

## Rotary Final Report

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Ambassadorial Scholar

Sponsor Club: Montreal Lakeshore, Quebec, Canada

Host Club: Loughton & Buckhurst Hill, London, UK

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Looking back on this past year as an Ambassadorial Scholar is amazing. It is hard to believe how lucky I have been: traveled so far, lived abroad for so long, met so many wonderful people, been so many breathtaking places, experiences so many new things, learnt so much. I've learnt about Rotary, London, England, Human Rights, internal cultural discourse and cross-cultural dialogue, Europe, sociology, law, economics, politics, history, philosophy, anthropology, the world and my self.

In addition to this, coming out of this experience I feel that I will have so many memories and skills. I will hold a Masters in Sociology (specialization in Human Rights) from the London School of Economics and my experience at the LSE and with Save the Children UK as a researcher will permit me to continue a career in international development and poverty alleviation. (In fact, I am going to Egypt to work for a small non-governmental organization as of September. for one year.)

My experience has changed my outlook on my host and sponsor countries too. I feel that I have a more profound and broader understanding and appreciation of London, England and to some extent Europe which goes far beyond the stereotypes of afternoon tea, black cabs, the Queen, country pubs and quaint villages; I can see that England is actually a deeply multi-cultural, fast-paced and modern country with as much diversity and complexity - socially, politically, economically and historically as any of the other countries I have visited or lived in. Also, this experience has also reinforced my feeling of great fortune and appreciation for my home country as a place of peace, tolerance and physical and human beauty. It is a pleasant feeling to be welcomed and respected as a Canadian across the world and this encourages me to do my part to promote the continuation of our shared legacy as leaders in international cooperation and understanding.

During my stay in London I believe I have contributed to The Rotary Foundation's mission of world understanding and peace in four central ways: leading by example in making an effort to share the spirit of goodwill among those that I meet, working in a team of international and diverse students towards a common goal of an understanding and realization of human rights, researching important law, policy and implementation immigration/refugee issues for children with Save the Children UK to enhance and defend unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors' right to an adequate standard of living, and lastly, sharing my knowledge and experience of Canada, England, Human Rights and international cooperation with Rotary clubs here and away.

I would describe Rotary to friends, colleagues and family as a highly sophisticated, efficient, international network of kind-hearted and like-minded people who seem to live to their ideal of service above self in a variety of ways. I would describe Rotarians as thoughtful, welcoming and generous people. I would also point out though that the average age of Rotarians I have met is relatively old and there is a pressing need for active recruitment of younger members - especially females- as well as a serious push for more extensive publicity - especially regarding the scholarship opportunities.

I would describe the Ambassadorial Scholarship as a fantastic deal. The generous support - financial, logistical and personal- that I have received from the Foundation, its staff, Rotarians and their clubs is outstanding. I have felt safe, looked after, respected and appreciated throughout this experience. I also think that the opportunity/obligation to speak at different clubs is an excellent, profound and hands-on way of promoting Rotary's ethos and engaging in real cultural exchange. I have recommended this scholarship to several dozens of people and will continue to do so in the future.

The materials I received from the Foundation were detailed, clear, helpful and appropriate. My sponsor and host Rotarians were kind and helpful but did not give me much in terms of information. I think this is more due to the fact that I strike them as independent and capable, rather than any hesitation or unwillingness to help on their part.

I found the orientation process to be flawless. I especially appreciated the booklets we received with the contact information of fellow scholars and Rotarians which proved to be tremendously useful this year. I would suggest some cost saving measures: doubling or tripling scholars up in hotel rooms, or staying in youth hostels instead, encouraging scholars to travel together to save money, printing on both sides of the paper used, encouraging recycling at the conferences and less food wastage.

The advice I would give to future scholars would be these points:

- The scholarship itself: 1) keep up with tasks and obligations, 2) ask for clarification when needed, 3) utilize all resources you deem necessary, 4) have fun and 5) be yourself - they picked you for a reason! !!
- Cultural differences: 1) create and maintain your own space where you can return to re-fuel/re-group/re-energize, 2) develop a routine that is familiar to you, 3) don't stress!!! You don't have to like everyone/everything and everyone/everything doesn't have to like you.
- Representing Rotary. sponsor and host Rotary clubs: 1) research Rotary - its means, ends, history, evolution, projects, goals, outlooks etc., 2) seriously consider if and how you relate to Rotary's ideals, 3) consider controversial/difficult aspects/questions/situations you might find yourself in and how you would deal with them, 4) be sincere - people forgive mistakes.

I'm often asked how I will continue to be involved in Rotary. My answer is always the same: I carry Rotary and its work in the same way I carry my faith - with me, all the time, everywhere, in everything that I do. I will complete my speaking requirements. I'll enthusiastically promote the scholarships, the Foundation and the clubs. I would like to be involved in orientations for future scholars as well.

All in all this has been an unforgettable and rewarding experience for which I am eternally grateful. Thank you,

mg nightingale