



SPACE CENTER ROTARY -

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

by Tom Wier

Rotary has an International Youth Exchange program. But it takes individual members to make it work. The program format is there, but it takes heart and will to make it work. Our own Alan Wylie has been making it work for the last 4-5 years as our club's International Youth Chairman and for District 589 as a member of the committee.

The participation of four club members involves playing host to a foreign student for a period of three months each. Altogether the student is with us for a year. This is not something that can be done halfheartedly- because there will be interruptions to your personal plans- but anyone who has children has that! Problems are solved by treating the exchange student as part of your family, and when the student leaves, you will feel that he/she is in fact part of your family. (Yet you don't have to pay their way through college!) As a current ad says: "When you place service above everything else, everything else falls into place."

Alan recently said: "Through this program I have met young people from all over the world-- Japan, the Philippines, the Scandinavian countries, Russia, Hungary, Turkey, Europe, South Africa, South America, Mexico, Australia, New Zealand and others. I have enjoyed watching their transition from initial shyness as they are becoming accustomed to a new environment and the English language to the point where when their year has ended, they have matured in their knowledge of our way of life and are sad to leave new friends. Each year with a different set of Rotary Exchange students, I find myself becoming more understanding of other places in the world."

The International Youth Exchange program makes a lasting difference to the students involved, of course. But it also makes a difference to our club members who have been their hosts and to those who have met them. Just ask Karen Birchenough, Bill and Joan Geissler, Doug and Joyce Schuler, Dixie Robison, David Taylor and, of course, Alan and Mary Allen Wylie, among others.

Exchange students will be coming in the future. Here's a chance for you to make a difference- in your life as well as someone else's. With this being done all over the world by over 22,000 Rotary clubs year after year, the potential for making a difference in this old world is great.