



This past weekend [April 25 – 27 District Conference at Skytop], our D7450 Youth exchange students spent time with us at the District conference. Did you know how they feel about their experiences and what it means to them to have spent a year in Philadelphia?

When asked how the Rotary Exchange program helped Rotary International reach its goals of world understanding and peace, Amanda Cury from Brazil (hosted by the Wells family - Avondale West Grove Rotarians), the answer was respect. "You have to understand that there are different things in your culture and your host culture. You have to respect that. You don't have to agree or disagree, but you have to respect ... By doing that you are understanding and creating a more peaceful world." Out of the mouths of babes... If we all just understood that message of respect throughout our world, wouldn't it be a better place?

Another student, Victor Sant'Anna from Brazil (Patti family from the Marple Rotary club) was asked, what have you learned about yourself while on exchange? His reply was "independence and how to manage myself. There was always some one in my house to clean or to pay for me to do things. Now I have to do that"

Benjamin Latour from Belgium (hosted by West Chester and the Eberts) discussed his impressions of the United States and our culture. Much to the surprise of many, he discussed how warm and open we are. He came to the District not speaking a word of

English and felt his experience has only shown how we Americans accept others easily. This is certainly a good message for us all to hear.

Every student had an individual perspective on their experience and what it has and will do for them in the future, but I have to say, the most amazing remark was made by Maite Imirizaldu Martinez from Spain (Kennett Square hosted by the Newman family). She listened to a Rebound (one who has been on exchange and returned to their home country) who has returned to District 7430, gotten a teaching degree and teaches Spanish in a local high school. After her compelling presentation which talked about loving two countries, having three mothers and finding direction in her life, Maite observed, "We don't even know what this experience is teaching us, do we? There is still more to come when we return home." Isn't that the truth?.....

While the District conference was a lot of fun and we learned quite a bit, this observation is what Rotary is all about...changing the world, step by step, one student at a time.

Want to help us? find an out bound student in your local high school for the 2009-10 school year (15.5 to 18 years old interested in exploring their world). Talk to kids in your community about a short term summer experience (Summer 09, same age range) Sit on the District Youth Exchange Committee, or at the very least, ask one of us to come speak at your club. Get involved. For more information, please contact Linda Messer, Youth Exchange Chair D7450, lindamess@comcast.net or 484-433-7951.

Pictured at the Saturday dinner after the parade of flags:

l to r

rear: Amanda Cury, Brazil (West Grove-Avondale); Bjoern Brauner, Germany (West Chester); Clementine Carre, France (Bala Cynwyd); Victor Sant'Anna, Brazil (Marple); Benjamin Latour, Belgium (West Chester Sunrise and Glen Mills);

front: Andrea Kogoj Tavasani, Italy (West Chester); Carlos Albrecht, Chile (Swarthmore); Viera Sverdlyk, Ukraine (Exton-Fraizer); Maite Imirizaldu Martinez, Spain (Kennett Square Longwood)