

From: John Lodal

Date: March 2, 2018

To: D5400 District Grants Committee

Subject: Final report on RYE 2018 district grant

This is John Lodal; District 5400 Rotary Youth Exchange (RYE) Committee Chairman. The intent of this memo is to provide the D5400 District Grants Committee a final report on grant P-1752. Documentation on costs totaling \$6387.53 has been uploaded to the district grants website as of today.

Rotary D5400 has a proud history of strong support of youth exchange. Numerous volunteers within the district have given a large number of hours and expertise and this has delivered what I believe is a smooth running and effective program for the district. We have many clubs who host and send students on an annual basis and this serves to create a true exchange program of Idaho teenagers experiencing overseas culture as well as foreign teenagers coming to southern Idaho to see and experience American culture. The level of mentoring that these "Inbounds" and "Outbounds" receive is on a par with any other program in the USA and one critical part of this report is for me, as RYE Committee Chairman and on behalf of all of these volunteers and students, to assert a strong and sincere THANK YOU to the governing individuals of D5400 for their consistent support of youth exchange.

We receive (and send) courageous youngsters in August every year and we send back (and receive) world citizens of the highest caliber after their year abroad. We enjoy and embrace this mentoring and the transformation that we can clearly observe in these individual students. We seek to leave it better than we found it and to help populate this world with clear eyed citizens who seek peace and who have lived a year embracing and learning a new culture. In this, I believe we deliver educated individuals who can see that our common ground of seeking to live in peace is much more powerful than any cultural differences that they observed and experienced while they were in their host countries.

The first event where the funds from the grant were used was Inbound Orientation at Camp Sawtooth in August. The new batch of foreign youngsters (aka Inbounds) had just arrived in the USA and we had multiple objectives to achieve at this gathering. First of all, we wanted the new crew of Inbounds to meet each other and to meet the D5400 RYE volunteers. Inbound Orientation is a critical and a mandatory step according to the US Department of State (DoS). We also had a number of training issues to cover to transmit feedback to these teenagers (newly far from home and now starting their exchange year!) that can be best described as "best practices" to ensure that they have an excellent exchange experience. Inherent in all of this, we were also able to assess each student's individual English language skills in terms of speaking and understanding what was being said to them.

We gathered for all meals for 2+ days, we completed numerous training sessions, and we let them out and about in the camp area as well as in the Sun Valley community to start getting a feel for what their new home state looked like. In the end, we were able to generate individualized plans to help each student succeed and to share some of this feedback with the RYE counselors, YEOs, and host parents. We wanted to get them off to a strong start and the district grant funds were used to pay our lodging and meal costs at Camp Sawtooth above Ketchum. For the 2017-2018 exchange year, we have 18

Inbounds with us in District 5400. The countries represented are Ecuador, Poland, Taiwan (2 Inbound students), Brasil, Argentina, Belgium (3 Inbound students), Japan, Finland, Austria, Netherlands, Sweden, Italy, France, Chile, and Spain.

The next gathering of the RYE students was in Buhl at Outbound Interviews in early November. This is the first time that the Inbounds were able to gather again as a full group so it is always instructional to see how their language skills have improved and to get some feedback on how they are engaging at school, with their host families, and in their communities. There are almost always some minor issues to resolve but the growth that we get to see from their first 2-3 months in southern Idaho is delightful to observe.

They are also expected to work at this gathering. Please let me explain. When a new crew of Idaho teenagers (aka potential Outbounds) are being interviewed, we have one day to make some critical observations of them (and their parents) and then decide if we are going to make an offer to them to go on exchange. What we have learned from years past is that our Inbounds and our Rebounds (i.e. former Outbounds who have returned from exchange and have accepted an invitation to join us at Outbound Interviews) can see and hear things from these potential Outbounds that the adult Rotarian RYE volunteers simply do not see and hear. In short, we as the adult RYE volunteers, have some critical “blind spots” in this interviewing process that the Inbounds and the Rebounds can consistently help with. So, we have designed activities where the Outbounds and the Inbounds/Rebounds have direct contact with the adult RYE volunteers essentially out of the picture. When deliberations on individual Outbound applicants occur in the afternoon on that November Saturday, we are always keenly interested to hear what the students have seen that we missed. They are a highly valuable part of this evaluation team; we simply could not do this vetting job as well without their input and observations.

The District grant funds were used at this gathering to pay for lunch for everyone involved. This is an intense day for interviewees, their parents, and all of the RYE volunteers so we have a big Subway lunch for everyone and we all need it. Feeding that crew this year cost over \$500 and the district grant made a big difference. Housing costs for adult RYE volunteers at this gathering is on their own dime while the Inbounds are housed by numerous Rotarians in and around Buhl.

The third gathering for the Inbounds and Outbounds is titled “Outbound Training” and it occurs in McCall during the opening weekend of Winter Carnival in late January. There is also a public face that we show to the world that weekend. The Outbounds have now been chosen and they are aware of where they will be going next August. This means that they have a keen interest to speak to the Inbound from that country. We also have a multi-faceted session of training with the Outbounds that is generally similar to what we did at Inbound Orientation in August. In short, we wish to share with them best practices on how to have a great exchange year and what kind of preparation they need to commit to in the coming 7 months before they depart the USA.

We will be sending (as of now) 12 Outbound students in 2018-2019 and it looks like we will be receiving 15 Inbounds. We are working on improving our student recruiting practices as this is a small class but they appear to be solid students all around. Our top recommendation to these new Outbounds is that

they commit to a rigorous plan of study in their new language. We think they heard us; we'll see in Sun Valley as they will be required to give a 10 minute speech to all of the RYE volunteers and students in their new language with no notes.

The District grant funds were used for meals and lodging at Pilgrim Cove Camp. While we are in McCall, the students participate in the McCall Rotary Club's primary fundraiser by selling Mardi Gras beads. This year, they raised over \$1600 in these sales and this was well over their goal (set at ~\$900) and was a delight to watch. Additionally, they are part of the Winter Carnival Parade and this is another opportunity to highlight this program to the citizens of Idaho. It is a fun weekend and we all come home to catch up on sleep but the full RYE crew that will be on display at D5400 District Conference in May is now established and they know each other by name.

I wish to add a few personal notes here. First of all, I wish to thank Marianne Barker for her help (and patience) in securing this grant. I believe we spent the funds in a responsible manner and, because of this assistance from Marianne, our D5400 RYE budget and accounts were in much better shape this year. I also wish to thank all of the hosting clubs and the district governing officers for their consistent support and hard work in making this a program for which all D5400 Rotarians can be proud. We change lives in youth exchange and that is no minor achievement. Finally, I wish to thank my D5400 RYE Committee Members. Our Inbound Coordinators are Todd and Natalie Chavez and our Outbound Coordinators are Mike and Beth Markley. These dedicated Rotarians work their tails off on behalf of the students and the district as a whole. Between Rotary International and US DoS, we have a boatload of mandatory requirements which must be met and this translates to a ton of work. Our RYE Counselors and club YEOs and these committee members embrace this work and do an outstanding job in keeping this program running effectively.

We have plans for further improvements to this program and I plan to work with this committee to effectively advance toward these tangible improvements over the final two years of my term as D5400 RYE Committee Chairman. But, for now, I think we can all puff up our chests just a little as we take a step back and see what we have done and what we will continue to do in support of one of Rotary's signature programs; Rotary Youth Exchange.

Thank you for this significant financial support this year. I stand ready to answer any questions that the District Grants Committee might have.

Regards,

**John Lodal**