

**Ely - my English is better!**

**Ely Uriarte Robles**  
reporting for ?? Rotary  
Club, Mexico

*Dateline:* - October, 2006

*Location:* - **Grafton**  
**Midday** Rotary Club,

Australia

I'm so happy because I have new friends and I think my English is better, is no really good but I talk a little more, and I understand more.

*(Excellent, they more you use, the better it becomes! Ed.)*

This month I went to the Jacaranda festival with my host sister and other friends from Grafton high, and we had a lovely time. (Walked on the streets all morning).

On Saturday morning others exchanges students and I went to shopping world. And then, we went to decorate the truck for the parade. We enjoyed a lot too much fun. At night all the exchanges students meet at TAFE College. We had bush dance, Australia dinner and we talked a lot.

On Sunday we went to Clarence River, some of students did water ski. We had pizza for lunch and the every body return at home.

On Friday 10 I had a dinner in Gold Coast. And I know one boy and one girl they are going to Mexico in January. They are nice people.

And November 12, I change home (Anthony Devine to Adam Sydenham). I'm really happy is very nice family.

*Ely*

**Benjamin - my exchange draws to a close!**

**Benjamin Robertson**  
reporting for **Ashmore**  
Rotary Club, Australia

*Dateline:* - December, 2006

*Location:* - **Enns** Rotary  
Club, Austria

Well, as my exchange draws to a close on the last month, I have been planning and doing many things.

Unfortunately a cloud was thrown across our enjoyment of the last week, a friend of mine was killed in Vorarlberg, while crossing the train tracks. I spent the Thursday of that week, at her memorial. Her name was Kathryn Harvey, we all called her Kat. She was just in the middle of her exchange from Canada. It was a blow to us all and for Rotary in Austria, she was without doubt, one of the most successful exchangees, with contacts and friendships being made all over Austria. We will all miss her.

Apart from this tragedy, I have been trying to make my time here as memorable as possible. Doing anything and everything possible. I spent time celebrating the birthday of an Argentinean exchange-student in Gmunden by the Traunsee (the coldest lake in Austria), with him and two New Zealanders we drove (yes, WE drove) a \$200,000 sports-boat, prototype, under the guidance of a Rotarian. So being responsible, we DID NOT go over the 60mph speed-limit. Wow...

This day, I go to Mauthausen to celebrate Christmas with my host-club of Enns. During this time I will make a short speech, and present them with a banner from our club of Ashmore. As this may be the last time I will see them, I will be sure to thank them for their support, and their willingness to host me for such a great time in Austria.

I want to finish this Report with a big thankyou to my club, as without you all I would not have made so many new friends, and may not have ever experienced this new culture in so much depth. I

believe I have matured greatly, and believe that this time in another country has done that to me.

So Vielen dank, und bis bald.

Liebe Grüß

*Benjamin*

### Sidney - I really enjoy it!



**Sidney Goury** reporting for **Les Eaux Claires** Rotary Club, France

*Dateline:* - December, 2006

*Location:* - **Ballina** Rotary Club, Australia

Hello everyone student all over the world!

After nearly 5 months in Australia I do not want to go back in France because like every student exchange I meet a lot of people and I do lot of things and I do not wait to live that!!! Since I arrive I was in Brisbane, Byron bay, bungalow, Ballina, Lennox head. Yamba, Taralga, the Gold Coast, surfer paradise, Canberra for 5 days with my first family, and Hamilton island Whitsunday with my second family... {The paradise on earth!}, on this island I did snorkelling, kayaking, catamaran, boat, beaches and pools... I am soo lucky. In Canberra my family take in all the monuments and hills so I saw the capitale in the inside and outside way! I m going to the Rotary meeting every Monday night and we have a dinner and I had a lots of fun. I hope this will be continue in this way because I really enjoy it!!!

I say hello to everyone and have fun... because the time goes very fast... by everyone.

Sidney Goury Student exchange from France hosted in Ballina. Australia.



*Sidney*

### Annie – A woman of few words!



**Annie Bay-Smidt** reporting for **Randers Sondre** Rotary Club, Denmark

*Dateline:* - January, 2007

*Location:* - **Warwick** Rotary Club, Australia

I can only say; Smile and the world smiles with you.

*Annie*

### Ashleigh - it snows here!



**Ashleigh Luke** reporting for **Coomera Valley** Rotary Club, Australia

*Dateline:* - January, 2007

*Location:* - **Odense Hunderup** Rotary Club, Denmark

I think being an exchange student is absolutely wonderful, there isn't a better way to experience the cultural diversity of the world. Everything is a challenge when you are an exchange student even the normal things you do in your home country because you are in a different environment and because all of the things that are different tire you out. The biggest difference I have experienced, apart from the fact that it snows here, is the school environment. The students are a lot more independent and the teachers give them room to be more independent and there are parties at the school, ones where the students actually drink and sometimes get drunk. However the one thing I have to get used too is the swearing, the Danish swear a lot in English and it is looked upon as normal frequently used words, it is very odd for me in this situation. (*Is it odd because we don't openly swear in Danish? Ed.*) It is also strange when you leave for school and it is still dark as if it were in the middle of the night. Well that's all for now keep partying hard and then party some more for me, vi ses!



*Ashleigh*

**Bianca - it's not a piece of cake!**

**Bianca Brooks** reporting for **Robina Rotary Club, Australia**

*Dateline:* - January, 2007

*Location:* - **Motosu Rotary Club, Japan**

The only thing at this point that I would like to share, is it's not a piece of cake. I have been pretty upset in the last week, and I just want future Outbounders to know that is isn't easy, but learn to adapt. (*Does that mean some of the stuff talked about at the orientation camps, is actually true? Egads! Ed.*)

Oh and try not to be moved out of the language classes. I've been moved out of all the Japanese speaking classes. But I suppose that I will go back in there when I have a bit of language behind me. Please excuse my lack of knowledge about the addresses and telephone numbers, I'm doing this in one of the free classes I have. I can't work it out on the computer at home yet.

*Bianca*

**Caitlin - getting organised and sorted!**

**Caitlin Whitby** reporting for **Jimboomba Rotary Club, Australia**

*Dateline:* - January, 2007

*Location:* - ?? Rotary Club, Switzerland

Hey all!

Sorry this email has been so long coming, it's just taken a while to get organised and sorted.

Well, well, well, where to start ey?! (*The beginning is usually a good place to start! Ed.*) The flight over was pretty good, it was about 9 hours to Bangkok which all went pretty smoothly. We then had a few hours in the airport where we just mucked around, cleaned our teeth and walked around for a while. It was at Bangkok

that the Swiss exchange kids left the French (I think) kids and join up with the other students going to Zurich from Melb and Sydney etc. the next flight to Zurich was rather long, about 12 hours. I slept in chunks with a blanket over my head for bout half of it. When we arrived in Zurich we simply went through immigration (where I later realised they DIDNT stamp my passport) got our bags and then walked out to our host parents. No need to declare anything in Switzerland!! Bettina and Eric (my host parents) met me at the airport and we had about an hours drive from there to my home here in Wadenswil. I'm on Lake Zurich, with a view of both the lake AND the Alps. Talk about picturesque hey (add to that snow, but more on that later) before we got to the house we first stopped into my first Swiss bakery to get sum bread for breaky. At home the boys (Alex 13, Timon 11) had got the table all ready as well as making me a huge welcome sign on the blackboard. I then had my first Swiss meal which was rather typical, bread! Of course I picked the only roll that already had butter on it! I managed to eat it all, just as well the butter here is better than in Australia! I then slept that arvo for a few hours before a walk into the town to organise by public transport ticket. This pass is ab awesome, it allows me to travel on pretty much every train line, bus route and tram line in all of Switzerland! On Sunday I then slept in and in the afternoon had my first experience on the bus n train into Zurich. Eric and I walked around the city for a bit, particularly in the old part. It's so cool, all the old buildings. We went into an old church and climbed one of its towers to see a 360 view of Zurich. Talk about a view! I also bumped into another exchange student who I'd sat next to on the plane. Monday was a holiday for me so I just did some odd jobs like my bank account and the like. Tuesday marked the beginning of my German language course. I had to catch the bus and train all by myself, something that I am very proud of accomplishing by myself! My class is made up of 3 other Aussie, 2 of whom live in Brissy, 2 South Africans and a kiwi. They are all awesome and I don't no where id be without them, prob in a corner rocking! Funnily enough one of the Aussie boys and I have a friend in common (Phil Cooper for all u nysfers). It has also become the class joke that I'm from Boonah,

its a hundred times funnier as only 2 of them even no where and what Boonah is like! Having a South African pay me out because I'm from Boonah is enough to make anyone laugh! On Monday arvo 3 of the boys and I went for a walk around the city and for a coffee in a very quaint cafe. They don't have flat whites here in Switzerland nor do they have nice cinos: (moving on...) it is now those boys and my saying that we were snowed on in Zurich as about 5 snow flakes dropped on us!! At home that night it did snow for real and I rugged up to go out and play in it for a bit. It was so cold!!!! For the next couple of days it was rather novel to go out and for it to be snowing. The countryside is so cut(e) when covered in snow. Anyway the next few days passed in much the same way going to school and then going into the city in the arvo. On Friday I took Anzac bickies to class to celebrate Australia day. I also wore my Wallabies jersey from Chris, Aussie flag socks from Kel, bonds undies from Annie, signed bonds singlet from Daz and my bikini top. We also put Aussie tats on our cheeks and had a giant blow up kangaroo called Bruce.

After class we all went to an 'Aussie Pub' to celebrate Australia day. It was a little bit of a let down as it was only 2 o'clock so there were no other Aussies and the waitress didn't even speak English!! It was fun all the same. That night I slept for 12 hours, being an exchange student is tough!

Hehe. On Sat it was all pretty lazy, I just went into Zurich to an exchange student's house for lunch with some other students. Just up from is place is the head quarters for FIFA, so it was pretty cool to see that. That night we had Rachlette for dinner. It was so yum! (It's this traditional Swiss dish of whole boiled potatoes with melted cheese on top. U put the cheese under this little griller thing, rather cool if I do say so myself!) (*I think you just did! Ed.*) On Sunday I had to go to Olten, a town about an hr away, for a Rotary welcome meeting. It was pretty cool to meet all the other students from the southern hemisphere in Switzerland on exchange this year. I had a bit of a break down just before lunch tho wen I got some msgs from my mates at home who were at church. I have my moments with homesickness but they pass pretty quickly, I just

tell myself to be happy and not a sook :) yeah and then yesterday and today was German course again. I'm doing ok with the language, but I'm having trouble trying to jam all the new words into my head, not to mention all of the confusing grammar!

Some interesting and novel things that I've done, eaten, experienced etc

- on the keyboard the z and the y are swapped and they have all these other cool symbols.

- everyone has really nice cars, bmws and the like. My fav things about them is the technology, push a button to start the engine, depending on whoes key is used to unlock the car will determine the position of the seat and other variables to a predetermined choice of the key holder, and my personal fav... heated seats!!!

- talking about technology, the stove in my house looks like one of those glass touch cook tops u can find in oz except it woks by induction. That means works using magnetism, so only special saucepans with specially designed magnetic bases will work on it. The good thing about this is the actual cook top doesn't get hot.

- The bread here is REALY good and so is the cheese. One of the other exchange students and myself go to the little supermarket just near school each day and pick a new bread and cheese to try.

- the meat is very expensive - yoghurt is really creamy and has funky flavors (and chunky bits) like fig and almond - they don't have jelly - my mum is an excellent cook - I have decided lint chocolate reigns supreme (plus its really cheep compared to in oz) - I really miss hugs and affection - not many people use conditioner (so why does there hair still look so good?) - I had this cool desert thing yesterday which was a small pie base with a layer of cream and them spaghetti stands on top but made out of chestnuts. It was very tasty.

- I'm dying for an icecream but its just way too cold!

- snow flakes really are in those pretty shapes shown in picture books - the swiz have blocks of these little garden patches for people who live in

apartments to rent. They grow vegies and the like on this land and spend their weekends there having bbqs.

- Everyone is on time, as they say: if u are on time u are late, if u are early u are on time!

Most of that was focused on food, I can see one fat exchange student returning to oz in a year! Lukily my second host family is into exercise. Phew!

I know that there is a whole ton more to say but I've run out of time and stamina to write it!

Thank u Rotary once again for this experience, I've only been here a week but I've already done, seen and met enough people to be satisfied to go home.

Imagine after one year! Talk about at invaluable journey! Thanks guy, ur efforts are appreciated, u rock!

I hope you are all safe and well and that the weather isn't too hot

Love from Switzerland,

ps emails are most welcomed!

*Caillin*

### Daniel - saw snow for the first time!



**Daniel Foster** reporting for **Tweed Heads South Rotary Club, Australia**

*Dateline:* - January, 2007

*Location:* - **Künzelsau-Oehringen Rotary Club, Germany**

I have been here nearly two weeks now and am settling in well. I am learning lots and speaking a lot better German then when I arrived, and it has only been two weeks!!

Last week I was able to see snow for the first time!

When I tell everyone that it was my first time seeing snow, they laugh. But I'm more than used

to it now. (*What, the laughter or the snow? Ed.*)

I wasn't even safe making a sandwich at home, I put liverwurst (a liver sausage) and salami together on a sandwich at dinner and was told that's not how it's eaten, followed by a laugh by the whole family. In time will learn how things are done.

I am beginning to become frustrated with my lack of German-speaking skills. It becomes very annoying when people have to speak English for me to understand. I can't wait to be able to have a full conversation with someone in German with both of us understanding what each other is saying.

I'm enjoying every moment here, not missing home yet. With the hospitality of my family as well as the many other people in this great town, how could I miss home? My school, town, friends and family are great. What more could I ask for.

*Daniel*

### Emma - j'adore la France!



**Emma Wood** reporting for **Burleigh Heads Rotary Club, Australia**

*Dateline:* - January, 2007

*Location:* - **Flers Rotary Club, France**

Bonjour!

I have now been in France for about two weeks and I must say, j'adore la France! It is absolutely amazing here; extremely different to Australia. I am in the northern part of France, Normandy, in a small village called Conde Sur Noireau. The surrounding area is known as Suiss Normandie due to it resembling the Suiss landscape. It is beautiful, all green rolling hills with cows everywhere! (*Just a little different from the sun-burnt country then! Ed.*)

The lifestyle here is quite different to that back home. Mainly when it comes to the food! The French eat a LOT, with a 3 course meal at lunch



and dinner. It is very good food though, lots of baguettes and heaps of fruit. My favourite food would have to be the pamplemousse (pink grapefruit) probably because of the name!

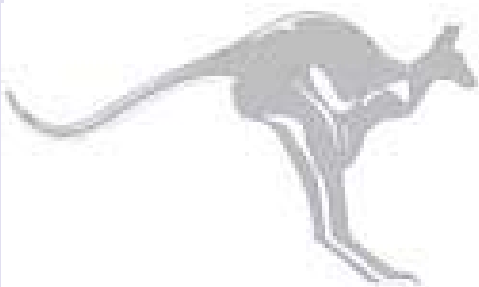
Also, the school system is very different, with the same people in every class, as opposed to my school back home in which the classes all had different students. The subjects are not as varied but, like in Australia, sport is quite popular. Compared to the 2 or so hours of sport I did at home, I am now doing about 6 hours per week, either table tennis or volleyball. Next term our class will start doing alternative dance!

Finally, I must mention the weather. Whilst it is summer back at home, it is the opposite here, winter. Last week it snowed for about 3 days, which resulted in many the snowball fight! It was great, as I had only ever seen snow on a school camp to Canberra. Having to walk to school in the snow was quite difficult though, as I hadn't really bought any shoes with grip on them... hence me falling over numerous times.

And I must not forget one of the things I love most about France! The kissing on the cheeks when greeting and saying goodbye to people! Although it does take a while when there are large groups of people, it is very different and I like it. Every morning and night and every day at school there are people to kiss. It does get confusing knowing how many times on each cheek though, most do one on each yet some do a lot more!

Overall, the last two weeks have been fantastic. It still has not really sunk in that I will be here for a year though, yet I am sure I will love every minute of it! Au revoir!

*Emma*



### Esther - I arrived safely!



**Esther Crothers** reporting for **Grafton Midday Rotary Club, Australia**

*Dateline:* - January, 2007

*Location:* - **Marenes/Oleron Rotary Club, France**

Bonjour yes I arrived safely!!!

My report...

Where to start so much has already happened!!!!

On my 2nd day here in France I went up north about 5 hours to Bretagne (Brittany) to a small city called Lannion to visit my host dad's sister and her husband!!!

I got to go crab fishing!!! I had no idea what to do so basically I followed my host dad around like a lost puppy!!! It was lots of fun though once I got the hang of it!!!!

We caught lots of crabs small eel like fish pipis and shell mussels!!! We then cooked and ate them I tried some my host dad gave me however never having eaten crab before I didn't know how to peel them!!! (*Nothing like a banana! Was that helpful? Ed.*) Or ask how to peel them so everyone assumed I didn't like them very funny!!! We then came home and I was supposed to start school however IT SNOWED!!!!!!

Lots and lots!!! So I have been at home by my self quite a lot. As my host mother father and brother all work in the hotel they own and my host sister has exams so still has to go to school!!! So it has been very hard at home by my self trying to occupy my self and not think of home!!!

I tried to go for a walk but outside because of snow it is very slippery I fell over 4 times and got very wet!!! So I gave up on that idea!!! My host family and their house and hotel is lovely!!! They are very nice and try very hard as am to understand each other as they speak very little English!!



In the 6 days I have been here I have picked up a lot of French!!! And hope that continues!!! My little dictionary has been a saviour!!!! The food!!!! Well I have never seen people eat so much!!!! Yet not many seem to be over weight!!!

Cheese (fromage) wine (win) bread (pain) patte ummm so much!!!! They constantly eat!!! At 7am 11am 1pm 4pm 8pm and supper just before bed!!!

These are their main meal times in my host family!!!

Les jardins du lac the name of my host families place is in English the gardens and the lake sums it up perfectly!!! It is beautiful here once I figure out the French computer I will email photos!!! I have tried but it is all in French and I have no idea... YET!!!!!! But I will soon I promise!!!

Well that's all at the moment...

Will email again soon thankyou (merci beacoup) for this awesome opportunity!!!

*Esther*

### Eva - I saw Dolphins!



**Eva Willimsky** reporting for **Furtwangen Triberg** Rotary Club, Germany

*Dateline:* - January, 2007

*Location:* - **Ballina on Richmond** Rotary Club,

*Australia*

In December I went to my second Surf Life saving Petrol. We even had to save one person but the rest of the day was a lot of fun and I met many people from the Surf Club. We had games at the beach and they took me with them in a IRB Rescue Boat, I saw Dolphins for the first time. I would like to be every weekend on Petrol.

I am going to the gym in Ballina together with my host cousin.

The Touch Football competition I am playing every Wednesday stopped over Christmas but I



am still meeting friends on the beach and we have Touch Football or Rugby games there.

I went to Sydney for four days and had a wonderful time. I saw many parts of Sydney and went sightseeing all day. I was there with my friends Luana, Anthony and Shelley Felber that used to live in Sydney so I also got to know with a lot of their family friends. It was interesting and very special for me because I could have a good look how people in Sydney live.

I also went with my host sister to Lismore on the 20th of December and with friends to Byron Bay on the 27th of December.

Besides that I stayed in Lennox Head and Ballina and met friends here and spent time with my very big family. All relatives and family friends visited us over Christmas and New Years Eve because my host aunt got married. It was the first Wedding I ever went to, there were many host cousins I got on well with and I made lots of friends.

In the beginning of January I went camping with a family from the Rotary Club to Tweed Heads. We did a lot of waterskiing, went to Movie World and Currumbin.

On the 21 of January I went to the Big Day Out concert on the Gold Coast, it was a great day for me.

*Eva*

### Greg - I find myself exhausted!



**Greg Rulfs** reporting for **Surfers Paradise West** Rotary Club, Australia

*Dateline:* - January, 2007

*Location:* - **Mazatlan A.C** Rotary Club, Mexico

Since arriving in Mazatlan things have developed so quickly that I feel like I've been here for months. I have already begun to attend my school/university but find it very tedious at the moment because I don't understand much Spanish. I am very much enjoying the

culture here, everyone is friendly and are always willing to help. My host family has been particularly helpful in that respect, making sure that I have everything I need and being easy to get along with and talk to. Constantly trying to learn and understand another language is very tiring and I find myself exhausted at the end of the day.

School starts at 7am every day so it's hard to try and balance things at the moment but I'm sure it will come. When I have learnt Spanish (hopefully about 2 or 3 months) I will be able to change my subjects at the University and understand that is being taught, obviously, so I'm sure that will make things more interesting. I already have 3 trips planned for the next few months. Next weekend I am going to a Rotary camp in Culiacan and then about a week later I am travelling to Baja, California to see the whales. In April I am going on a tour around the country and will be going to Mexico City, Cancun and many other cities. My family are all very jealous because they haven't been some of the places I'm going and say that it is so beautiful and they want to come too. I am looking forward to that.

That is all for now but I am certain I will have more to share next month because I have only been here about a week now so there isn't too much that would be of great interest just yet.

*Greg*

### Heidi - I had a little adventure!



**Heidi Clare** reporting for **Mullumbimby Rotary Club, Australia**

*Dateline: - January, 2007*

*Location: - Charleroi Porte de France Rotary Club, Belgium*

During the Month of Novembre 3rd-6th I went on a little adventure to Germany to see a very good friend-Lara. I took the train. Funny story that follows this. The train that I was meant to take to another city in Belgium was 30mins late. So in actual fact I was too late for the train going to Germany, and had to wait in Liège for 2 hours for

another train heading to Germany. Bad luck that it was. The first night I arrived, we went to a discotheque and I was able to meet all her friends. We rode on bikes everyday, it was nice because I able to see alot more of her city. On the 2nd day there, we went on a long bike ride, she showed me her school, the country side and we played some mini golf. Then in the evening 2 of her friends came over and we watched a movie. On the day that I left, I got to experience a bit of German schooling. I sat in on English and Religion. I had a really good time. Wish I was able to stay so much longer.

Novembre 11th-13th, I did some more travelling. I went to Barcelona, Spain for 3 days with my 2nd host sister. She showed me around the whole city (mind you, nothing like Brisbane or Gold Coast). We visited the Gallery of Giro (famous Spanish artist), Gaudi's bizarre looking creations (mushroom style houses), the parc of Giro and his mosaic artworks. We also visited the beach, and the harbour port, walked around the many, many shops. I saw the Olympic stadium (it is very UNIQUE and unusual I believe), I will have to show you photos or send some. (*Yes, please send photos. Ed.*) Then in the evening we again walked around the city eating Italian glace, sitting under the church watching performances.

It was such a good trip. I was so glad that I went to Spain, it was defiantly on the list of where to go this year.

Then again I went travelling. On the 24th and stayed until 27th. I went away with my Rotary Club to France, Cacassonne (we flew down). It is down south of France to the west, and is near Spain. I think they said about 1 hrs drive. My club here in Belgique have a sister club, who they visit from time to time, and this club also comes to Belgique from time to time. It was actually the BIG 35th BIRTHDAY of "Haute Vallée de L'aude" - The club is named after the river in the town. The other exchange student (from India) and I stayed together with a host family. They had 2 children, a 9 month old girl and a 6 year old girl. We did many activates, such as visit a Wine Yard, and they explained to us how they make and produce their wines, we visited the Castle of Carcassonne, the dinosaure musesum and also the

hat musesum. On the 24th, there was a huge fete for the Club. Guess what I ate??

You will be amazed. IATE DEER..et LIVER pate. Woah!. Speciale français food. It is so originale. Voila. Some big adventures of travelling.

So sorry this is such a looong email. I have done so many things since I last wrote.

Then my god mother in my Rotary club, took me to Paris for Christmas. It was unbelievable. Truely magical city. At night everywhere is light up, and with fake snow. It has not started to snow in Europe yet, which is bizarre for them. I saw so many places, that I can hardly remember the names. I have a bad memory (I know it's so terrible). But I was able to see the Eiffel Tower, La Louvre, the site of Napoleon, and so maaaaany monuments. I would love to live in Paris, but this lady we stayed with said it is not easy. It is VERY expensive, and you see many homeless people living on the streets and it touches your heart, but it is not only Paris but everywhere, and especially in Belgium.

I am now spending time with friends from school. We went ice-skating a couple of weeks and saw a movie. Going out and living the Belgium style.

Trying to say to goodbye to everyone that I have met this year (well not all-but all the ones who have stayed in contact), host families-families. I will go back to school for 2 days and so bye to all my friends then continue with packing.

Ok so I only have 1 week left. Most definatly NOT happy about leaving Belgium, more on the lines of very sad. My experience here has been just extradionary. Can't explain it in just 1 word but many. I love all my host families. They have been the best ever, I was lucky to get such great families. I feel like I am just one of their family members. So I now have 6 families, including my family in Australia.

Also to update you on my back report... It's ALL SUPERB... the test came back and I'm back to normale... So back to snowboarding in no time now. Hee hee hee...



Well... you might be a little tired of reading this now, so I will leave you to it.

Looking forward to seeing you all so much... Hope you had a great Christmas...

JOYEUX NOEL et BONNE ANNEE a tous...

Gros bisous de Belgique...

A bientot...

*Heidi*

### Katherine - having a fantastic time!



**Katherine Browning**  
reporting for **Surfers Paradise** Rotary Club,  
australia

Dateline: - January, 2007

Location: - **Luisenhof** Rotary Club, Germany

So far I am having a fantastic time here in Germany. My host family is lovely and the students and teachers at my school are very welcoming. The city of Hannover is really beautiful - it is set on a huge lake and all of the streets are lined with gorgeous old trees. It is not too cold, I have made a lot of new friends, and my (lack of) German hasn't been a problem at all!

*Katherine*

### Kirsten - I'm coming home!



**Kirsten Grierson**  
reporting for **Maclean** Rotary Club, Australia

Dateline: - January, 2007

Location: - ?? Rotary Club, USA

John thanks so much for that email you sent us.

It really opened my eyes that I'm actually coming home and WHAT an experience I have had! I mean I always knew what a great opportunity this

was for us young adults and also what a privilege it is for us to be on exchange!!! But when I read your email it actually hit me that it was such a great opportunity and that I will be coming home and that this has been such an awesome experience and it has taught me so much! I would love to help as much as I can in getting other people interested in the exchange program and also helping the Outbounders as much as I can...

Thanks again...

Sincerely, a proud Rotary exchange student

*Kirsten*

### Megan – leaving was easy!



**Megan Parmenter**  
reporting for  
**Murwillumbah Central**  
Rotary Club, Australia

*Dateline:* - January, 2007

*Location:* - **Colfontaine-Borinage** Rotary Club,

South Africa

Hello everyone, the last eleven days since I left Australia, have been pretty eventful.

Leaving everyone behind was easy as I was prepared for the trip over, while long, was fun as there were plenty of exchange students, not just Rotary Y.E.P. Students.

However, upon arrival in Brussels, I discovered my suitcase was missing so I met my first and second host families and my councillor.

Fortunately my suitcase turned up at midnight, so I awoke to find it at my feet.

My biggest challenge, other than the suitcase, has been the weather. Although not too cold, it ranges from - 11 degrees Celsius to eight or nine degrees Celsius, which coming from the lovely Aussie summer, was a bit tricky.

On the 21st I met up with most other exchange students in the area, and they gave me the tour and also introduced me to several Belgian specialties.

On Thursday I started school, and did four hours of English.

Friday was a public holiday and then there was the weekend, and back-to-school on Monday.

Tomorrow I start attending a special French course that my school Saint Stanislas sends all its exchange students to.

Tonight I attend my first Belgian Rotary meeting.

Until next month

Au revoir

*Megan*

### Morgan - it's awesome!



**Morgan Johnsen**  
reporting for **Nerang**  
Rotary Club, Australia

*Dateline:* - January, 2007

*Location:* - **Windsor**  
Rotary Club, USA

I love being here. I've settled in now and it's awesome. It's just started snowing which I have never seen before and tomorrow my family and friends are going to go outdoor skating which should be fun. I've only been here a few days and everyone is so nice and love to invite you places.

*Morgan*

### Ryan - it is freezing here!

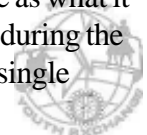


**Ryan Burton-Ree**  
reporting for **Stanthorpe**  
Rotary Club, Australia

*Dateline:* - January, 2007

*Location:* - **Braine-le-compte** Rotary Club,  
Belgium

I am finally in Belgium. It is freezing here!!!! The sun at the middle of the day is the same as what it is at 8 O'clock in the morning at home during the winter. There is ice everywhere, not a single



puddle is unfrozen in the middle of the day. On my first Friday, it snowed all afternoon but it melted as soon as it hit the ground. It was the first time I had ever seen snow fall like that. It was very slow and gentle.

My first bizarre experience was travelling in the car at 130km/h on the right hand side of the road, which of course is normal here. The diet is very different with a lot of bread and cheese, I have never eaten so much in my life. I have already tried a Belgian chicon, a Belgian waffle, Belgian chocolate and Brussels sprouts from Brussels.

After I arrived home, from the airport, we had lunch then I went straight to bed, I was exhausted! I was then woken the next morning and started school. Everything happened so fast, it is taking me a while to adjust. School is extremely different to any education system in Australia. The school that I go to specializes in Languages/ Sciences and does not offer any other courses. My subjects are French, English, German, Spanish, History, Geography, Math and Science.

The countryside is very nice. It is extremely green when it is not covered in ice. The buildings are very old and have a lot of character. The home I am in is over 300yrs old and is near a church that is 1000yrs old. On Saturday, my family took me touring around to the little villages and towns in the area. The atmosphere and architecture is incredible.

I am having a great time but miss the Australian sun!

*Ryan*



## Samuel – it's two weeks!



**Samuel Brown** reporting for **Grafton Rotary Club, Australia**

**Dateline:** - January, 2007

**Location:** - ?? Rotary Club, Brazil

Well 2 weeks in Brasil. So how's it's been you ask, well eventful to say the least. I arrived in São Paulo at around 8:00pm local time after a 30 hour plane trip ready to pass out from tiredness.

What made the tiredness worse was the person who sat next to me on the plane managed to sleep for most of it. Now I know conventional wisdom will suggest it was mainly the caffeine in the Coke I foolishly drank during dinner that kept me up, I beg to differ. There is nothing more likely to keep you awake than a person sleeping near you, just watching their easy sleep and being occasionally brushed by them is enough to keep even sleeping beauty awake. Anyway I got my sleep and am now recovered and my sleep pattern is adjusting.

My host family has been great and my sister especially for helping me with learning Portuguese, however the highlight of my trip so far came due to my new dad, Carlos. Carlos is a football nutter.

Now I love my cricket and am a self confessed tragic, but his love for football makes my love for cricket look like an innocent holiday fling. He took me to the São Paulo football stadium to watch the match São Paulo v an unknown country side, simply a pre season match. It was amazing.

Despite the fact the result was a forgone conclusion (I forget the score but it was something in the order of three or four to nil) the supporters were so passionate in wishing their team on. The stadium was only about 5% full but judging from the noise and dancing it could have been a sell out with 80 thousand people in attendance. I can only imagine what that will be like when we do go and watch game with a capacity crowd.

Unfortunately that great day was somewhat tarnished by my outing to the cinema that night. I was going with two other exchange students: Pancho (from Ecuador) and Fransico (who is heading to Australia in February) and we decided to watch the critically acclaimed movie Babel. Now I'm not saying those rave reviews weren't deserved but I think those enthusiastic reviewers had the advantage of watching with English subtitles. It turned out one of the major parts of the movie was that it was in multiple languages including Hindi, Japanese and Arabic.

Luckily one of the story lines contained English but I believe I left the cinema not only very confused but also having only digested 5% of the story line. Well such is life it was almost worth it, due to the amount we laughed about it on the way home, the people queuing up for the next screening must have thought we had just seen a hilarious comedy not a high drama.

Well that's it from me for now so hoo roo and hope everything is good in Australia.

*Samuel*

### Ashleigh – I'm on a ship!



**Ashleigh Luke** reporting for **Coomera Valley Rotary Club, Australia**

*Dateline:* - February, 2007

*Location:* - **Odense Hunderup Rotary Club, Denmark**

Hej, it is the 3rd of February and I am on this ship, which is so huge, on my way to Norway. The ship reminds me of a modern titanic! (*I hope you didn't get that "Sinking Feeling" Ed.*) It is so nice and when we set sail we had very good seats in a night club at the back of the ship where we sat and watched the sunset.

Then at 6:30pm we had a lovely dinner in the wild West Restaurant. For a starter I had Buffalo wings, main course I had pepper steak with chips and for dessert I had this absolutely delicious four-layer chocolate cake.

Then while my host dad sat and had an alcoholic coffee I found myself sitting and daydreaming that Scott walked around the corner and then I realised I was day dreaming.

I really like being on a ship, it is kind of soothing in a way, the sound and feel of the motor is relaxing. Oh I forgot today I got to see where the Queen of Denmark lives, it is a very beautiful castle and she was home cos the flag was up!

When on Rotary youth exchange there are 4 main rules no dating, no drugs, no de-facing of the body and no Drinking, well my host dad just bought me a bottle of this strawberry flavoured liquor that I wanted. (*OK – then we won't tell anyone about that then, will we? Ed.*) I was going to buy it then he insisted on paying for it! I am so lucky, now I have something to drink in Norway, I just had to promise not to let Stoffer have any.

The 4th of Feb and this morning as the sun rose I sat at a table at the front of the ship, ate breakfast and sailed into the beautiful country of Norway. Norway is the most beautiful, amazing place I have ever seen, the nature is enchanting. It is a glistening winter wonderland.

Today I skied for the first time! It was so much fun except I had a bit of trouble controlling them and all of a sudden I would go shooting off down a hill that I didn't really want to go down and my instructor would watch me to see if I could stop and then he would come down after me and help me cos often I would have only gone halfway down a slope and when I try to gain control again somehow I would end up backwards.

Then for dinner there was a magnificent buffet with lots of different foods and the desserts oh the desserts I tried some of all of them! I no I am going to get fat!

Then after dinner I went ice-skating with my host mum. Well actually she fell over straight away and hurt herself bad so she went back to the hotel to lay in bed and I stayed out with Stoffer. I ice skated for a while and filmed Stoffer being stupid and then we made snow angels and it was snowing. It was magical, oh Stoffer killed my first snow angle so I had to make another one.

Oh you not hat bottle of strawberry liquor my host dad bought me it is soooo nice. With dinner I had a Norwegian beer it was very good and then I had some strawberry stuff before bed.

Hopefully in the morning I will get up at 7:30 so I can go to the gym. (*That all depends upon how much "Pink Stuff" you consumed before retiring for the night! Ed.*) The hotel is very nice there is a gym, a pool, a sauna, table tennis, ice-skating and tennis courts. There is also a very nice lounge area down stairs and also one upstairs with a fireplace, also upstairs there is a bar and entertainment area.

I have taken lots of pictures so you can see, but one day I hope to save enough money to fly mum, Kiandra, Scott and me to Denmark where we can stay for a week and then sail to Oslo with my first host family and stay in the hotel for one week while we go skiing and then sail back to Denmark and then stay in Europe for a further 2 weeks whilst we travel around and I can show you the places I will see on my Euro tour. So that is my dream (apart from being the first woman Prime Minister).

Well it is now 20 past 11 and I am so tired. So I should go but you will here from me 2moro.

5th of Feb you wouldn't believe this but today I became an expert at skiing, that is until I crashed into a little wooden ski house and banged up my right knee. Now I can hardly walk! So 2moro I will not be skiing and hopefully with a days rest I will be back on the ski's on wed. It hurt so bad.

Anyway before I crashed I was doing really well on the ski's I was as good as Susanne on a good day and she has been skiing for 6 yrs. So I was pretty good. But now I am sore, my neck it is getting sore, my ankle and of course my knee. My knee took the whole blow it was the only thing that hit the ski house, so it is pretty messed up. (*Was there much damage to the ski house? Ed.*)

6th of Feb my knee feels better this morning I can bend it without any pain when there is no pressure on my foot which means I still can't walk properly. But I can walk better than yesterday. I am really disappointed that I can't ski today and I

hope so much that 2moro my knee is better so that I can ski. I think about home to much when I am just laying in bed and hanging around the hotel all day.

Ok so now it's the 7th of Feb and I am still not back on ski's cos of my bloody knee! But it looks good for 2moro, which means out of a weeks skiing holiday I will get to ski a whole 2 days yay! How exciting. I am so damn annoyed it's not funny. I mean it could have hurt my knee on my second skiing holiday ever, not my first! Well because I have been sitting in the hotel all day that's all I have to say.

Well its my last nite in Norway I am soo sad I don't want to leave I was back on ski today and I had so much fun I cant believe how tiring a day on ski can be.

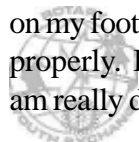
My host brother is annoying me so much at the moment I have him holding his tongue ok now I have him trying to touch the tip of his elbow with his nose, now I have him in the closet. I wish he would just be quiet.

It was so cold outside today it was so cold that my hands were stinging nearly frozen in my loves it was so cold that the windscreen had a layer of ice on the inside it was so cold that our bottles of water in our pockets were freezing. It was minus 17. My host parents were being so cautious with me on ski today so cautious that the first time I went down the green slope my host mum stood between me and the house that I previously crashed into.

There is this band playing at the moment they are pretty good but at the moment they are singing that scissor sister's song I feel like dancing and it sounds like shit save me!

I have left my bedroom and Stoffer behind now and I am sitting upstairs.

Ok that's all bye bye



**Bianca - I had never seen snow before!**

**Bianca Brooks** reporting for **Robina Rotary Club, Australia**

*Dateline:* - February, 2007

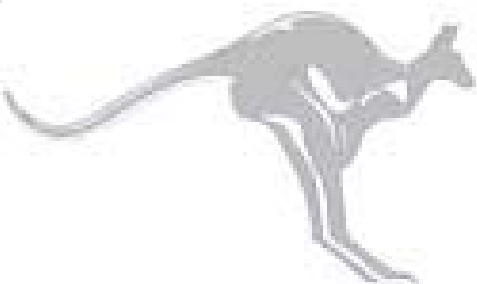
*Location:* - **Motosu Rotary Club, Japan**

At this point in my exchange I'm really dreading not learning the language before I came. Although I am learning and cramming my brain, it is still rather hard. Although I have to say that we as Australians are fairly lucky that we speak English. Because pretty much everywhere you go there is bound to be someone there who speak English, as English is the most commonly spoken language. Although in saying that I can also think that it would be a curse in the same. Trying to learn a language and people knowing that you speak English is hard. Because they want to speak English to you, but you want to speak the language you are trying to learn.

Anyway, the nice things now. I had never seen snow before, and I seriously think that Australia really needs to cool down and get some. It is the best thing that I have seen in my life (I love my family, lol). When you are lying in the snow with it all over you, you seriously don't thinking of how cold it is, or how the wind seems to be burning your face. As I found out, snow isn't wet, it is like dry ice, but way cooler. Myself and 11 other students in the snow all at the same time is cause of a snowball fight. We had many in the two days that we were there. Any chance there was that you could pick up a ball of snow and hurl it at someone was cause to have a snowball war.

Good times!

*Bianca*

**Billie - Likes Belgium!**

**Billie Mertens** reporting for **Tamborine Mountain Rotary Club, Australia**

*Dateline:* - February, 2007

*Location:* - **Verviers Rotary Club, Belgium**

Ok well I am having a fantastic time!!! Always so busy and there is always something happening its sooo great I luv it! It has been good at school now cause I'm no longer just the exchange student from Australia people now actually want to get to know me and not about Australia so that's good making more friends and getting invited to places with them because I'm making an effort to speak their language more now than I was before so that's good! It is hard to get used to all the rain and remembering you have to take an umbrella everywhere!! Ha-ha. (*Certainly different from Australia on that point! Ed.*) But it's so exciting seeing the snow and experiencing weather that is so different from home! I was told by the other exchange students that they could tell that I was an Australian because I wear layers of clothes so that was funny! Ummm dunno really what else to say because so much happens I tend to forget stuff which is bad! But I do know that I'm having an awesome time and I hope everyone else is too!

I LOVE BELGIUM!!!!

*Billie*

**Caitlin - time sure does fly!**

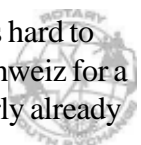
**Caitlin Whitby** reporting for **Jimboomba Rotary Club, Australia**

*Dateline:* - February, 2007

*Location:* - **?? Rotary Club, Switzerland**

Hello all!!!

Wow time sure does fly doesn't it! It's hard to believe but I've already been in der Schweiz for a bit over 6 weeks. That means I'm nearly already



through one 8th of my time here! Wow! Some days it feels like that's absolutely no time at all and other days it feels like there is all of eternity stretching out in front of me before I'll be back home. I find it best when I have things to look forward to in my week, and I suppose by arranging to do activities, not only am I keeping homesickness at bay, I'm also making good use of my time! (*You got that right in one! Ed.*)

I'm always incredibly tired, which I think is due to two reasons mainly. The first is the language as it takes a lot of effort to concentrate on what is being spoken to you when its in gobbledygook &#61514; and the other reason is most my days at school start at 7:50 and as I have to leave allocate about an hour for travel, I'm having to get up at around 5:45 (when its still dark!).

Compared to my school life in OZ when id only be getting UP at around the 7:30 mark, I'm finding mornings very hard indeed! School also only finishes around 4 (except Wed, when I get the whole arvo off!) which makes it late by the time I get home and so its rare that I get to bed before 9. And for a girl who believes that 12 hours is only just enough sleep for one night, my sleep time battery is seriously low. To add to my dilemma is that fact that because school takes up the whole day, the kids here socialise mostly on the weekend. At night! It also seems to be that for one reason or another I'm not able to sleep in on Sat or Sunday mornings either! Oh well, such is the busy life of an exchange student! Not that I'm complaining, its great to be doing and experiencing so much.

More about school. well this week was my first week and I went a lot better than I expected. I have 12 subjects in all, and for most students in my class that's a light load! My subjects are Biology, Physics, Chemistry, Maths, English, German, and Special German for exchange students, Economics, History, Geography, Art and Sport. I'm very lucky as I've been exempt from French, which also means I'm able to sleep in for an extra hour on Friday mornings! Other students in my class also take extra lessons for particular instruments and languages! Talk about a broad selection of subjects. I was told the course I'm doing had a lot of maths (3 x 45 mins a week) but when compared to the 6 x 70mins and week in

did at home, the maths really isn't that heavy! It also seems strange to think they said that even though I'm doing more German than any other subject. Anywhoo. A bit about the school system here in Switzerland. It's all very confusing as each Kanton (state, but rather a lot smaller, rather like a very, very small shire when compared to Australia) has its own system of schooling. This means that some high school have 6 years, other 4. At my school I'm in year 3 (out of 4) but the NZ gal in the school next to mine (not even a fence separates the two schools, some of the corridors even join) is in year 4 (out of 6) even though the kids in her class are the same age as the ones in mine. Very confusing! (*I'm glad you stopped there, I was confused enough for one day! Ed.*) The way that school works here is that you don't pick your subjects individually, rather you pick a course. And depending on what course you want to do depends on what school you go to. If you want to do an apprenticeship then the type of school you go to is different to the type that I attend, called a Gymnasium. (This is a good idea as then you only get kids at the academic schools who want to be there to learn which means no disruptive kids in class) Within the Gymnasium system, different schools specialise in different areas such as art and music, languages or science.

I've been told my course is economics based even though I only do one more lesson of economics than I do of each of the sciences. My class has the same students in it all the time and they have been together for the past 2.5 years that they have been attending the school. This makes it easier to a) find my classrooms as I just follow the crowd, and b) get to know people and names as they are always the same. I've been very lucky with the class I've been put into for a variety of reasons. Firstly there are only 6 girls all of whom are really nice which makes getting to know them a whole lot easier.

Secondly all the boy are also very nice and mature. Thirdly is the fact that one of the girls was in Sydney last year for exchange also so her English is good and she knows what its like to be an exchange student. There is also a guy whose mum is an American, which means his English is perfect, though he sounds American. And apart

from these two, everyone else also speaks REALLY good English as do the teachers. However this is a bit of a draw back as I'm not being forced to speak German.

On the topic of German. I'm doing ok, as I can understand mostly what is being said to me one on one but I'm still not very good at talking myself.

I'm totally useless trying to understand a group conversation and find it hard to understand one person talking to me when there are other convos going on. Surprisingly I find it easiest to talk to Emma (the NZ girl), I think this is because she also talks slowly and has the same vocab range as me doesn't mind when I interrupt to ask what a word is in German. What makes it more difficult is that the spoken language here is Swiss German but the official language (used for announcement on public transport, anything in writing, TV shows and spoken in school and at anything remotely official) is German. So its all a bit complicated but I'll just keep plodding on. The weather here at the moment, I've been told is 6 weeks early. It's been pretty rainy with a couple of hours of sun in the middle of the day. I know in oz we are always complaining about the lack of rain but after a week of constant rain it gets pretty annoying! Especially when it's also cold and I want to go for a walk! But at least it's better than the freezing snow I suppose! Not that I'm complaining, its very interesting experiencing all the different weather here. Another thing that continues to amaze me is how green the grass is. And it's not yet at its height of greenness! And we haven't had any big thunderstorms like we have at home in summer, everyone likes a big thunderstorm every once in a while!

But your all probably don't care about the weather! So onto what I've been up to.

I visited a glass making factory with my family called Glasi. We went through this cool multimedia presentation about the history of glass and the factory. It was very cool although it was all in German! A part of the presentation was then being able to watch the glass blowers working in the factory. It was so interesting to see how the different glass pieces are made and to actually see the molten glass. I was also fortunate enough to

blow my own glass ball which now takes pride of place in my room, that day for lunch I also tried a bit of Bettina's (my host mum) meal, which was raw mince. Surprisingly it tasted ok. Then that night for dinner we had fondue (no not chocolate but cheese!) this was also very good.

There is a small mountain near Zurich called the Utliberg from which you can see all of Zurich plus the lake, the towns on the lake and also the Alps in the background. I've been up there twice, once with my host family and once with people from school. With my host family I was able to try a traditional Swiss pastry called a nussgipfeli, or in English a nut croissant. Which is a croissant (though it's made with less butter) filled with a very sweet almond filling. So very, very, very good!

On the 9th of Feb it was my 18th B'Day which was surprisingly awesome!

Thank you so much to all the people who sent me emails and msgs, you all really helped to make my day &#61514; it was the last day of my German language course so we didn't have any work to do! All my exchange student friends were really awesome, buying me pressies, helium balloons and the likes. My teacher also brought along a typical Swiss cake for us to share (I was sung happy b'day in English, German, Swiss German and South African!) then that night all of my exchange buddies came over to my house for a 'party'. We had so much fun and laughed our heads off. I think my host parents thought we were a little strange! My family was so excellent; they really put a big effort in for me. It was also very cool that the boys handmade my gifts, a mug decorated with markers and this plastic stuff by Timmy and a pencil tin and letter holder by Alex. And in addition to everything my host parents did to get ready for the party and the huge quantity of food they bough, they also gave me an I-station for my iPod so I could have music in my room! It was so fun that night all singing along to high school musical!

The weekend after my b'day I went on a Rotary exchange student weekend in Grindelwald. It was so much fun as we stayed in the town's nuclear



bomb shelter! We went ice skating and schlitten (like tobogganing) it was the greatest fun ever!

Then the week after that (can you tell I'm going through my diary?!) I had holidays. It was good to be at home and to relax after the first few hectic weeks. I didn't really do much other than to go shopping and have a sleepover at Emma's. That was cool to do something normal and like what I'd do with friends at home.

In my second week of school holidays I went skiing with my family!!

We were in a town in the Alps called Riederalp. It was a very quaint little town. The only way to get there was by cable car and in the town cars were forbidden. This meant that everyone just skied everywhere! On the Sunday, Eric (my Host dad) gave me a quick lesson in the morning and I was doing ok but then I kept falling over so I gave up. It must have been really funny to see this tall girl in the Kinder Club having to duck her head on the ski ramp so as not to hit it on the arch way! Then from the Monday to the Friday I had a daily skiing class for three hours. Usually I was so tired after the lesson I just went home and slept! My class was really nice as was my teacher. We were a bit of an interesting mix as the teacher was Swiss; one half was German and the other half from Holland. The common language was English even though I was the only natural speaker! However we had lots of fun! On the last day my family took me up a mountain to a restaurant that was on the top. It had excellent views to look out on as you ate your meal.

(By the way, I could see the Matterhorn, the mountain on the Tobblorone box, from my balcony. It really is pointless trying to explain how good the view was, it's simply something you have to experience.) There was also this really funky 'beach' there. Complete with deck chairs and loud beach music.

Rather funny to see people in ski clothes sitting on deck chairs sipping coffee (with alcohol in it) in the snow, the only problem with this experience was to get down you had to ski! In the beginning I tried but after a few painful falls and sliding down a HUGE slope on my back with skis dragging behind (and that was the slope Bettina

was filming to show my skiing expertise!) I was a little too scared to keep skiing down the steep slopes so I took off the skis and went down on my bottom instead! I assure you, it's just as fun! From falling so many times, by the end of the week I had (and still have!) a huge purple bruise on my hip as well as some pretty impressive ones on my legs. (*As long as it's not the ego that's bruised, you're doing great! Ed.*) On the night I got back from skiing I went to another exchange student's 18th birthday party. It was so good to see all of my friends again as I had only really been around my family for the past week. We went out to Zurich for a bit which was pretty good but I'm still not used to having smoking in restaurants and bars so I found it all a little claustrophobic.

Then on the Monday I started school, which you've heard all about already.

On the Wednesday (I have no school on Wednesdays) I went to the swimming pool (indoor) with some people from my class. It's so strange to go to a pool wearing 3 coats and a scarf! That in itself was an experience as here they are a lot more open about nudity. All the girls just got changed into their bikinis together in the open. There was only one private change room... which I was vacating!!!! (*Vacating or occupying? Ed.*)

So it's all been very good of course I have times when I'm home sick and really miss everybody but like I said, I just make sure I keep busy. I've been slowly gaining weight, a combination of very tasty chocolate and bread, a host mum who is an awesome cook, always being hungry (I have no idea why!) and a lack of exercise. But I'm just going to enjoy it, as my sister said, your only here once and when I get home I'm only going to wish I'd eaten more of it!

Well must go as I do believe I've been typing for hours! I pray you are all well and having fun. I love to hear what you're all up to so please feel free to write us an email (or even better snail mail). I don't want to return home in 10 months and not have any idea what you did for the past year!

Love you all and miss you dearly, Love

*Caitlin*

### Clémentine - my mind changes all the time!



**Clémentine Henry**  
reporting for **Colfontaine-  
Borinage Rotary Club,**  
Belgium

Dateline: - February, 2007

Location: - **Surfers Paradise Rotary Club,**  
Australia

Being an exchange student is quite annoying sometimes. My mind changes all the time and it drives me crazy. I should stop thinking about things from Belgium and what I'm going to do later... and there are all these limits you can't go through and these obligations you have to keep and all those things you don't agree with but you can't do much against it. The way an exchange year can transform you is totally amazing. It can teach you things you didn't have any ideas about. I hope come back more mature and a bit different (but I don't really believe that I've changed!).  
(*Wanna Bet! Ed.*)

*Clémentine*

### Esther – a really big challenge!



**Esther Crothers** reporting  
for **Grafton Midday  
Rotary Club, Australia**

Dateline: - February, 2007

Location: - **Marenes/  
Oleron Rotary Club,**  
France

It is fantastic!!!! Experiencing a new country culture school family life everything is so new and so different it is fantastic learning that people so close yet so far can be so different yet so similar... A really big challenge is learning the language and trying to communicate though it is challenge you face every day and slowly but surely diminishes... it's challenging being away from home also but

being in a family life on exchange makes it so much easier in the almost 2 months I have been here I have become really close to my host family they are like another family to me!!!! It is excellent!!!! (*Youth Exchange is somewhat special that way! Ed.*)

Thankyou for such an amazing opportunity!!!!

*Esther*

### Eva - I just feel comfortable!



**Eva Willimsky** reporting  
for **Furtwangen Triberg  
Rotary Club, Germany**

Dateline: - February, 2007

Location: - **Ballina on  
Richmond Rotary Club,**

Australia

The longer I'm in Australia for the less I want to go home. In the meantime I'm thinking that the hardest part of the whole year is not leaving Germany, or any problems or homesickness in Australia but to leave this wonderful country and all the people that I became friends with. I also will miss surfing a lot. It is so much fun and I'm doing it as much as I can. And I will miss Ballina, I'm missing this town and my friends here already after one weekend I was away. The second hardest part is probably to leave the host families every time after you got to know and love them. Every time it feels like you get pulled out of something that is nearly like your home and that you belong to. The first day at the new family is always as if I got thrown into cold water and I just feel uncomfortable. I always promised myself to visit my last host family every day. I haven't been homesick after the first couple of month but every time I need to move to my next host family I feel homesick. Not for my German home but for my last Australian home.

This feeling never stayed for more than a week because I get "distracted" by lots of nice trips and activities and every family is lovely in a different way so I become friends with my new host parents and their way to live. It is amazing that it takes me only a few days to get into my new host

family and to stop being sad about leaving the last one. I think this is because an exchange is too good, too exciting and too much fun to be sad.

Every single weekend I meet lots of people, either friends of my host family, Rotary member and their families or my own friends and the weekends are also good to see other exchange students. Always something exciting is happening for me, a trip to another town, water skiing, a motorbike tour and lots of other things. At night I usually fall into my bed like a stone, completely exhausted - but it is not too hard to get up early in the mornings to go surfing since only fun and leisure activities and conversations and socialising are tiring me out so that it also gives me heaps of positive energy. I can not think of one weekend there was nothing to do and even if the weather is terrible there are still many activities I get taken to or I organise myself.

During the week I also have lots of "action" because I'm doing so many sporting activities before and after school like Squash, Volleyball, Touch Football and surely lots of surfing.

The exchange student camp in Stanthorpe was a very big highlight of my whole year in Australia. It was just great to spend 5 days with the other students. It was a good opportunity to get to know better everybody and develop more and deeper friendships. I laughed a lot and had fun every day. But I also learned much about orientating in the bush, using a compass and reading maps, first aid, wine producing and I got taught other language by the other students.

I have been in Australia for 8 month now so over two third are over.

When I first came here I had the dream to speak English perfectly by the time I leave but I kind of gave up this illusion since I know that I will always keep making mistakes when I speak English and it also is impossible for me to loose my strong accent. Sometimes I come into a shop and after three words I spoke I get asked if I am a tourist.

But I also know lots of people when I walk through town so I rather feel like a local than like a tourist.



My exchange will stay as exciting as it was until now and the next three month will be full with travelling. I will go to Tasmania, on Safari, to Hamilton Island and Melbourne and visit the Blues Festival in Byron Bay.

I wish I was an exchange student for the rest of my life.

*Erin*

### Greg - an interesting month!



**Greg Rulfs** reporting for **Surfers Paradise West Rotary Club, Australia**

*Dateline:* - February, 2007

*Location:* - **Mazatlan A.C Rotary Club, Mexico**

It has been an interesting month in Mazatlan.

It seems like I have been in Mexico for a lot longer than I have but at the same time, the time seems to go so quickly and a month just rolls by.

Being an exchange student here is difficult some of the time but also has its rewards. A lot of the time you are assumed to be an American Tourist (who are not so popular with the locals) and that's not a problem if you can put up with people calling out to you on the street and Bartering each time you get into a taxi so you don't have to pay some outrageous amount to go down the road. At the same time people who know you are a student here and can speak Spanish they are very nice people, happy to be your friend and eager to find out things about where you come from. Rotarians and their families have been especially accommodating.

The challenging part of exchange for me is mentally pushing yourself to go on when you feel like you have tried as hard as you can. (*Good, you'll find that the harder you push yourself, the easier it becomes! Ed.*) Usually this is rewarding but sometimes it just builds up again and you have to do the same thing over and over until you can find peace in something. Part of it is just getting your Head around the fact that you are

here for so long and that there is a lot of time ahead. I feel like it will be easier when I begin to realise how quickly the time passes and then I will probably take more advantage of opportunities.

This month I have been able to start surfing over here. I did it a lot in Australia and I have been hanging out to hit the water. Through this I have been able to make a few friends and begin to feel more accepted here. I have made friends at school too which is hard sometimes because of the language difficulty, But that will pass in time, and they are also interested in knowing about me and where I come from. They are also happy just to accept me into their group at school (although it is a very small school) and help make me a part of things there. The exchange students here have also been very good at showing me around and helping me become familiar with the culture and the language.

They are the ones who put in a lot of effort to teach me Spanish as well as becoming very good friends to me. The Mazatlan carnival was 2 weekends ago and was a really great thing to be apart of. Thousands of people fill the streets for 5 or 6 days of parades, music, parties, dancing etc. It is a very hectic time but the locals love it and so do all the tourists who come from all over to see it. Like anything my exchange so far has been a mixture of ups and downs but I know that in the end it will be a rewarding experience.

*Greg*

### Isaac - many changing moods!



**Isaac Dufficy** reporting for **Maclean** Rotary Club, Australia

*Dateline:* - February, 2007

*Location:* - **Dielsdorf** Rotary Club, Switzerland

So far I have noticed I go through many changing moods. I can be on top of the world one minute and kind of home sick the next. My advice is to ride the highs and keep busy during the lows like talk to host brother or ask if u can help with woteva ur host parents are

doing. *(I like this lad! He gets to the meat of the situation. Good advice for those who actually take advice! Ed.)*

*Isaac*

### James - I talk too fast!



**James Barnes** reporting for **Ballina** Rotary Club, Australia

*Dateline:* - February, 2007

*Location:* - **Viitarsaari** Rotary Club, Finland

It is a sweet experience to be here, to be so different to everyone. Challenges would just be the language here, it has been kinda hard to learn really good and hard to talk to people when they are shy to talk or can't speak English. But I just laugh at it when they can't understand me and how I talk too fast for them.

*James*

### Jessica – I've been here 4 weeks!



**Jessica Hoey** reporting for **Ballina-on-Richmond** Rotary Club, Australia

*Dateline:* - February, 2007

*Location:* - **Gannat** Rotary Club, France

I have been in France for 4 weeks and can't believe how fast it has gone! I have experienced so many different things. I saw snow for the first when I arrived, I have learnt how to make crepes and cook pizza on a wood fire. My host families have shown me around Paris which was amazing and well as the local area and took me to a concert in Clermont. If it snows again I hope to be able to go skiing or snowboarding. The biggest challenge so far has been language, I don't speak French very well but with the help of my host family I am learning. School is fun the teachers and students are really nice, although I can't understand most of the lessons. There is an exchange student from Brazil

in my class so she is able to translate for me. When I learn French I hope to be able to learn another language at school. I am having an awesome time, thank you to the Rotary and the Ballina-on-Richmond club for giving me this opportunity.

*Jessica*

### Katherine – I'm learning German!



**Katherine Browning** reporting for **Surfers Paradise Rotary Club, Australia**

**Dateline:** - February, 2007

**Location:** - **Luisenhof Rotary Club, Germany**

For the past couple of weeks I have really been experiencing frustrations with the language. I was feeling quite negative about it and thinking that I would never be able to speak in a way that is grammatically correct. So I have enrolled myself in a German speaking course. Initially I expected it to be a crash-course that would last for a few weeks. In actual fact it is an intensive course that runs for two hours per night, Monday-Thursday... until... and this is the big part... JULY! So even though it is a lot of work... I'm looking forward to being able to speak properly when I'm finally finished it! Also my host club is very supportive and are paying half of the fees for me.

Apart from my frustrations with the language I am not having any other real problems. The students and teachers at my school are very friendly and my host family is absolutely lovely. I feel as though I have fitted in very well and get along great with all of them.

The night life in Hannover is also good and my school is walking distance from the city centre/ Hauptbahnhof... which is great for shopping... which I have been doing a fair bit of... (i.e. every day as school finishes for me at 1:30 every day!) Also, school starts at 8:00am three mornings per week and 10:00am two mornings per week. But in reality it turns out that more like four mornings a week begin at 10:00... as classes are often simply

cancelled! It's so crazy! In my second week at school, after wandering around trying to find my class for about 20 minutes... I was informed that the class had been cancelled... and that most of the students were down the road in the café... drinking coffee... WITH THE TEACHER. Also I had a sports lesson one day and when we were half way through the teacher said... 'hmm you can all just go now I don't feel like teaching anymore.' So we did... Crazy... but hey, I'm not complaining.

I think that's all to report for now... everything's well!

*Katherine*

### Kaye - best year of my life!



**Kaye Titmarsh** reporting for **Boonah Rotary Club, Australia**

**Dateline:** - February, 2007

**Location:** - **Charlottenlund Rotary Club, Denmark**

I love being an exchange student!!!!

Denmark is the best!

I'm absolutely having the best year of my life! I love it so much; I've had so many wonderful and exciting experiences that I hardly have the time to write them all down. But thank you so much for giving me this opportunity! (*I don't want to rain on your parade, but take the time to write them down; you'll appreciate it later in life as look back over this experience. Ed.*)

*Kaye*



**Laura - time has gone so quickly!**

**Laura Priest** reporting for **Ashmore Rotary Club, Australia**

*Dateline:* - February, 2007

*Location:* - ?? Rotary Club, USA

This month has gone so quickly, and looking back at all I have done - it seems so unreal! I have been to many places and seen many things and met many new and lovely people. I've never experienced something as challenging and at the same time as great as this month. I previously had some problems with my host brother, but now things are going fantastic - he treats me well and we hang out regularly, with his friends.

I love the people here, I finally feel a part of the school and I am not missing home as much. I have kept myself busy and because of that, I have gained a lot of experience also. I love going to the Rotary club meetings, the dinners are exceptional and the company is just as fantastic! The snow has started to melt and I am anticipating spring and all that comes with it, including some warmer weather! I have had a great month!

I stayed with a family in Connecticut for the winter break, where I met up with an old school friend from Australia. We all went to Niagara Falls together and it was freezing cold, yet definitely a beautiful sight, even in winter! Following this I went and saw Justin Timberlake in concert, I had VIP tickets and it was an amazing experience to see my favourite singer and be so close to him, I touched his trousers and it was the best! That was definitely my winter break highlight. While in Connecticut I helped look after a two and three year old and it was soooo much fun! We took them sledding while the parents were working and it was just the time of my life, I enjoyed myself thoroughly, especially travelling to New York City! That was an amazing amazing sight! I went to the statue of liberty, empire state, ground zero, central park and had time to do lots and lots of shopping!

When I got home, I realized how much I loved my host family, and I knew they missed me too! I've

really become part of the family, simply because I was outgoing from the beginning, instead of moping around and keeping to myself, although at times I wanted too - but that was the key! (*I'm pleased that you're really experiencing your exchange! Ed.*) I am finally content with my surroundings and I have so much more to look forward too this year, I am so privileged to experience being here in USA and I realize that now. I am so thankful that my parents gave me this honour, I can't wait to see what happens next month!

*Laura*

**Lloyd - I'm speaking Swenglish!**

**Lloyd Graydon** reporting for **Glen Innes Rotary Club, Australia**

*Dateline:* - February, 2007

*Location:* - **St Petri Rotary Club, Sweden**

Hej hej everyone, the first week of the exchange has been an awesome experience. I have been going to school for 4 days now, and it's been great meeting new people and making new friends, and overcoming all the difficulties in communication. For the past week, it's been excellent I've seen snow, rain, extremely cold, and lots and lots of ice. It's all still feeling a tad surreal but it's all going to hit in sooner or later.

It's been a great experience so far, as I've taken an active part of spectating the extremely popular and crazed sport of European Handball. The local team has been good for about 30 years, so in the small town of Ystad, of which I am staying in is absolutely nuts about handball. The language is very very difficult, yet I am managing to pick it up rather well, I mean I'm starting to understand bits and pieces here and there but I guess that's what happens when you're fully submerged in the language. It should be good next week I'm going on a language camp 150km north of Ystad and hopefully after a full week of language school I'll be able to start talking and having very limited



conversations. At the moment I'm speaking Swenglish, a mix between English and Swedish.

*Lloyd*

### Morgan - today is a snow day!



**Morgan Johnsen**  
reporting for **Nerang**  
Rotary Club, Australia

*Dateline: - February 15, 2007*

*Location: - Windsor*

*Rotary Club, USA*

It is freezing cold here. Today is a snow day which means that the buses don't come to take us to school :) I love school. It is so different yet interesting. They are very patriotic and sing the anthem every morning. Then we listen to the notices through an intercom which u can also talk through too. It's so cold in the mornings because they turn off the heat over the weekend so the school is always cold. I'm taking parenting classes only because that was the only subject left :) and gym and drama which is fun. Everyone is so nice but ask the stupidest questions. I've got them all from do you speak Australian? And do you have kangaroos in your backyard? My favourite is do you ride kangaroos to school and I'm not coming to Australia because u live in the outback and can get eaten by spiders :)

People here talk to me just to hear my accent and make me say things over and over like jumper because they say sweater and things like that it's so funny.

I went to Florida last week. We went 2 a retirement park but it was still fun everyone was so active it's amazing.

Nothing else has been happening just having a good time.

Hope all is well in Australia



*Morgan*

### Ryan – walking in the falling snow!



**Ryan Burton-Ree**  
reporting for **Stanthorpe**  
Rotary Club, Australia

*Dateline: - February, 2007*

*Location: - Braine-le-compte*  
Rotary Club,  
Belgium

I am still really enjoying my self. Three weeks ago, it snowed for two days. It was indescribable; we woke to find everything covered. It was as if someone had come along with a giant flour sift. It was incredible walking to my bus stop in the falling snow in the tiny, narrow cobblestone streets of the 900yr old village. The atmosphere was overwhelming. After waiting for 20mins huddled in front of the doors of the old cathedral in the blowing snow. We soon learned that the bus was unable to make it into the village. So a group of about eight of us formed into a single file and tramped through the streets in search of the bus. The paths were very slippery and steep in parts and the snow was whispering down very rapidly. It was a case of the young helping the old, arm in arm. We had finally reached the out skirts of the village. Even though I could only speak basic French, the members of the group felt as if everyone was an old mate. After a 2hr bus trip of slipping and sliding, which should have been only 15mins, I finally made it to school. I will never forget this one experience. (*I suppose you got into trouble for being late as well! Ed.*)

I have also been attending the local ROTARACT meetings and been part of their activates in the community. (*All exchangees should consider Rotaract when they return home - it's great fun! Ed.*) Three weeks ago, I went to an orphanage with the group and we took the children out ice-skating and made them Crêpes for afternoon tea. We are also organising a massive party, which is to raise money for the local clubs and charities. Disappointingly, there will not be a Euro Trip this year. The district had called a meeting to discuss further possibilities of other trips. Now they are thinking of having four

separate tours to Greece, Italy, Spain and Prag which I am sure will be just as exciting.

On the weekend, another exchange student from South Australia, her host family and me visited Brussels. It is an incredible city filled with stunning architecture, grand buildings and many statues made of bronze and gold. The atmosphere was incredible; I have never seen so many people gathered in one narrow street before. The little cafes and pubs have an indescribable feeling that cannot be told, but only experienced. I visited the Grande Plaza, Manneken-pis and ate my first real Belgian Waffle.

This week in Belgium is a holiday for la Carnival. It is a massive carnival where all districts from Belgium come together dressed in costume. On Sunday my host, family and I went to la carnival Bianch. The town is very small surrounded by broken walls from the 3rd century. People were everywhere crammed into the narrow cobblestone streets dancing and playing music. I was also lucky enough to be privately invited to follow the Jeal (The jeal are a group of men in traditional costume dancing continual rhythm of a drum), which commenced at 3am and finished that afternoon. It was an incredible experience, which is even rare for a Belgian to experience.

*Ryan*

### Samuel - I am missing everyone!



**Samuel Brown** reporting for **Grafton Rotary Club, Australia**

*Dateline: - February, 2007*

*Location: - ?? Rotary Club, Brazil*

Ola friends, fellows and followers

First up I am missing everyone, and I mean everyone even Carson Galloway and Brett McDonald but it is in a good way. As in I'm not letting it get in the way of having good time.

Brasil is about to go crazy for a few days as Carnaval starts tomorrow after everyone finishes

work, everyone is very excited even though the predicted weather is rain. (*That sort of makes one somewhat homesick doesn't it, everyone being excited about the prospect of rain? Ed.*) On Friday night we are going to the Samba-do: a samba procession in São Paulo then on Saturday we are heading to Rio De Janeiro. I cannot express how exciting this is but I know its going to be amazing fun. I've heard many stories of people not sleeping for the whole 5 days of public holiday so I'm guessing it's going to be a huge party. It will also be my sisters first time in Rio which is just making everyone else more excited.

Since I arrived I have done a lot of things, one of them being a trip to the football. I am what they call a São Paulino or supporter of the team São Paulo. The game wasn't a big one with São Paulo getting home quite easily but the stadium is huge and the singing and dancing was awesome.

I am also the proud owner of two football shirts my Brasil national one and a São Paulo one. The support for football is bordering on scary. For example last Sunday we were driving through the city and my host mum made me take my São Paulo shirt off in the car because they just beat the 2nd biggest team in Brasil Corinthians (largest is São Paulo) and she was afraid when we stopped at the lights we would get car jacked due to my shirt. I suppose the sight of me sitting in the car with no shirt on would have scared off any possible car jackers (my muscles if you don't get the joke.) (*I'm glad you explained that, I was afraid I'd have to! Ed.*) However despite this most Brasilians are very friendly and welcoming.

I also went into downtown São Paulo a week ago which was amazing, they have some HUGE chapels (and I mean bigger than St Pauls in London) and they are so lovely and ornate. I also saw monks singing in Latin in one of the churches. I have also been to church with my family but it fails to keep my attention as the language problem makes normally boring sermons even worse.

I started school on the 5th and school here is very different. For one thing I have to 'study' physics, chemistry and biology this is amazingly hard, especially since I don't understand what the teacher is saying. For once in my life maths is my

best subject! Luckily for me I am what they call a hearing student all I have to do is turn up and learn Portuguese. Which I guess leads me onto the next subject my language. Well it's getting better, I can now have very slow and fractured conversations with people but they are still conversations in Portuguese. I have had two very big helpers with my Portuguese: my sister Marcela and my best friend at school Z (Eliza.) They are both very patient and helpful which has been great. *(How things improve as your language skills improve will surprise you! Ed.)*

I have been making friends here; I have met some of Marcella's amiga's and since I started school I have been meeting others. At the moment my best friend would be Eliza, (the one I mentioned above.) She is a very nice girl who dreams of one day living in Australia. I have also met a few boys whose names I can't remember, chances are one is Raphael (there are 4 in my class) and I know one is called Diego. I was meant to go to their house to play guitar and football last Friday but I had to go to Rotary.

Just some general notes about Brasil if any of you decide to travel here. The drivers are crazy, the stopping distance is about 50cm when the car is travelling 80km/h ALWAYS check the language a film will be in before paying for your ticket, (I went and saw the movie Babel which was... interesting as the subtitles were in Portuguese and the language spoken was not much English.) Jump class is fun but when you're the only guy in an aerobics class and you get out of time you look very stupid from the side and in that big mirror they put in front of you.

Finally the restraint Outback is not Australian, unless you're American and think that cactus is as Australian as Brazilian beer.

Well I guess I'll email you about carnival and tell you about that afterwards. I am missing you all so very very much but not so much that it is wrecking my good time over here.

Oh and finally I'm opening a competition to all my now uni student friends about who has the biggest party next week, me at Carnaval or you at O week. It's on...



Love from

*Samuel*

### Laura – I went to Boston City!



**Laura Priest** reporting for **Ashmore Rotary Club, Australia**

**Dateline:** - February, 2007

**Location:** - ?? Rotary Club, USA

Hello Family, Friends and

Rotary!

Just thought I'd drop you a message to tell you about my weekend in which I went to Boston City!

My family and I drove 6 hours starting on Friday afternoon to get to the great windy city because my host parents had tickets to a wine conference. Its very big on its Irish heritage— - there were a dozen Irish bars in one street alone.

There were about 14 of us from Hammondsport who drove out together to enjoy a nice relaxing weekend. My host brother Chris and I didn't go to the conference obviously but he did take me around Boston on the Freedom Trail - Most of the Boston National Historical Park sites are connected by the Freedom Trail. Recognized as a National Recreation Trail, the 3-mile trail is a walking tour of 16 sites and structures of historic importance in downtown Boston and Charlestown. It was a lot of fun! So on Saturday morning Chris and I got up bright and early and stepped out of the Hilton into the windy city... my gosh it was cold! I couldn't feel my face for half the day! We saw a lot, from historical buildings (Which you shall see in my pictures below), to the markets, famous gravesites, Fenway park, and lots and lots of shopping! I had the most fun in one day you could possibly have! We started at Quincy Market - a famous market full of the tastiest gourmet foods you could possibly imagine - and also providing the best seafood the country has to offer (too bad I hate seafood). But the life in this market was overwhelming - there were

traders waving their fish around singing “get your fish-everyone have a taste of this juicy fish”. It was so great!

Chris and I then started on the freedom trail... the freedom trail is marked out by red cobblestones in the middle of the street and when you need to cross the road you just follow the red painted line... it was a lot of fun! We walked past many beautiful buildings and a big park called the Common where I walked on a frozen over pond! It was definitely an experience! The famous gravesite was a lot of fun, I saw the grave of Benjamin Franklin, John Hancock, and many other American history makers in which I knew nothing about, but Chris was smart and pointed out special things that certain people did. He taught me a lot about what happened at which historical buildings, so amongst all the shopping I became a very learned young woman!

We walked until we could walk no more, with shopping bags full of clothes and souvenirs in our hands, and went back to our hotel where we would get ready to go for dinner. We went to this fantastic and famous seafood restaurant known as King Fish, which was 5 minutes walk from the Hilton, and my gosh! It was freeeeeezing! No snow, just wind, and it almost killed me! I was thankful to finally step into the restaurant... which was decorated with glass fish hanging from the ceiling and the booths were shaped as large pearl shells - it was a beautiful site. The restaurant was wonderful. The adults were already extremely tipsy from their big day at the wine conference, so it was hilarious at the miniscule things they would joke about! I was completely wrecked after dinner that I just had to go back to the hotel. The walk home was wonderful—we went past Quincy market which was all closed for the day, and the trees were all lit up by fairy lights - it definitely felt like Christmas. Once back at the hotel I crashed on the insanely oversized beds with my host brother... we watched Borat on the television (so hilariously funny), while the adults went to an 11pm show at the comedy club. It was truly an amazing day; I can't get over how beautiful Boston is. I want to spend a week there - to do a guided tour on the freedom trail, ride on horse and carriage, skate on the pond and eat cinnamon scrolls and gourmet foods - I want to

do it all over again! I am so thankful my family took me - it was a great way to start the beautiful month of February, in such a beautiful city!

Here are some photos from my short time in Boston: (*Laura's photos are in the Photo Gallery. Ed.*)

1. It's the whole group outside our hotel! Very fun! And a beautiful hotel!
2. Me outside the gates of the Massachusetts state house... The State House was designed by Charles Bulfinch as a replacement for the Old State House. It was built on the property of John Hancock's farm house. Hancock had died in 1793 deeply in debt and his heirs sold the property to pay off his debts. The cornerstone was laid on July 4, 1796 and the building was completed on January 11, 1798. The original foundation of Hancock's home can be found in the basement.
3. The Grave of Benjamin Franklin - the gravesite was like in the middle of the big city... really weird and somewhat creepy.
4. My feet next to the sign starting the Boston Freedom Trail - where my big day's adventure began! (*I thought the red toes were quite smart. Ed.*)
5. Me outside Old City Hall... was home to its city council from 1865 to 1969. It was one of the first buildings in the French Second Empire style to be built in the United States and is now one of few remaining. After the building's completion, the Second Empire style was used extensively elsewhere in Boston and for many public buildings in the United States, such as the Old Executive Office Building in Washington, D.C. As well as other city halls in Providence, Baltimore and Philadelphia.
6. Me sitting on the donkey outside the old city hall... signifying the Democratic Party, with two bronze footprints in front of it labeled “stand in opposition” and a plaque explaining the origin of the donkey as the party's symbol... but I can't remember what it symbolizes now.
7. This is of me outside a large church across the road from the prudential centre... Boston's tallest



building... its very beautiful and big full of shopping (not as tall as the Q1 though)

8. Me by the wharf... where the Boston seafood magic happens - goodie!

9. Me near some good ole Boston graffiti... I tried to look deep with my woodchopper's hat - I don't think it worked... I don't look badass at all! (And I thought it was all your hard work on the wall! Ed.)

10. Me outside the Hilton after a long day of walking!

11. Me and Chris about to go through the revolving door - I walked straight into the glass of the door because it revolves the different way too Australia... I got very payed out - it was funny but!

12. Me and the city behind me... just before I left - I was a bit sad

13. I LOVE BOSTON!

There's so many more photos of like the Quincy market and of some really good break dancers and me outside the original CHEERS (the TV show) bar... but this email didn't permit me to upload that many.

So anyway! That was my weekend! It was fantastic! I am soon to be staying with my host auntie and uncle in Atlanta - they are hilarious... and ridiculously wealthy! And also I'm getting a visit from my friend Francesca waters from Brooklyn NYC... so there is a lot to look forward to!

New York life is going fine, I'm over school! But that's alright cos I've met some cool kids in my classes now, and I'm fitting in heaps good everywhere and so things are definitely looking up! Loving and thinking of you all!

LOVE!

P.S! Please email and let me know what you are all up to! I'm dying to know! I miss you like... heaps!



Laura

## Samuel - Carnaval!



**Samuel Brown** reporting for **Grafton Rotary Club, Australia**

**Dateline:** - February 14, 2007

**Location:** - ?? Rotary Club, Brazil

CARNAVAL!!!! Lets just describe it as when a whole country decides that jobs and normal life in general is over rated and that it would be a much better idea to just party for 4 or 5 days straight. First stop on my party was the São Paulo Sambadramo. There is no way to properly describe the colour, the dancers, the music, the entire crowd dancing, the skimpy bikinis and when I was asked to sum it up in Portuguese for a TV crew all I could manage was, Eu adora Carnaval, muito linda (I love Carnaval, its very beautiful.) Luckily they knew that I was a gringo (foreign) so I had novelty value. Sambadramo started at 11pm and finished at 8am, (5am for me because I'm weak) so sleep was, limited that night and was going to be low on most peoples priority list for the next few days.

Next stop on the carnival ride was Rio de Janeiro. Well I did all of the tourist things, saw the sugar loaf got a photo in front of the Christo Redemer, etc., but more importantly and funarily (I know I just made up a word) (And I left it in there, as I liked it! Ed.) I got to dance the night away on Rio's beautiful beaches, watch some of the most amazing samba dancing on earth. (Se este for heaven, a seguir eu quero permanecer! Ed.)

So the final verdict on Carnaval, well... when taken with a lot of caffeine is one of the greatest rides on earth.

Samuel



**Morgan - today is a snow day!**

**Morgan Johnsen** reporting for **Nerang Rotary Club, Australia**

**Dateline:** - February 15, 2007

**Location:** - **Windsor**

**Rotary Club, USA**

It is freezing cold here. Today is a snow day which means that the buses don't come to take us to school :) I love school. It is so different yet interesting. They are very patriotic and sing the anthem every morning. Then we listen to the notices through an intercom which u can also talk through too. It's so cold in the mornings because they turn off the heat over the weekend so the school is always cold. I'm taking parenting classes only because that was the only subject left :) and gym and drama which is fun. Everyone is so nice but ask the stupidest questions. I've got them all from do you speak Australian? And do you have kangaroos in your backyard? My favourite is do you ride kangaroos to school and I'm not coming to Australia because u live in the outback and can get eaten by spiders :)

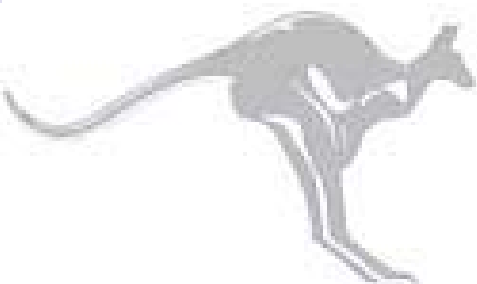
People here talk to me just to hear my accent and make me say things over and over like jumper because they say sweater and things like that it's so funny.

I went to Florida last week. We went 2 a retirement park but it was still fun everyone was so active it's amazing.

Nothing else has been happening just having a good time.

Hope all is well in Australia

*Morgan*

**Billie - really long school days!**

**Billie Mertens** reporting for **Tamborine Mountain Rotary Club, Australia**

**Dateline:** - February, 2007

**Location:** - **Verviers Rotary Club, Belgium**

No everyone has been super nice to me!! I was late for school the first couple of days because we couldn't get the timing right but now its all good we sorted it all out so it's all ok. I have a bit of trouble dealing with the really long school days I get soooo tired at night and headaches from concentrating so hard on learning the language but besides that its ok its all part of the experience learning how much these kids go to school and how much study they do its really amazing it makes Australians look so lazy ha-ha

*Billie*

**Bianca - any suggestions!**

**Bianca Brooks** reporting for **Robina Rotary Club, australia**

**Dateline:** - March, 2007

**Location:** - **Motosu Rotary Club, Japan**

I'm not really sure I have any of those this month.

Oh, my cat at home is dying, and I've been really really upset about it.

I'd like to the point I want to chuck it in and go home. So if anyone has any suggestions, they would be greatly appreciated.

*Bianca*



**Billie - it's so crazy!**

**Billie Mertens** reporting for **Tamborine Mountain Rotary Club, Australia**

*Dateline:* - March, 2007

*Location:* - **Verviers Rotary Club, Belgium**

Wow I can't believe I have been here for two months it's so crazy!!! It has gone by so super fast!!! But I have had good month schools so much better now because I can talk to people cause I now know some of the language haha! But changing families tonight so I'm bit scared I don't really feel that ready to change cause I have just started to feel like I fit in here but the family is super nice so should be ok I just got to back again bummer I'm really not good at packing lol! But yeah that's bout it from me!

*Billie*

**Emma - my favourite place... Paris!**

**Emma Wood** reporting for **Burleigh Heads Rotary Club, Australia**

*Dateline:* - March, 2007

*Location:* - **Flers Rotary Club, France**

J'adore la Paris!

Well! This month I went to what is now my favourite place... Paris! I went on the 13th of February (I think the 14th may have been a bit more romantic) with my host brother, Quentin, and dad, Wilfrid, and fell in love with it. It is absolutely amazing. All the old buildings and exclusive shops like Chanel and Yves Saint Laurent. Plus, of course, the magnificent sights such as L'Arc De Triomphe, the Louvre, Notre Dame and the Eiffel Tower.

One of the reasons I chose a European country was because I love the history they have; all the castles! On the drive to Paris (which unfortunately started at 5.30 am) we drove through so many tiny villages, each with a beautiful

church from about the 12 century. There were also a few castles on the way, none of which compared to the Louvre though. I hadn't realised that the Louvre was actually a castle, and such a large one at that! It was incredible to look at and to think that a few hundred years ago it was home to royalty. Although the museum itself was closed, we were allowed into a section where we could see the foundations of the original castle (the existing castle was built during the Renaissance), dating back to the medieval ages on the 12th century. We were also able to see the pyramids outside which were great. Fans of the Da Vinci Code would have loved it!

All in all it was one of the best days I have had and I can't wait to go back!

*Emma*

**Greg - a beautiful place here!**

**Greg Rulfs** reporting for **Surfers Paradise West Rotary Club, Australia**

*Dateline:* - March, 2007

*Location:* - **Mazatlan A.C Rotary Club, Mexico**

Dear Rotary Friends of Gold Coast Central,

I apologise for the length of time it has been before I specifically wrote an email updating you on how my first few weeks have been on exchange in Mexico. I will write again soon. I am currently living in the city of Mazatlan which is a popular holiday destination particularly for American tourists. It is situated on the west coast of Mexico in the State of Sinaloa. I am sponsored by the Rotary Club of Mazatlan AC which holds its meetings on a Tuesday morning over breakfast.

It is a beautiful place here and I feel very lucky to be living in a place where people come from all over the world for holidays. It is probably similar to the Gold Coast but you tend not to appreciate things like this until you are removed from familiar surroundings and are able to look at things from a

new perspective. So far I have made a trip with Rotary to La Paz in Baja California and also to the nearby city of Culiacan. Both have given me an opportunity to see some of the Mexican countryside which is indeed very beautiful and different.

I am attending a University/high school called Tec Milenio which is only 2 blocks walk from my house. This makes it very easy to walk to and from school each day. I start at 7am and finish usually around 12 or 1pm. I am mostly in high school classes of Grammar, Mexican History and Computers but I sometimes join a University class. It is sometimes hard to just sit there for 6 hours and not understand much but I will learn to cope. I take Spanish classes 2 times each week and am learning very fast. I speak as much as I can with my family in Spanish which is a helpful. The other exchange students also help me to learn.

My family is fantastic, I am their first exchange student and their oldest son will be leaving for exchange to Australia in June. They are very good to me and help me and accept me into their family. They have given me many opportunities already to experience Mexican culture and are interested in showing me their way of life as well as learning mine in Australia.

The people in my school are also interested and are very friendly. It is hard at the moment to talk about anything too meaningful because of the language but that will come in time. Also the other exchange students are friendly and very helpful in introducing me to my new Country.

I have attached some photos of the city here mostly of the sunset because that's what this place is world famous for. (*Check out the Photo Gallery to see Greg's Photos. Ed.*) Also one of the Malecon at night which is the longest avenue in the world, one of a marina and one of the beaches. I hope you like them and they give you an idea of what its like over here.

I hope everything is going well in the life of the club and that you are all having a prosperous first few months of 2007, it all seems to be progressing so quickly.

I think of you often and I will write again soon,

*Greg*

### James – having way too much fun!



**James Barnes** reporting for **Ballina Rotary Club, Australia**

*Dateline:* - March, 2007

*Location:* - **Viitarsaari Rotary Club, Finland**

This month it hasn't really changed since February, still the language is a bit of a challenge but that's about it. Everything is going awesome, I have a great family, rad friends. Everything is amazing.

*James*

### Katherine – I feel like a local!



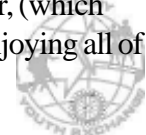
**Katherine Browning** reporting for **Surfers Paradise Rotary Club, australia**

*Dateline:* - March, 2007

*Location:* - **Luisenhof Rotary Club, Germany**

This month has absolutely flown by - I can't believe its report time again already! This has been a really good month. I am starting to settle in more and I know the city so well now that I actually feel like a bit of a 'local'. I've also made some really good friends from my class; who are very friendly and are always inviting me to do things with them.

Right now we have Easter holidays and the weather is great. It's actually warm enough to go outside in just jeans and a jumper. As the weather is warmer everyone is really active right now and doing things outside all the time. For instance, the other day I went for a 10 kilometre walk around the Herrenhauser Gardens in Hannover, (which are absolutely stunning). I am really enjoying all of



this outdoor activity as that is something I was starting to miss about Australia.

So everything here is going well, also my German is really improving and I can now watch TV and actually understand what's going on! Yay!  
(*Excellent, what a great milestone that is! Ed.*)

That's all for now,

*Katherine*

### Lloyd - my one month mark!



**Lloyd Graydon** reporting for **Glen Innes Rotary Club, Australia**

*Dateline:* - March, 2007

*Location:* - **St Petri Rotary Club, Sweden**

Hello Everyone!!!!

My one month mark has been hit, and it feels great. It feels great that my one month hump is over. In the first month I was faced with many challenges that have seemed to have gotten a lot better in the last week. A big challenge I was faced with, as I know the other exchange students in Sweden have faced, is that the Swedish people are very reserved, and do not initiate conversations, and compared to Australians are rude. But it has taken a month to get used to it, and now it seems normal. I went through a couple of weeks of feeling like nothing was working, that I was trying to get along, and nothing was happening at all. After "being accepted" by some people in my school, the rest has just fallen into place, I no longer find myself having nothing to do and it feels like I'm being smart with my time, and not just sitting around reading. (*Excellent, Ed.*)

Anyways, until next time, Lloyd Graydon.

*Lloyd*



### Vanessa – I don't want to leave!



**Vanessa Pire** reporting for **Esneux-Aywaille Rotary Club, Belgium**

*Dateline:* - March, 2007

*Location:* - **Jimboomba Rotary Club, Australia**

The time goes so fast... I don't want to leave. I really enjoy myself and thanks to some stories I understood that everything changes... it's the life and you have to take benefit of every single day! Four months left in Australia, I feel strange when I think about that. I remember the day when I arrived, my first Rotary meeting and also my first camp. This Stanthorpe camps was already the last one before the safari. It's just amazing!

I want to thanks the Rotary in Australia and my Rotary club in Belgium for letting me live what I live. It's a great opportunity that you offer to young people like me.

*Vanessa*

### Billie – no time to write!



**Billie Mertens** reporting for **Tamborine Mountain Rotary Club, Australia**

*Dateline:* - March 27, 2007

*Location:* - **Verviers Rotary Club, Belgium**

Hey sorry it's taken me so long for another group email and sorry it's just a group email!

Its funny I've been like busy and haven't had time to write but then when I actually do sit down to write the email I cant think of what to say and what I've done! ha-ha. (*You should try being a Magazine Editor for a Youth Exchange Program. Ed.*) Well the most exciting thing I've done recently is on the weekend I went to Amsterdam with my host mum and Jordon which was tons of fun! It is a really beautiful city lol and very liberal ha-ha but got to see so much! Its actually funny cause I went to places that I've

seen on like the great outdoors and never actually thought id ever go there but there I was lol I'm quite the loser ha-ha But yea visited the house of Anne Frank which was super cool, its funny when we read the book at school we found her rather weird and laughed at stuff that she had written, but being there was really like wow this actually happened to someone it was really sad and surreal they had so much footage of the concentration camps and stuff it was really sad some of the images that were shown and it was really moving its hard to believe so many people survived for so long in such a small space and the it was sotra for nothing cause they died anyway well not the father! And it was amazing how young she was and she was able to stay so upbeat even though she was going through something so horrific and they actually had the diaries there on display but they were in neederlanders (Dutch) so I couldn't read them. What else hmmm well went to the museum of Van Gogh rather cool he did some sweet pictures he was bit crazy but did some really pretty stuff that was cool although there were so many like 200 paintings in the one place wow crazy so my feet were rather sore that day lol We also took a boat cruise around the canals of Amsterdam soo super cool omg such an amazing city!!! Umm we went to the tulip fields so pretty...although there were actually more daffodils than tulips but hey we wont go there lol and we went to the beach but that was wasn't pretty they were like ohhhhh c'est beau c'est tres beau meaning its so beautiful but it really really wasn't the water was like a dirty brown and it was windy and it just wasn't a nice beach ha-ha aghhhh how I miss the proper beaches lol The night life of Amsterdam was sweet too there was so much happening everywhere and soooo many people alot of Americans wow they were everywhere lol they just changed the times here which is gonna be hard to get used to cause its 8:30 at night and its still light and I'm like tired lol cause I gotta get up at 7 which is like 6 man it crazy BLAH!!!!

It was exciting for me again last week cause it snowed sooooo much super cold but so cute its so surreal sitting inside and watching the snowflakes fall down over the buildings and the city ohhh soo pretty but all the belg are like aghhh

we hate the snow lol and I'm like oh its so pretty!!!!!! We had like 35 cm of snow which was like over ankle deep SWEET!!! Ha-ha

Um what else have I done... well went to my first carnival that was fun big floats and dancers and music and lights and CONFETTI ohhh so much confetti lol I even got to go on one of the floats for a little bit hehe fun stuff but there were some super bizarre costumes wow

Umm I'm changing families on Friday which I'm so not ready to do I cant believe I have been here 2 months already its gone sooooo fast ill be back there in no time ha-ha but I've just started to feel at home here and like just started to feel like fully comfortable and now I have to go and start all over again sort of so kinda gonna be hard but at least this time when I change ill be able to actually speak ha-ha but the family is fully nice they are taking me to the south of France for a week not next week but the week after so that'll be heaps of fun!!! And next week I'm going to Normandy in France for 4 days with all the exchange students here in Belgium so that should be exciting hehe

Umm I think that's it hmmm not really sure haven't really been that exciting just going to my French courses with lots of men from turkey who smell funny lol but its all good I'm the youngest there by sooo much its funny but it's funny cause they others are like old but ya can see how they were when they where in school like talked and mucked round and stuff it's so funny to see like old men like the ones who study then the ones who like just sit there and like the "cool kids" ha-ha funny stuff and then there's me ha-ha! (*Egads, the secret of old men has been discovered – they are just young boys at heart! Ed.*)

Ok well that's it from me!!!!

Miss ya all tons and bunches xoxox write back would love to here what ya up 2!!!

Mwah kisses and hugs live forever Billie xoxox stay safe have fun be good don't work to hard!!!



**Ashleigh – I made the news!**

**Ashleigh Luke** reporting  
for **Coomera Valley**  
Rotary Club, Australia

*Dateline:* - April, 2007

*Location:* - **Odense**  
**Hunderup** Rotary Club,  
Denmark

I was in the newspaper I will get my mum to email you the article (not that you will understand what it says.)

*Ashleigh*

**Billie - this emal is gonna ake me!**

**Billie Mertens** reporting  
for **Tamborine Mountain**  
Rotary Club, Australia

*Dateline:* - April, 2007

*Location:* - **Verviers** Rotary  
Club, Belgium

Hi again Well this emal is gonna ake me so long to write cause I just changed families and m new family has a belg computer and the key board is different all the letters and stuff r in different places lol man I just got the hang of a regular computer haha even then my typing was slow and painful lol. *(And I was going to ask if you had fat fingers? Ed.)*

Well as I said I just chnaged families and my second famiy is super nice I love them!!!! But I was so scared bout chnging it was really hard but it ok cause now I'm fine lol I was just being stupid lol. *(Just goes to show that there is nothing to fear, than fear itself! Ed.)*

So I just spent the last 4 days in Normandy France wit all the other exchange students in Belgium that wanted to go on it there were 50of us and I had a blast so much fun!! But I was rather cold actually it was bizarre cause it was nice and sunny but freezing cold and windy!!! but we still had fun... visited so much in thse days to they really packed in the days no resting for us poor students lol but nah it was good there was so

much history in the place it was cool we visited the beaches where the Americans and Canadians took back France from the Germans it was so moving and sad and went to the American cemetery, wow that was mind blowing it was the most beautiful land on the beach cliffs but really sad there were just rows and rows of crosses 9400 actually but we visited the German cemetery too and they were so different the atmosphere of the 2 were just completely opposite!! The German one was like dark and gloomy and American one was more celebrating the achievements of the soldiers I dunno hard to describe...

But yea we visited some beautiful churches and abbeys and baches fishing museums that was rather riveting ha-ha not um went to cider factory, cheese factory, bell making place ha-ha that was rather random and bizarre haha some islnd thing that was on The Great Outdoors that was really beautiful, lots of war memorials old towns ate los and lots of French pasteries lol but yea did more but I kinda dont got a memory an more lol but man a little advise for travelling people **DO NOT GO ON LONG BUS RIDES WITH SOUTH AMERICAN BOYS!!!!!!** you will not sleep and get headaches very quickly lol love them sweet kids but omg they do not stop singing haha one day they sand the same song over and over for 3 hours oooo boy and dont try take them on we made that mistake lol we tried to sing classic English songs lol yea we made it worse they just got louder lol but fun fun fun!!!

Well Sunday I'm going back to the south of France wit ,y family for a week so that'll be good they showed me pictures of where we are staying its so beautiful its in a mountain with loys of trees and the hose is the only thing on the mountain but its all good cause its got a swimming pool and ll be hot and we will be bush walking and stuff so hopefully I can loss my chocolate gut lol and become un pasty lol hahaha and today I'm going to Germany to go shopping so that'll be fun!!! and tomorrow going to the tennis the belg pros r having a game and my family thought they would take me so thats nice but I get so tired cause always doing so much I just need my sleep lol nah its all good but I'm bit bummed out cause I'm

missing the chocolate festival bugger!!!! But it's not like I need it lol!!!!

Well take care everyone!!!! I miss you all so much keep having fun don't work too hard always smile stay safe be good!!! oh and the lovely ozzies this weekend made me realise even more stuff that I miss lol mmm Milo and wheatbix yummmm haha and takeaway coffee that doesn't exist here in France we taught I coffee shop guy how to make a mocha haha how funny is that!!!

Well yea that's about it from me love ya all mwah and mum call me tomorrow morning my time thanks love ya!!

*Billie*

### Emma - !



**Emma Wood** reporting for **Burleigh Heads Rotary Club, Australia**

*Dateline: - April, 2007*

*Location: - Flers Rotary Club, France*

Last Sunday (April 1st) I went to Flers with my host family to see the car exhibition that the club organised. There were heaps of really nice cars (Ferraris, Porsches, MGs etc) set up in a warehouse so people could come along and perhaps find out a bit about Rotary and what they do for the community.

Two weekends ago I stayed with a Rotary family in Granville, a seaside town about an hour away, at their beachside weekend house. There was me, the father, mother, their daughter and two of the daughter's friends. None of them spoke English which was quite a challenge but I managed to communicate quite well with my limited vocabulary and lots of hand gestures! I ended up picking up a few more phrases and words which is good. We didn't have much planned for the weekend, just went looking around the shops and the market. The market was quite spectacular, the seafood was amazing! Lobsters, crabs, stingray, squid, mussels and all types of fish! So I developed quite a taste for seafood during the

weekend! I am welcome back anytime so I will definitely be taking them up on that offer, especially in summer.

On Tuesday the 27th I finally went to le Mont St Michel on a school trip. There were a group of German students spending the week in France so I asked if I could go with them and it was fine. We took a bus but not straight to the castle, instead we stopped about 10kms away so we had a 3 hour trek across the sand flats in front of us! It wasn't too bad but after a while when it was getting really hot and everyone was getting blisters we started to get a bit over it. Especially because we seemed to be walking in the opposite direction of our destination! It was definitely worth it though as it is absolutely amazing. Unfortunately I left my money on the bus so I couldn't pick up any postcards or souvenirs, but I'm quite sure I will go there again with my sister when she arrives in July.

*Emma*

### Isaac - don't ever say no!



**Isaac Dufficy** reporting for **Maclean Rotary Club, Australia**

*Dateline: - April, 2007*

*Location: - Dielsdorf Rotary Club, Switzerland*

I have heard a remark from an ex exchange student... "Don't ever say no" it's so true. If anyone is on exchange or is going on exchange remove the word no (or whatever it may be in your new language) from your vocabulary. No matter how boring or bad the offer may sound always say yes. You'll be surprised how quickly things turn around and surprise you. I've had a lot of fun with things I thought were going to be boring. Also you meet more people make more connections and then open more doors. So DONT SAY NO!!! lol (*I couldn't have said that any better. Ed.*)



**Jessica – it's Easter soon!**

**Jessica Hoey** reporting for  
**Ballina-on-Richmond**  
Rotary Club, Australia

*Dateline:* - April, 2007

*Location:* - **Gannat** Rotary  
Club, France

I've been in France now for 2 months and it's gone so quickly I can't believe it! Since I've been in France I've done heaps of cooking with my host families and eaten some pretty strange things, like Buddha-pigs blood sausages really gross and tripe-pigs intestines also really gross! But both are considered a delicacy here! I haven't eaten snails or frogs legs yet but my host mother is going to cook them for me. School is also different to Australia. In my class, premier, there are 10 people, which makes it easier to get to know every one and we have the same class for all our lessons only the teachers change classes.

I've gone the movies a few times since I've been here. It's a bit hard to understand as my French is still not too good, but it's interesting seeing the different French films that aren't released in Australia. The cinemas in France have a combination of French and American films so there are some similar films, they are generally released later but.

Looking forward to Easter soon, I don't know whether there are many different traditions here than in Aus or whether they celebrate it on the same day as we do. *(That's the fun part of the exchange, you actually experience the differences! Ed.)*

Gotta go, ciao

*Jessica*

**Tamara - and when you realise!**

**Tamara Fraislebem**  
reporting for **Campinas-  
Barão Geraldo** Rotary  
Club, Brazil

*Dateline:* - April, 2007

*Location:* - **Ashmore** Rotary Club, Australia

I feel very good being an exchange student because although it is really challenging, I feel I already learnt so much. My host family is absolutely fantastic, and that makes it much better. Being in another country that does not speak the same language as you, and that has a different culture as yours, is something amazing, because you get to learn so much, and when you realise, you already got used to the culture. I feel that I am already used to leaving (living) in Australia, and it has been really great.

*Tamara*

