stop.

Well, that is all from me for this month but I am enjoying every minute of my exchange and the whole experience.

*Hi da Louisa***Marion seeks lovers!**Hi, I'm **Marion Grunert***and this is my February report*My Sponsor Club is - **Balina**

My Host Club is - in Taiwan

Hey all you reader's and lovers of my work . This report is also late, but I have my reasons. Anyway, life here is always improving and I now feel somewhat settled. Well, on the outside and in my daily routine I certainly do. Inside is still the urge to feel like giving up. Though, so far, I feel I have done very well in keeping my raging emotions at bay.

Oh! I have gotten my first 'bout of food poisoning from some unfresh seafood from the night market. A feeling I've never quite felt before. As though my insides were liquidising. I suppose it's traditional for foreigners to get food poisoning in these Asian countries; I just got it early.

My host-family is still as good as ever and I am surprised with how many people seem to like me here. My classmates daily supply me with a typical, Taiwanese breakfast or just the usual lollies and notes. I have begun an 'exchange diary' with a girl in my class. One of us writes in it one day, then the other writes in it the next. We are getting to know each other well, her English is good. I have made some other cool Taiwanese friends, who are not too shy too practise their English on me. There's also this Rotex girl who spent her exchange year in Germany, and we spend time together (speaking German) and talking about our nostalgic memories of Germany. We've planned to go away together for the summer holidays, (which are still some time away; July/August). The other exchange students are great as well, and though I haven't opened myself up to them entirely yet, we all share this silent understanding with each other, and this makes us all close.

Other than that, I am trying to teach myself Chinese whilst I sit in class, oblivious to the teacher/student - Chinese flying through my hearing receptors. I have been constantly requesting for someone to help set-up Chinese lessons for me and help me find somewhere to resume my Karate trainings..... Unfortunately I have had no such luck and everyone finds an excuse as to why these certain requests are unable to be delivered. So it's a bit exasperating.

I have now been finding things to do over the weekends to keep me occupied. My brother's girlfriend has moved back to Taiwan as of the 7th of February and she is the first person to whom I could spill some of my bottled-up explosive emotions. It's good to have someone with whom I can sense a feeling of familiarity.

I have also now been elected to be on the school volleyball team, which is about all the exercise I get. I have spoken at every Rotary function (basically, I always say the same thing, as it's all I know.....but they think it's great), and



have spoken often in front of my school class (in English, with bits and pieces of Chinese I might know). I have been to a few exchange student 'gatherings', and have been trying to be as little a burden as I can be to my host-mum who is constantly sick due to her heart problems.

I had a Tai-chi lesson here, with my host-dad, but I get the vibe that the Tai-chi teacher constantly reminds me that Tai-chi is supposedly much better than Karate and that he refuses to teach me properly. So yeah, my Tai-chi lessons never went farther than the first.

I have taken many photos already, and realise with a slight horror that it's getting quite nigh to my parent's visitation here in Taiwan. I really hope to impress them, so wish to have definitely raised my levels of my Chinese vocabulary. Time is really flying - fast. Next Wednesday, I will have been here 2 months already!

I can't wait to know the language and use it to get to know many, many other potential friends. I look forward to the morning where I wake up and realise that I can get by, making conversation whatever the situation. I know....it will still be a while.....

Til the next report, then; (and hopefully this one will be on time)!

*Marion*

### Miranda's First Impressions

Hi, I'm **Miranda Gray**



and this is my February report  
My Sponsor Club is - **Broadwater/  
Southport**  
My Host Club is – in Germany

I can't believe it has already been 4 weeks here. In a way it feels like I have still only just arrived but in another it feels like I have been here for ages because so much has happened and my life has changed so dramatically in just 4 weeks. My first impressions of Germany were taken driving from Hamburg airport to my place in Rehrhof. I was in ore at the picturesque landscape that surrounded me. The houses were timeless, like out of an old train set, yet one thing that gets me is how well kept and well looked after all the houses and properties are. Most of the houses are over 200 years old, and any that aren't are built to fit the time of the city, I haven't seen one modern looking building. It is like walking back in time, some of the old country cottages still have roofs that look like grass.

The journey to my new home was a lot shorter than anticipated because of the autobahn. On the autobahn there are no speed limits so it is up to the driver to what speed he wants to go. What I have noticed is that the driving is a lot more aggressive than in Australia. I live in a little town called Rehrhof, it has only 80 inhabitants, but it is only 15-minute drive from Luneburg, which is the biggest town closest to where I live. This is where I go to school

and where my Rotary Club is based. Luneburg is one of the oldest cities in the North of Germany because it wasn't effected by the war, while most of the other cities in Germany had to be rebuilt. Luneburg was actually built upon a salt mine and as the salt was pumped from the ground the buildings began to collapse. So there are some streets you can walk down and see the bottoms of the buildings have expanded into a bubble shape were the salt was pumped from below and they began to collapse at the bottoms. This huge salt industry also made Luneburg one of the richest towns in all of Northern Germany.

My home is very beautiful, it is on a farm and not only do my host family farm grain, hocks (main ingredient for German beer) and heather, but they also own nine holiday apartments and stables. The heather fields (beautiful purple flowers) that bloom in spring attract tourists who bring their horses and come to stay in the apartments. During the spring they ride their horses through the heather fields arid forests surrounding the farm. I have heard all about it and how beautiful it is in spring but since it is winter at the moment I will have to wait.

The first two weeks of my stay in the country it was quite warm for winter (approx. 100c) and one day it even reached 150c so my host family and I took the opportunity to get outside in the fresh air and ride the bikes past all the fields to the next village where we had lunch in an authentic German cottage restaurant. Other than that one-day most days here in Germany are cold, overcast and drizzly. Yesterday I saw snow for the first time! I thought it was just rain so I had my umbrella out and then the rain turned really thick and suddenly there was snow spiralling down from the sky. It was so beautiful and I stood out in the middle of it trying to catch it on my tongue while everyone else huddled under the bus shelter thinking I was crazy. I told them in stilted German that it was my first time seeing snow and they were all excited for me.

My host family are wonderful, my host parent's names are Doris and Jurgen Vogt, and I have a host brother, Christian 15, and a little host sister, Alena 9. I get along well with them all and I am especially fond of Alena. The family have made a wonderful effort to make me welcome in their home and to do things with me on the weekends. My first weekend in Germany they took me to an English theatre in Hamburg, knowing I would be able to understand little German. They have also taken me to a swimming park in Luneburg. Quite an experience because some of the pools are outside and your body is all warm from the water but your face frosts over. I guess it is what one would call 'Invigorating'! They have also taken me to the Salt museum to learn about the history of Luneburg and out to dinner and lunch a number of times. I have met an American lady at my German learning school and she was a yoga teacher in America but has come to Germany with her husband and she can't teach yoga here because she can't speak the language yet. She is really missing the teaching and has volunteered to give me a lesson at her home on a Friday morning before school. I also made friends with an Indian Au Pair girl that works for a family

in Hamburg that have a weekend home on our property in Rehrhof, I spent the weekend with her and her Au Pair family in Hamburg. We saw the sights and I visited the local markets with her family in the morning and we drove along the big River that's connected to the huge harbour in Hamburg. It was very beautiful and they enjoyed my company and have offered for me to visit again and take picnics with them along the river in spring.

I didn't start school until two weeks into my exchange, I must confess I was a little lonely for my friends and family in Australia, but now I have been at school a week and a half and it feels like forever because the students are really nice and have really made me feel welcome. I am in the 12th Grade for half the year (because their school year begins half way through the year) and then I will go on into the 13th Grade with the students in summer. I am trying to take as many classes in the school as possible, such as Art, Geography, Religion, History, Informatik, Sport and English. The teacher in the English class involves me a lot by asking me all the time if he is pronouncing the words correct, and I have offered to help some of the students who are finding the subject difficult. English also makes a good break from the constant German I am hearing. I am sure it is the same for all exchange students at the beginning to have a headache at the end of the day.

The classes are terribly hard to understand because the teachers speak so fast but I am managing to understand the conversational German a little more. On the weekend I spent I spent with the Au Pair girl in Hamburg I met another Au Pair girl from Poland who couldn't speak any English so I was forced to speak German to her, and I was amazed how much German actually came out of my mouth when forced. Of course the conversation was stilted but it was a start and a great confidence booster to know you can communicate a little when forced to. So I have learnt the more you speak the language the easier it will become.

As far as Rotary Meetings go, I haven't actually attended one yet but I have been in contact with my councillor and I should be invited to the one next Monday. I already have a little speech prepared and I look forward to getting to know the members of my club. My goal at the moment is just to meet as many people as possible and to get settled into my host family and the school and to learn German as quickly as possible so I can make the most of my exchange. I want to take up every opportunity that comes my way and to live for the moment. It is a lot easier said than done, that I have learnt, and I don't believe any amount of camps could have prepared me for the how difficult it would be to leave my family and friends behind and come to another country where I do not know a soul. But nothing would make me regret coming here because I know already I have grown more in the last 4 weeks than probably any other time in my life, and I am starting to feel new friendships beginning to blossom.

*Miranda*

### Gam's Weather Report

Hi, I'm **Navitta (Gam) Sopajaree**



and this is my February report

My Sponsor Club is - **Tamai** in Thailand

My Host Club is - **Broadwater Southport**

This is me, Gam. It had been my interesting holiday this month. The first of all I had to talk about the weather which was very hot. I could not believe how hot Gold coast was. I can tell that here is hotter than my country, Thailand. I spent many times in a pool at home.

As I lived near Movie world & wet n' wild I could go there very easily (5 minutes away) so I went to & wet n' wild with some exchange students. We went in a very hot day .It was packed. Another day I went to Movie world with my host sister, Meegan. We had a great time (I thought) we sort of raced with time and everything because we tried to make everything in this day and finally we made it. Meegan pushed me in Leather Weapon ride, which was the second scariest thing I have ever done from Giant drop. I was trapped twice. (I went twice) It was good fun actually.

Anyway the rest of my holiday was almost at home. I had been watching one-day cricket. Cricket is an interesting sport but at the first time I watched I wasn't interested in it because I didn't understand. My first impression was winning of Aus against NZ. Since then I actually love cricket. Every time I watched I always asked the people who were sitting around about rules and what was going on until they said, "oh Gam can u stop asking a minute, please "then I will stop for a while.

Well, my school had started since 29th January. My holiday was over. I hoped I would have some fun at school

Bye

*Gam*

### Patrick experiences buckets of fun!



Hi, I'm **Patrick Sondowski**

and this is my February report

My Sponsor Club is - **Friesoythe-Artland-Cloppenburg** in Germany

My Host Club is - **Kingscliff**

G'day, how are you. I am feeling great.

On the 16th of January, we had a very big storm up here in Kingscliff. I was lucky. I have been to wet and wild with three of my friends but when I came back my friends mum told me about it. I thought that nothing happened to our house but I thought wrong. When I came home I couldn't see the roof because it was dark. But when I came inside the house I saw everywhere buckets full of

water. The roof was wet. The lamps were full of water. The TVs were broken. Every bed was wet and because of this I had to change families three days earlier. It was about 8 or 9 o'clock. I had to pack my clothes and my stuff together and then my host mum took me to Margaret's and Tony's house. I was so tired from wet and wild and went straight to bed. When woke up the next day I felt for the first time sick. I don't know what I had but I had something. Margaret bought some medicines and after a few days I felt better. My old host family's house. Especially the roof. Still got a lot of damage. They had the whole roof covered in big blue plastic bags. In the last few days or better in last few weeks was no day without the beach. I am going to the beach everyday. That will be the thing I will miss the most when I go back to Germany. That's it for this month.

*Patrick*

### Philippe touches Australia!



Hi, I'm **Philippe Dupleix**  
and this is my February report  
My Sponsor Club is - **Vichy-Doyen** in France  
My Host Club is - **Ballina**  
Good hi!

Hi have finished the holiday and now I am at school. I found something funny because now we have eight period in a day and they found its lot back in France with got more period in one-day. All my friend was hoping to see me again.

I have been to the Gold Coast for one week where I have been to DreamWorld. It was great, I have been nearly all the attraction. Like tower of terror...

I have see for the first time a koala, I have touched the kangaroo for the first time too.

Last week I have plant coffee tree at the place of some friend, now it's the sugarcane from where I live. We just look it grow.

Now planning my come back in France because it's just arrive so fast. See you next report.

*Philippe*

### Rick had absolutely no idea!



Hi, I'm **Rick Prince**  
and this is my February report  
My Sponsor Club is - **Coolangatta/Tweed Heads**  
My Host Club is - in Finland

It's been over a year since I decided to participate in the Youth Exchange. Since that time my days have been filled with the stress of finishing high school, the worries and uncertainty of

planning for a year abroad and now; the disappointments and joy's of exchange life.

I really didn't think it would be like this, in fact, I really had no idea what it would be like. Sure, Rotary said it would be difficult, but I never believed it. I mean come on; this is me you're talking about... not some weak little girl. (*Rick - I feel that there are a few "weak little girls" out there that will take you to task over that. Ed.*)

Looking back after over a month in Finland, somehow my time here seems to have passed quickly. How, I have no idea, since my emotions are going up and down like a Sine wave. I'm either extremely happy and looking forward to the 11 months ahead, or at times disheartened and wondering why.

My first introduction to this distant country arrived after 23 hours of sitting, sleeping, eating and talking my way right to the airport transfer bus. With our eyelids wavering on exhaustion, 30-something exchange students invaded Karkku for a week long orientation camp. It was here that we experienced the sauna and other cultural treats that Finland is enriched by.

But before long, business cards were exchanged with lingering promises of keeping in contact as we departed with our first host parents. I was very fortunate to receive such a warm welcome by my Host Dad, Mum and of course, my Scandinavian bombshell sister.

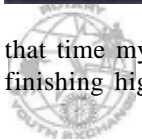
Two days after, I started my first business venture: making friends. It's always a hard task, as I am sure most of you know, often you just want to retreat home to the ones you already have. But nonetheless I've been making quite a bit of progress. (*That's great Rick - it's one of the really important things to do - as you are finding out. Ed.*)

So much so, I was invited on a week long trip to Levi - the snowboarding central of Finland. Definitely a highlight so far, carving down the slopes with the red sun resting low on the horizon and the scenic background to match, its something I will always remember.

It's at this point in the exchange which I can reflect on the past year, my future and everything in between. In my short experience so far, it's only when you're pushed outside comfort zones and placed into uncomfortable environments before growth occurs internally. And that's what I think the exchange is all about; internal growth. With elements like joy, love, hate and despair within the spectrum of your environment, it's hard not to change.

Sure, it's hard. For some, their environments are lined with more padding. For others, everything hits you like a rock. I'm sure the key is to stay positive throughout, and that's my intention. This has been one of the most interesting experiences ever. I can't wait to see what confronts me next. (*Excellent - keep with it - and you'll have a really great exchange. Ed.*)

*Rick*



**Sibylle – Says Good Bye!***Hi, I'm Sibylle Kuhn*

*and this is my February report*  
My Sponsor Club is - **Zürich-Limmattal** in Switzerland  
My Host Club is – **Alstonville**

For some of us the 18<sup>th</sup> of January is an important date. I went with my host family up to Brisbane airport to say goodbye to Kathryn. Of course, we also said goodbye to Hannah, Amy and Daniel and everyone else. Christina was also there and it was very exciting to see everyone off.

After that I visited the parents of my fourth host mum. I also got to know her brothers and their family.

A week later I met Christina at Lennox Head with her fourth host family. We had a Cabin on Lake Ainsworth. We went to the beach and I tried wind surfing. That was good fun. I could hardly stand up. It was so windy. On Australia Day we played Cricket, and we were pretty proud of ourselves, because we Swiss girls never played it before.

At the End of January school started again. Yahoo. It is the same as before.

This week, on the Wednesday, Brooke Bowland, who has just returned from her exchange year in Germany, gave her speech in Rotary. It was very interesting and I think she learned a lot about how to live, I wondered how I will speak about my year.

Anyway, the next weekend the Bowland's and another family were at our place for dinner. We looked at Brookes pictures that she took and I felt I was doing a European tour.

Last weekend I visited Christina. At the moment she lives with a woman in a high rise. That was amazing. We went shopping and to the movies. We just enjoyed Australian life (perhaps not the typical one). On Saturday night we went ten floors upstairs to a Rotary fundraiser. One family cooks and three or four other couples comes for dinner. Before we went to bed, we saw the opening ceremony of the winter Olympics, it was just wonderful

*Sibylle***Tamara has limited knowledge!**

*Hi, I'm Tamara Rogers*  
*and this is my February report*  
My Sponsor Club is - **Palm Beach**  
My Host Club is – **Erwitte-Hellweg**  
in Germany

I had been here for a month now and, despite the cold I got in the first week and the consequent missing of my mother, the time has gone unbelievably quickly.

Germany, aside from being freezing cold, is very beautiful. Many of the towns I had been through seem straight out of a fairytale, I half expect to see Pinocchio walking down the street. My host family's wonderful and patient with my very limited knowledge of German. My host club are sending me to a German language course Tuesday evenings and going to school is helping, but it is very frustrating the moment. The people here are very friendly and luckily most students are pretty good with their English.

I'm finding it strange having to wear so many layers of clothing everyday. I'm keeping my fingers crossed for warm summer here. (*I suppose you could say that you're really wrapped up in your exchange! Ed.*)

That's all till next month

*Tamara***Tarja - Where did the money go?**

*Hi, I'm Tarja Ylitalo*  
*and this is my February report*  
My Sponsor Club is - **Someron** in Finland  
My Host Club is – **Grafton Midday**

God day, mate!

After sending my last report I travelled to Gold Coast and stayed with my lovely district counsellor with Anna-Stiina. It was fun to go shopping (and now I'm strictly forbidden to buy anything for a while) and also chat in Finnish after a long pause. While we were there enjoying Don's hospitality we went to Brisbane for a day and night to visit Penny, the girl who went to my home town. It was really nice to meet her and tell all about my town, friends etc. I'm sure we'll have great time when she's gonna stay at our place after me going back home.

On the 15th Anna-Stiina realized that we've been away from Finland exactly half year. That's pretty amazing! That's the longest time I've ever been away from home. Wau!! Six months is a long time but still it has gone so quickly. And I've managed to survive fine without my family. That is a big achievement.

After coming back from Gold Coast I just packed my things and in two days moved to next host family. I had only one day to settle in the house and the following day we left to the beach for a week. We took a van and drove to Evans Head, a little town with the biggest caravan park in NSW. I had great time at the beach although it was pretty windy almost every day and the waves weren't so good.

My present host family lives next to the river so it's not long way to go swimming. I've been warned about the sharks but no one has ever been attacked by a shark so I won't worry too much. I felt a bit sad to move off from my last host family because they're really nice and enjoyed

a lot to live with them. My seven-week stay with them went all too fast. But this family is nice too. Family includes parents and two boys; Glen is 15 and Tony 14. They also have a lovely dog called Tipsie. It feels that I've lived with them only a couple of weeks but actually it's almost a month! Can you believe that!

Before holiday finished I went to Coffs Harbour with my host mom and brother. We went a little rainforest walk, which actually was my first time in a rainforest. There I was "introduced" to the local lovely creatures, leeches. They're so amazingly fast! I got bitten by one but luckily I didn't get sore leg because of that. I got sore leg because of another thing: I went ice skating (oh, it was so great to see ice again!) and because of the crab skates I got huge blister to my leg. After couple of hot days it got worst and worst and I was afraid of having some kind of infection. But nice Pharmacy-man helped me grind powder to put on to the blister and luckily I'm now healthy again! But I learned my lesson - won't go ice skating anymore in Australia...

Then, 30.1. It was time to go back to school. That first week felt quite odd, trying to get use to the school again. It felt like the holiday went too quickly. I just had so much to do during holidays (which was just great!) and so much fun. But now I've got used to the routine again. And it's good to see all the friends. After starting the school I haven't had time to do anything special.

After Christmas time has started to go faster and faster. It feels that I won't have enough time that all these nice moments will end too quickly. Now I feel that I'd like to do so many things but always I find the one problem: haven't got enough time left. I'm now trying to take the best of these last months and really enjoy when I still can.

Lots of love and wishing happy Valentine's Day

*Tanja*

### Alexandre – experiences his first time!

Hi, I'm **Alexandre Sneessens**

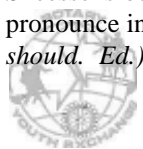


and this is my March report  
My Sponsor Club is – **Hannut-Wararre** in Belgium  
My Host Club is – **Ballina on Richmond**

Hello everyone,

I think it's the first time I'm writing something for the hopping mag but like everybody says "it's better late than never"

So for the one who don't know me, my name is Alexandre Sneessens but you can call me Alex it's much easier to pronounce in English! (If you insist – then I suppose we should. Ed.)



I'm from Belgium and I'm actually staying in the best spot, Ballina (NSW), I'm spending here the most beautiful year of my life!!!

I've so much fun in this wonderful country, by the way I think it's going to be hard to leave but I'll see how it goes!

I had to book my back flight already, I'm going back on July the 14th.

I've realise the other day (during maths at school) that I only had four and a half months in Australia, I reckon I was a bit sad to realise that but I can't do anything about it... unfortunately!!!

I'm in my third family, it's going great, there absolutely great, I was very lucky because all my host families so far have been wonderful, I had so much fun with all of them, I thank them!!!

I've been very sportive while been here, I've been rowing (very good sport) and of course I've learn the best sport ever... surfing, I've never enjoy a sport so much it's just awesome, that's what I've done during my summer holidays, 4-5 hours on the waves nearly every day, and that's what I keep doing when I've got the time!

Two weeks ago, I've been to Stanthorpe for a Rotary camp with all the exchange students, it was so good I reckon that's one of the best we had, it's so good to be with the other students who live the same things as you so you're able to talk if you got problem or to share the good times you had, ...

The next is at the district conference I really look forward to meet them again!

And then it's the safari that is going to be excellent, I also look forward to go!

But first I am going to enjoy as much as possible my couple of months left and to as much thing as I can.

Last Thursday, I did my presentation about Belgium to my host Rotary club, I think it went very well and I also think the part they've enjoy the most was when I gave some Belgian chocolate... I really happy about it!

All right I think that's about it, next month I will have a lot of things to tell because I'm going down to Sydney for the Easter show, going to be great!!!

See you next month!

*Alex*



### Amelia experiences the worst ever!

Hi, I'm **Amelia Parkins**  
and this is my March report



My Sponsor Club is - **Mt. Warning Murwillumbah**  
My Host Club is - **Hamina-Vehkalahti** in Finland

Its still very much wintertime in Vehkalahti but the weather has been the worst winter ever, so I've been told! This has meant its been raining then dropping to below -10 freezing the water then covering it with a layer of very deceptive fresh snow. Perfect falling on your arse weather and I have got the art almost perfected! (*I'm pleased you have something perfected so early in your exchange, although, I hope you do it in a dignified and lady-like manner. Ed.*) However we have recently had a 'skiing' holiday which went for a week where I tried snowboarding for the first time and wasn't very successful, but after many hours I managed to use the lift properly and get to the top of the hill... just in time to go home! Also during this holiday I went with my host mum and sister and a friend on a cruise from Helsinki to Estonia and back, it was a night of dancing and eating that went well into the morning.

One of the highlights of this month was having the courage to really embrace Finnish customs and eat their blood sausage. It was surprisingly good, but the thought of what went into it made me refrain from seconds. I also ate reindeer twice and tried moose. It all tasted really good.

Most of this month has been occupied with watching the Winter Olympics and travelling around the place with my host brother and his ice hockey team. I have to say that it is the most amazing sport. I was a big grass/turf hockey fan in Australia but ice hockey tops it off! It's so amazingly fast!

I don't think that Rotary meetings are held very regularly in my area but when they are they make the most of it... it goes for hours! They are very different to in Australia also; each meeting is at one of the member's work places and includes a tour then speech about the company. When this is finished they have dinner, or lunch which is followed by the Rotary part and then social chats over coffee. Last week we went to a paper mill, very exciting but very smelly.

School is really easy and a great place to meet people and learn about the language. On that note its time to go to music class... heippa!

*Amelia*

### **Amelia – wonders what she's been doing!**

*Hi, I'm Amelia Ramsay*



*and this is my March report*

My Sponsor Club is - **Surfers Paradise**

My Host Club is - **Chatel-Guyon** in France

Bonjour toutes les mondes.

I have started making copies of the e-mails I send out because I have had the most major problems with e-mail

for the past 4 weeks. So here is a patched together e-mail from all the ones I have written and I tried to put it in some sort of order so that it makes sense. Hope it does and hope it reaches you finally. I am using the host families Internet address because it seems to be a lot more reliable than hotmail and it's a lot cheaper for them.

So what have I been doing? (*Now – that's a real good question. Ed.*)

It's my first week here and I have had the worst case of homesickness. Everything is wrong to me. The food, the people, the language, the surroundings. Nothing makes sense and it's nothing helping to keep the food down. But I'm travelling. I keep telling myself things are going to get better and that thanks to our weekend camps, it's not worse, it's not better it's just different. And it is and I know I will get used to it, it's just really hard right now and I'm not coping too well. I miss home but I'm keeping a brave face so that my family wants me to be here and they're happy to have me.

My family are fantastic. I have a sister my age Julie, and two older sisters and a brother. Host mum and dad are cool too. I scored with the host club because I have the host club president for my dad. Lucky me! It's really good because I get news in advance and it's easier to ask when I want to do something. The house I really interesting, it's funny that on the outside all French houses I have seen look exactly the same then you head inside and you're mistaken. There are so many passages, doors leading to stairs, stairs leading to doors. Rooms you never thought could exist. It's funny I have been here 2 weeks now and only 3 days ago I discovered the house has another floor. That's where all the washing heads to when you can't find it (he, he). (*Amelia – have a look around for any of mine will you – I'm missing some black socks. Ed.*)

I've got my own bedroom and bathroom and can roam the town at my own free will. Oh the town... Chatel-Guyon. What can I say it's 'different'. And I love it. It's the tiniest, well it's not that small, and it's very old. There is one main street and 65 percent of the shops on it are closed. (*Maybe you should go there during business hours. Ed.*)

Chatel-Guyon is known for its water. In summer, which I'm yet to experience, the town is alive because all the tourists come for the fresh baths and good-for-you water. But for the moment the town lays dormant, like the volcano's that surround it. I've explored a heap of it on my daily walks even though it's pretty cold I manage to see a fair bit. The town is about the size of say Paradise Waters. Maybe a bit bigger I haven't yet discovered it all. It's very cute. For those who have seen Chocolat the buildings are like that. It's a very historical place or more old than historic. I think the houses were here before the roads so it's squishy and all over the place. There are winding streets going in every direction. But Chatel-Guyon (my town) is close to all the others and it's like

you haven't left it but yeah like I said it's all over the place. Chatel-Guyon is a tourist destination; in summer... They have famous baths which if you can all think of the water you see in the supermarket the Water is called volvic water. All the water in the taps is volvic water and it's very good for you. Back to the baths. In summer lots of people come here to bathe in the baths because they are supposed to make sick people better. So in winter it's pretty dead here because most of the main shops and pretty much all the hotels or motels close. So that's Chatel-Guyon.

Yesterday I went to the main city with another exchange student from Canada and he showed me around the place. I saw the biggest bloody Cathedral you've ever seen in your life. (*I've seen some pretty large Cathedrals in my travels – the one there must really be huge. Ed.*) It's very gloomy because it's made from volvic rock, which is rock from volcanos. It dates back to about 1200 or more I'm not sure but it took generations to build it and the work in it is incredible. I will take lots of photos of everything to show you. I had my first chocolate croissant in France today and it's delicious. Yum, yum, yum.

School started half way through my first week:

My French is going pretty well I am starting to understand everyone when they speak really slow and in the plainest of French. It was my second day of school today and it is not so bad. Everyone is very interested in knowing all about Australia and where I live. My photo albums and books on the GOLD COAST came in very handy at this point. They are very jealous of the beach and how close I live. School starts at 8am and the sun doesn't come up until about 9 so we go to school in the dark and first class is dark but it's no so bad. I am in le classe seconde which is the equivalent of year 11 here so everyone I know is about 15 16... But they're all very nice and it doesn't matter because I can understand them. We start the day with a kiss, kiss on each cheek, which is lovely and friendly. The school or le lycée is quite big with about 5 main buildings. I do French which is the equivalent to English in Australia, German which is even harder because I can't understand what they're trying to translate; maths, history/geographie, English, sport and I think that's about it.

\*\*\*\*\* PAUSE\*\*\*\*\* Sorry about the tense changes etc. And the doubling up on information. Like I said this is a compilation of about 6 e-mails. Hoping you're getting the picture anyway. \*\*\*\*\* UNPAUSE \*\*\*\*\*

Now that's all in the past I'll skip to the here and now and do a quick run over of what I have done and seen in the past 4 weeks.

The most important thing is that my French has improved!!! Went to a Rotary meeting tonight as I do every second week and had numerous comments on how it has improved. People at school have also noted the

change so I guess that's a grand bonus!! (*That's really great. Ed.*) Second. The food is good. I was having problems to begin with now I think I can withstand anything and even like it. I have eaten raw, half cooked, all cooked, fried, baked, grilled, toasted, you name it I've done it to meat. And enjoyed it.

The French cuisine is fantastic and not one to be taken lightly. The French are very particular about it and one thing I've learnt is that you eat it all and don't leave anything on the plate. I guess sometimes it's taken as an insult. I've eaten cheeses that I never thought existed and am even learning some names.

I have done my Rotary speech, which I hope went without I hiccup. I think people understood and with the help of my translator and friendly dictionary (my host sister) I wrote it in one day. People enjoyed it and my host dad (president) asked me to type it up and he has handed it out with the weekly newsletter.

I have been to several birthday parties, played numerous games of pool, have taken up tennis lessons with two girls I know, one of them my next host sister. I will be doing hip-hop dancing with my host sister soon instead of watching. I have been to a ska and reggae concert in the bigger town. I've been shopping. I've been skiing. I've been babysitting. I've made some really good friends in and out of school. I've been to a scouts meeting and eaten a bowl of rice and an apple and paid 5 euros for it to raise money for a worthy cause.

School's great. My English teacher is the best with giving me books to read and stuff to do. Future time now.... Tomorrow I'm taking the day off school to go with a family to see, VULKENYA. Which is one of the several dormant volcanos in the region and they've made a kind of tourist attraction out of it by putting the attraction in the middle of the volcano so you go there and you go in the volcano and see how it all works. I don't know about this one but I'll let you all know how it goes. 30 of March is the bus tour. And I'm off around Europe for 11 days. Then for the second week of the holidays I have been invited by another family, a daughter and her dad, to go to the north of France, Bretagne and stay there with them for a week.

So I guess you could say I'm a very lucky girl!!!! Life has settled down for the moment and it's just the basic routine of school and weekend and TV and walks and sports etc. So it's just like home with a twist. I'm enjoying in 100 percent thoroughly!!! But it's time for bed because it's a bit late here. So hope you enjoy and primarily understand and secondarily receive the e-mail!!!

Let me know.



**Anna-Stiina – It's gone already!**Hi, I'm **Anna-Stiina Sirviö**

and this is my March report  
My Sponsor Club is - **Tuira-Oulu**  
in Finland  
My Host Club is – **Mt. Warning**  
**AM**

G'day mates!

One month has gone again... which is sad in many ways because departure is again nearer than yesterday. And it's not maybe worth to say that last month's time has gone fastest ever!!! I don't know why... maybe my watch is broken or something, I wish that I could stop time running so fast... at home you have so much time, it doesn't matter if thing doesn't happened just during the year... because I have still time left. But here you have only one year as your leaving date draws nearer... it is bad... because I have still so much to do, and just when I going to learn how to say Murwillumbah I have to leave, but not yet I'm truly going to enjoy my last four months. My last month has been fulfilled with quite different things and action....

Inbound camp in Stanthorpe was quite experience and I still remember (and will always remember) how in our multicultural group joined two new persons... Sarah and Sato warmly welcome! And for you Yuri, if you ever see this you'll always be part of my experience and see ya at in Japan or ether in Finland! I remember the great time we had... all those various times abseiling and how about safari briefing half way up the pyramid! And how I learnt so much new things about Taiwan our way back and visiting in local vinery... I think that now everyone of us basically knows how to make vine! And our tears in the rehearsal for conference... I had great time and I love you all!

During this month also my whole family came over to Australia which was so different! I felt stupid when I tried to speak Finnish and kept all the time forgetting words. And before I didn't even think that I had learnt some Aussie accent, but I think (now) that I has, because when I tried to speak to my sisters (in Finnish) they couldn't understand me! ... After all I spent nice time with them, but still after they went I was happy... I can have my life again! J

I like my school very much... and usually I'm waiting to get back there, because all my friends are there and we have fun together every day! ...Last year half an hour lunch break felt way too long but now 50 mins feels like five! I don't even have enough time to start before it ends... I'm talking too much! In the swimming carnival I get paid off because I'm Finnish... but showed that we can also swim!

As I said before this month has gone too quickly but maybe just that's why because I've enjoyed every moment

and I felt really special way when I watched Olympic games... I was going for both Australia and Finland.

Heaps of hugs to every one!

*Anna-Stiina*

**Elizabeth – Can't believe it!**Hi, I'm **Elizabeth Mullan**

and this is my March 07 report  
My Sponsor Club is -  
**Murwillumbah Central**  
My Host Club is – **Eniwa** in Japan

Hello again from Japan! (*Hello back to you – from Australia. Ed.*)

I hope everyone is well and that you are all having a good year. I can't believe it's March already. I have had a slightly slower-paced week, which has been nice. Have now finished school exams. I did personal study most of the time, but did the Maths test and the three English tests. Quite different from what I'm used to and English Grammar was quite confusing. The instructions were all in Japanese and I couldn't recall learning when to use 'which' and when to use 'that', which was what half the test seemed to be about! It will be interesting to get them back and see how I went. (*Don't worry Elizabeth – I still get confused on that one – or should that read – "which one?" Ed.*)

Friday was a holiday and my host sisters are always baking cakes and things so I offered to cook a Toblerone cheesecake, which they thought was delicious. The packets of fresh cream here are so cool - they all come with a small plastic disposable piping bag and nozzle, so I had lots of fun decorating the cake.

The weather was just beginning to warm up, until Saturday morning when it started snowing again. I took the train to school alone because Ai had slept in, and dreamily wandered along, thinking about those poor people who would again have to begin the arduous task of scraping the snow from their footpaths and driveways. I was also thinking about how cool it was that I was making the first footprints in the newly fallen snow, when I realised that this was because I had wandered off the footpath and was heading towards a brick wall! It's easy to do when everything's white. (*Now – that would have made a great accident report – "I was walking along this footpath that wasn't there – and walked into this wall I couldn't see. Ed.*) I returned to the crowds of students and failed to notice the boy in front struggling to keep his balance, until I suddenly found myself sitting on the ground in the snow! My first fall. There was no blood and no broken bones, but it gave me a shock and I'll be watching my step even more from now on. (*Ahhhh – the interesting Ice under a thin layer of snow trick. Ed.*)

That afternoon was an inter-city Rotary event. I attended the first half with my host sister, Ai, who's heading off to



Australia later this year, and two other exchangees (Australian and Canadian). It was pretty boring because they just took turns saying speeches which we couldn't understand, so during the break my host father took us to Mister Donut. We spent the rest of the afternoon there, eating and looking at the English language books in Hokkaido's biggest bookstore. There was quite a selection, with all the newest and most popular novels, but they were all frightfully expensive, even by Japanese standards. We returned in time for dinner - quite a feast - after which we filled take-away containers with the leftover sushi for the next morning's breakfast!

Sunday was Hinamatsuri, which is the doll festival. In the homes of small children, stands of dolls are set up but taken down quickly afterwards because apparently it's bad luck to keep them up for too long. The top stand holds the King and Queen dolls wearing many layers of Kimono. After this comes the maids, musicians, wedding dressing rooms etc. I think that's right - my third host family's mother explained it to me in great detail the other weekend. They're set up in lots of shops and hotels, too. We had quite a feast for dinner with three platters of 'take-away' from the Sapporo Grand Hotel (the number one restaurant in Hokkaido) and special cakes, too. There was a mix of Western, Chinese and Japanese foods and it was quite delicious.

The last three days have been holidays. On Tuesday I went out to kaiten-zushi (sushi train) with my host sisters for lunch. It was lots of fun and really yummy. I've decided that some of the time it's better not to know what a food actually is, nor to spend too much time examining it, because it nearly always tastes good (with the exception of sea cucumber and dried squid)! We then went shopping in Sapporo. It was amazing. We never left the train station area, yet there were hundreds of little clothing shops and cafes - I'm sure it must have been bigger than Pacific Fair! They were all out of my price range, but it was lots of fun just to wander and look. The 'Jerry and Mousse Dessert' displayed in the window of one of the little cafes was quite tempting, though. (JeLLy?!) (*My vote is for the Tom and Jerry type humour - after all - Jerry was the Mousse! Ed.*) It's a bit like the shirts we once found selling surprisingly cheaply at the Carrara Markets with 'Surfers Paradise, Australia' printed on them! (*Maybe that's why they were so cheap - maybe you should have bought an armful? Ed.*)

Anyway, must go now - Until next time - Love,

*Elizabeth :)*

### Elizabeth is too busy!



Hi, I'm **Elizabeth Mullan**  
and this is my **March 14 report**  
My Sponsor Club is -  
**Murwillumbah Central**  
My Host Club is - **Eniwa** in Japan  
Hello!

I hope everyone is well. I am, although a little tired after a rather busy week.

Saturday and Sunday were spent in Naganuma which is about 20 minutes from Eniwa by car. All the exchange students from the area met up for afternoon tea and a chat, then spent the night with homestay families. I stayed with a lovely family who live on a farm in the country. There was a grandmother and grandfather, mother and father, daughter (Asami - 15 years old) and two younger sons. We had a fantastic evening talking, playing games and eating dinner sitting at tables on the ground. We were looking through my photos and came to a school one and Asami said 'I know that uniform'. She rushed upstairs and came back with a photo of none other than the All Saints Japanese classroom complete with Lizzie, Jack and Tamara! It was one of our grade 10 Japanese classes - I was in the other one. It turned out that she went to Australia with a group for a week in 1999 and visited All Saints for the day. It really is a small world!

The next morning we went out to the shops to take some purikuras - the popular Japanese photo-stickers - then it was back to Rotary for an afternoon of food and speeches commemorating the 10th anniversary of the Naganuma Rotary Club. We were each presented with two bottles of Hokkaido apple juice to take home, which was nice! By far the worst part of the day was when they asked all the exchangees to sing a song together. Ask 12 people from different countries to sing a song they all know and you end up with a nursery rhyme! I'm not sure how well 'Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star' went down, but I guess at least everyone sang and it was in tune (?)

Yesterday was Rotary. I did my third speech, which they seemed to enjoy, and received my monthly okozukai. I caught a taxi there (which had an automatic door which shut on my leg!) and the driver talked the whole way. He was difficult to understand and I got a bit confused and I think I told him it wouldn't be finished until midnight (I thought he asked when it started - 12.00!), but he gave me a 20% discount, so that was nice. My host family were amazed - apparently taxi people never give discounts!!!

The rest of my week has basically been school. I have been getting there early to play piano duets with Hitomi and leaving late because we are busy working on our presentation for the International festival on Saturday. My group is studying Uganda. We were given five days to make a poster and do a presentation about our country. There is one boy in our group who hasn't done much, so today I brought in the Ugandan National Anthem and music, which I found on the Internet and suggested he could sing it. He jumped at the idea and I was rather surprised! It is quite a difficult song and we spent a lot of the day going over the words and melody, so hopefully it will all work out well.

Today in Biology we dissected a pig's eye (cows eyes are banned because of mad cow disease, according to the

teacher). It was really interesting, although I couldn't believe all the screaming and hysterics! I mean, nearly all the girls in my class have piercings and they all did their own. My host sister, Ai, even did one through the skin under her lip herself. Yet there they were screaming about pigs eyes?! Strange!

Anyway, until the next episode of Elizabeth's adventures in Japan...

*Elizabeth* :)

### Kelly – Faces Stormy Time!

Hi, I'm **Kelly Bartlett**



*and this is my March 21 report*

My Sponsor Club is - **Robina**

My Host Club is – in Canada

Hey all, Well I'm amongst another snow storm and overnight there's already been almost 20cm of snow. Its great! Everyone thinks I'm crazy cause I get all excited when I wake up to a white wonderland. It's actually pretty warm outside today. Only about -1C. Yesterday it was a beautiful day. It was only 0C and I didn't even need my mittens outside. Great ha! I wish that you guys were able to see what I'm seeing. Its so frustrating cause its just awesome.

Lots of love

*Kel*

### Kylie – Is lost for words!

Hi, I'm **Kylie Burton**



*and this is my March report*

My Sponsor Club is -

**Murwillumbah**

My Host Club is – **Köln um Rhein** in Germany

Hello all! Well its hard to believe that I am once again sitting down writing another monthly report when it still only seems like yesterday I sat and wrote the other one - late again (sorry Rodger). (*I suppose that better late than never – but you'll find that doing this on a regular basis has it's own rewards. Ed.*)

This month, like every minute of my exchange so far, has flown by at such speed and with so much excitement that right now my whole mind and body is a whirlwind of emotions and as I think back now on what I have done this past month and it scares me to think of how much I have fitted into just four weeks! Perhaps it is a good thing exchange only lasts 12 months otherwise I fear that my life would past through me so quickly that I would before I knew it be a grandmother and my life near an end - such is the speed that time flies here. But in reality if everyday of my life could be like what I am experiencing right now I don't think I'd care! This month I have grown

more accustomed to going to school and classes and homework and tests - which is really helping my German which is slowly getting better. I started an evening German course twice a week where I am drilled in grammar and articles for 3 hours! I am quite tired though as on Monday's and Wednesday's when I have these courses I have 7 hours of normal school and then 3 hours of the German school from 6:30pm - 9:30pm but I will do anything if it helps my German and it's only for a few months. My host family have continued to be the best family I could have ever hoped for - so far we have not even had a disagreement and my host sister and I are the bestest friends and for me I love having a little sister. I feel so at ease and welcomed as a family member, not a guest, that I am dreading having to move on - they have already started fighting Rotary to have me longer! I am beginning to do more and more with German people and my colleagues at school are starting to become good friends rather than simply people who sit with me. I am becoming more active in class and telling more and more stories in the breaks of my life in Australia compared to Germany. On completion of this report I am going to begin packing for my 2 wk German tour that starts the 23rd March - I am so excited! We go with all the other exchange students and although I'm sure not much sleep will be had by all - I know it will be a most memorable 2 weeks of my life as I get to see even more of Germany's history and culture. Some things I have accomplished so far on my exchange are: I have been ice skating outside, sat on my window sill and watched snow fall - and melt, visited the birth house of Beethoven, visited the oldest church in the world that has a bishop, written an essay in German, passed a test at school, become fully independent in travelling on bus, street tram and train, met the Prince of Karneval, kissed a Prince (although he did not turn into a frog), and above all have finally managed the art of ordering food in German - which I'm sure means the kilos will soon start to pack on! Well, until next month (which I am sure will be here before I can blink) I bid you farewell and leave you with the knowledge that I am still thoroughly enjoying my exchange and am in a state of awe as to what I know the year brings - a German tour, Europe tour, and more amazing moments that I know will be with me the rest of my life. Thank you again Rotary for this amazing opportunity and until next time

Tschüs

*Kylie Burton*

### Markus - The Great Moose Chase

Hi, I'm **Marcus Jones**



*and this is my March 20 report*

My Sponsor Club is - **Ashmore**

My Host Club is – in Sweden

OK, well this last month has travelled in a blink of an eye for me. I'm sure its the same for all exchange students, and its also annoying because it seems like I just wrote you the previous report yesterday! Ah well, Ok,

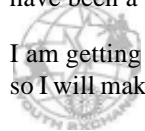
my activities for this month, well no really outstanding adventures have taken place for me this month. Really I am just starting to get used to the life of a Swede, and it is very comfortable. I think I am becoming totally accustomed to the Swedish way of life. It is pretty easy, especially when you don't have to do much hard work. I am starting to find my feet and it is a stress free life.

School is going great and things are settling there as well. I have met the whole school now and have just now found a group of people that I really like. When you first meet people, you don't always get the right impression of them so sometimes you choose a bunch to make friends with but then you find that they don't really suit you. Only when you are ALWAYS social and accepting to everyone that is it possible to meet people that are perfect for you. They are out there, but if you're not always open to new people you just might never meet them.... I have been a bit sick the past few days. I went camping up in a mountain last weekend with my host brother and a group of his friends. We hiked all day and found this amazing fresh water waterfall (80% of the water in Sweden is fresh) and spent half of the day relaxing around the fall, climbing the surrounding cliffs and playing games. At night though it was unbelievably cold, especially when we didn't have a tent or any shelter...it even snowed. I had never experienced such pain and cold - straight to the bone. I tried to conquer the Swedish environment but lost and now I have a cold. Ha, ha, ah well, I will know what to expect next time.

It is starting to get warmer here (up to about 5 degrees some days!) and spring is nearly here. The trees still have no leaves and the grass is still brown but the tulip buds are starting to sprout so the symphony of spring will begin soon. There is such a huge difference in life with the seasons here (as everyone tells me) the weather means so much to them, where as Australians rarely appreciate the weather because we live in paradise all year round! The nature here is so unbelievably beautiful. It is so different compared to the Australia flora and fauna. I live right next to a very pretty forest; it's so green and lush. The floor is covered in a green moss so the forest has a soft carpet and you can run barefoot through it (if it was warm enough). I went for a walk in this forest all Saturday last month and I came upon this amazing medieval church on top of this mountain. It was completely alone and like something out of a fairy-tale. Everything was perfect at that time, even the sun came out!

I had dreads for about a month ago. They were sweet and starting to look like good dreads until I chopped them off today. They started to get a bit yuck and also I don't think Rotary OZ would approve because I looked like too much of an individual.... Now I have no hair and my ears are freezing! But don't worry don, I am being the perfect Australian ambassador, even though my hair might have been a bit messy.

I am getting a page in the Town newspaper all to myself so I will make it a shrine to Australia for all to see. So far,



I have convinced about 40 people to come to Australia instead of New Zealand, which for some reason has a GREAT reputation here. Last week, I went to a music festival in a town near here. On my way home I had to ride through a little forest. I was bit scared cause it was midnight and very, very dark, so I started to imagine things and because there is nothing in Sweden to be scared of I started to think of MOOSES. So as I was riding I saw a deer in front of me that jumped away into the forest as I came closer, this got me really scared, so when something started slapping me on the arm I just started to pedal as fast as I could, I seriously thought it was a moose. So I was riding and riding but the moose kept nudging me on the arm, then I finally stacked the bike in the snow and fell on my back, I covered my face ready to receive the wrath of the angry moose, but nothing happened. I opened my eyes to realise that it was my backpack strap hitting me the whole time, what a crazy Australian...

Thanks for the sweet times Rotary God bless

*Marcus*

### Roxanna discovers her surroundings!

Hi, I'm **Roxanna Lane**



and this is my March report

My Sponsor Club is - **Grafton**

**Midday**

My Host Club is - **Bordeaux-Est** in France

Hi.

Another month! Everything is going great. We had two weeks holidays this month. So I took the chance to sleep in (a lot!) Still discovering Bordeaux, I see new things every time I'll leave the house. Still get lost occasionally, but that's good as well.

I spent the first week of the holidays here in Bordeaux, exploring! I spent the second week of the holidays in the Massif Central with my host family. We stayed in a tiny little village in a Valley, among the snow capped mountains. Days were spent skiing (Alpine cross-country, building snowman, visiting amazing old Chateau's and villages. The region also produces very good cheese... Of course I ate a lot of that! Yum.

It was absolutely fantastic holiday. But after such a great time I was sad it was all over, and the school routine (getting up early!) Had to start all over again.

This month I also experienced the French mucker-up day. Well. After getting completely covered in flour, I still have to say that my school in Australia is better at it... So it probably a good thing I'm here to miss out on it!

All is well here.



*Roxanna*

**Tarja reports - February is missing!**

Hi, I'm **Tarja Ylitalo**



and this is my March report  
My Sponsor Club is - **Someron** in  
Finland  
My Host Club is - **Grafton**  
**Midday**

Hello, hello!!

I have noticed that it's autumn now. It's a bit cooler in the morning and usually I'm a bit cold while cycling to the school. Friends & Rotarians say I shouldn't freeze 'cause I'm from Finland, cold country but I still do. Oh, I've been thinking what it'll be like when we get our winter in Finland later this year! Of course after a while I'll again get used to it but first I'm surely so much freezing! And I'm sure I'll get some kind of flue etc...

February went so quickly. In the end of the month I was so surprised that March was already coming and I hadn't done anything during February. At this moment I'm pretty busy doing a couple of assessment tasks to school and at the same time I'm trying to write a little story about aerobics in Australia to my home town's sports magazine. I'm just not pleased to my writing: I can't write well Finnish anymore. I know what I would like to write but I just can't express myself right to the paper. And, lie I wouldn't have enough to do already, my friend asked me to tell him something about Australia because he has to do some kind of school project of it. And I just have so much to tell...

In the middle of February we had a weekend camp with the exchange students in Stanthorpe. It was really fun - once again! I met 2 new exchange students and got along with them well. But then we had to say goodbye to Yuri which was really sad. But, we can always keep on e-mailing and keep contact to each others.

During Saturday we had so full day - going to see some kangaroos, abseiling (which was fun), visiting berry farm and wine yard, climbing to Mountain Pyramide (which was hard in the end but you got so beautiful views from up there), wine tasting etc. - so in the end of the day we all were just exhausted. Well, we actually didn't sleep very much in the night before...

It was also great to hear more about Safari. I hardly can wait 'till we go to safari! But there's a bad side, too: after safari I'll have only about 6 weeks to go. And that isn't nice! My friends and family keep on writing me that they can't wait 'till I go back again and that they miss me. But, I don't miss them and I wouldn't like to go back home so soon...

Grafton's Swimming Club organised in the end of the month a swimming carnival where I competed in my club's team. We had to give our time in 50 metres swim before the race and then in the race we were trying to swim the same time. We didn't succeed in the team race and neither did I in the individual swim. But it was fun.

And surprise, surprise - we had a BBQ after the race. I'm so used to getting BBQ's, so Aussie thing.

On 2.3. My club had a Progressive Dinner. It is held for the Rotarians and their better/worse halves and also to their friends they've invited to come along. Usually they spend the night in three Rotarians' houses - having appetisers in the first, main meal in the second and desert in the last place. Now we only stayed the night in two places. It was fun night! I also did my first real presentation (the very first one was only really short one) and it was quite relaxed: it was held around 11 o'clock in the evening, some were more or less drunk and the rest of them were tired. But it still was fun.

My Rotary Club, among many Clubs, helped selling the Bowel scan kits. One Saturday I went I went and helped a couple of hours selling them. It was actually fun and I also got good feeling helping other people and doing such an important thing.

Last Tuesday I went and helped my Club to choose an exchange student for next year. I didn't belong to the interviewing panel but I was there listening and told the others my opinions. It was new experience to me 'cause I didn't go through interview at all 'cause I was there only applying my home Club (yes, my home town and club is small). I was surprised how hard it is to try to put the applicants in order. Some of them may have some good characteristics but some other one may be better in another way. That time I was thinking that I'm a bit jealous to those ones who get the opportunity to go and explore the world. I would like to do it again... (*Just think of the fun that the district YEP committee has, interviewing all the applicants from all the clubs, and trying to make their decisions. Ed.*)

Wednesday I went with my drama class to Lismore to the theatre. We left in the evening and came after midnight. So I didn't get much to sleep... But the play was so good! It was comedy and so funny that I was just cracking up all the time. We also had so much fun in the car with my friends. I think I got 50 years younger because of all the laughing.

At this time I'm pretty busy, like I already told earlier. I'm also trying to have so much fun during these last months. Because I know that soon it's over... But 'till that happens I'm having the best time (well, so far) of my life!

Sunny greetings from

*Tarja*



## Foreign Exchange

Exchange is about learning.

It's not as simple as learning whatever it is that's taught at school, though.

It's about learning how to listen, how to speak, how to think.

Learning who you are, who your friends are, the type of people you want as friends.

Learning how to trust your innermost feelings, and how to find those feelings in the first place.

It's about learning what's really important to you, and learning what you don't really give a damn about.

Exchange is about how to tolerate, how to accept, how to like, and how to love.

Learning how to give as well as you receive, and how to trust that everything will even itself out on it's own.

It's about learning that your mum and dad do have the right answers sometimes, and that your kid sister isn't such a dumb kid sister anymore.

Exchange is about learning how to treat people as people, not as stereotypes.

Learning that sometimes a kiss isn't just a kiss, sometimes it means more, and sometimes it means less.

Learning how to achieve, how to succeed, how to accomplish.

It's about learning how not to come in first place and still be proud, and about coming in last and learning how to admit that you could have done better.

Exchange is about learning that large parties don't necessarily mean a good time.

Learning that loneliness doesn't go away in a crowd, and that sometimes it's ok to be by yourself on a Friday or Saturday night.

It's about learning that your lunchtime crowd doesn't constitute your popularity, and that popularity is all a matter of perspective.

It's about learning that boredom is simply laziness of the mind, and that watching 3 hours of TV every night is not quality relaxation time.

Exchange is about learning how to pack a bag and how to pack a room full of way too much stuff.

It's about learning that people probably like you a whole lot more than they'll ever tell you, and that it's your responsibility to make sure your friends know how much you appreciate them.

It's about learning that simply doing what you're suppose to do isn't enough, you need to put forth twice that effort in order to fully grasp whatever it is that's sitting in front of you.

It's about learning how to make people smile.

Exchange is about learning how to miss people enough not to stick them in the past, and how not to miss them so much that it keeps you from moving into the future.



Learning how to motivate yourself and how to motivate others.

Learning what the phrase 'make do' means and how to use it to seem as if you're not simply 'making do'.

It's about learning 25 different ways of saying 'we made out', and how to swear in all the different languages of all the other exchange students.

Exchange is about learning..... LEARNING HOW TO LIVE.



### The Power Of A Glass Of Milk

One day, a poor boy who was selling goods from door to door to pay his way through school, found he had only one thin dime left, and he was exceedingly hungry, as he hadn't eaten in quite a few days. He decided he would ask for a meal at the next house. However, he lost his nerve when a lovely young woman opened the door. Instead of a meal, he just asked for a glass of water.



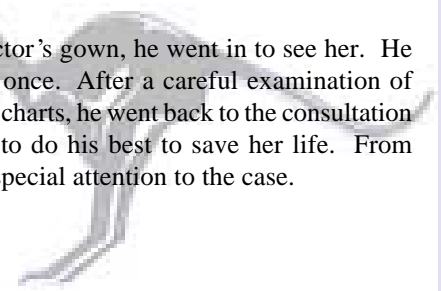
She thought he looked hungry, so bought him a large glass of milk. He drank it slowly, savoring every drop of the delicious white liquid and finally asked, "How much do I owe you?"

"You don't owe me anything," replied the young woman. "My Mother has taught us never to accept any payment for a kindness."

He said... "Then I thank you with all my heart." As Howard Kelly left that house, he not only felt stronger physically, but his faith in his God and mankind in general was strong also. He had been ready to give up and quit.

Year's later that same young woman became critically ill. The local doctors were quite baffled with her condition. They finally sent her to the big city, where they called in specialists to study her rare disease. Amongst the doctors called in to consult was a young but eminent physician. When he heard the name of the town she had come from, a strange light filled his eyes. Immediately he went to her room to see her.

Dressed in his doctor's gown, he went in to see her. He recognized her at once. After a careful examination of the patient and her charts, he went back to the consultation room determined to do his best to save her life. From that day, he gave special attention to the case.



After a long struggle, the battle was won. Dr. Kelly requested the business office to pass him the final bill to him for final approval.

He looked at it, and then wrote something in the margin and the bill was finally sent to her room. She feared to open it, for she was sure that it would take the rest of her life to pay for it all. She immediately looked at the total amount due, and her worst fear were confirmed, without the insurance coverage she had been thinking about for years and years but never considered really necessary, she was sure that never be able to repay the amount requested, no matter how hard she tried. She re-read the bill so many times, she felt she knew it by heart.

Finally, something caught her attention in the margin; she hadn't noticed it before, just a simple hand written annotation with a really small sketch.

**"Paid in full with one glass of milk"**



(Signed)  
Dr. Howard Kelly.

Tears of joy flooded her eyes as her happy heart prayed:  
"Than You, God, that Your Love has spread abroad through human hearts and hands."

Now – **You** have two choices

You can send this page on to spread a positive message. Or ignore it and pretend it never touched your heart. I know what I'm doing.

**Marcus Jones – Photo's**

Photo of Rebounder Kate Ranclaud (Japan), Hide Nishimura (Inbounder Japan), Marcus Jones (Outbounder Sweden ) Ian W

**Natalie Kerr – Photo's**

Me and some school friends at a shrine in the middle of Yokkaichi

Me and Fuuko (school friend and is going to Adelaide on Rotary exchange on 23rd of March) eating Taiyaki, which is a traditional Japanese sweet (like a waffle with a sweet bean paste inside) - it is really yummy!

