

"Make a Difference"

The Official Newsletter of Rocky Mountain RYLA, Inc.

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RYLA conferees learn to trust their teammates

Rotarian has RYLA Roots

By Tanis Roeder

My relationship with Rotary began in 2001 when I won the Rotary 4-Way Test speech competition in the Rotary Club of Fort Collins. It was a great experience and I was interested in Rotary from that moment on.

I attended RYLA as a participant in 2001. I fully

understand what everyone means when they say that the experience is amazing – in fact so amazing that one cannot describe it in words. While attending RYLA I cracked my ankle bone and was on crutches all week long. This made the experience very challenging because I am the type of person that likes to jump up and lead, but I was always a few crutches behind my group! I still remember everyone who was in my group, and will never forget the support they gave me throughout that week.

When I returned from RYLA I helped establish the Interact Club of Fort Collins and served as co-president. We had 8-10 active members that first year and completed a number of projects that taught us about leadership and just how amazing it is to help other people. It was very hard to find dedicated high school students, but we started a group that is still alive and kicking today.

The next year I applied and got accepted to attend RYLA 2002 as a Junior Counselor (JC) and this was yet another challenging leadership

experience. I developed friendships with other JC's that will last a lifetime and learned a lot about myself. I was a part of an amazing group that was always pushing the limits. I don't think we won a single event that week but we stuck together as a team and had our own victory by the end of the week when some of the conferees who didn't want to participate "joined" the team.

The most important thing that I learned at both RYLA events was that Rotary was an amazing organization and it was a group that I had to continue to be involved in.

When I graduated from high school and began my three years at Colorado State University I was still involved with Rotary and helped co-found the Rotaract Club of Fort Collins. Although I couldn't be as involved as I wanted to be, since I was going to school full time and working three part time jobs, my heart was still with Rotary.

After graduating from college I worked for a short while as a wine sales rep for E&J Gallo, but found that the job duties truly did not fit with the 4-Way Test ethics that are forever engrained in my life. I decided to change positions and become a Public Relations Director for a local moving company in Fort Collins. During our first meeting I made it very clear that being a part of Rotary meant a lot to me, and it was something that I would like to get involved in. My company President was already a Rotarian so he completely understood, and wrote my Rotary membership into my contract.

This summer I was inducted into the Rotary Club of Fort Collins and currently serve on the 4-Way Test and program committees.

*"Be the change you
wish to see in the
world"*

Ghandi

Editor's Note:

Welcome to the inaugural issue of "Make a Difference". This newsletter is dedicated to reporting on how RYLA conferees are making a difference in their family, school, community, or the world. With this end in mind, I invite Rotarians to report on the accomplishments of those conferees sponsored by your Rotary club.

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RYLA: More Than a Four Letter Word

By PDG Bill Muldoon

RYLA for me was a four-letter word. Being a long-time Rotarian I had heard about RYLA for years, never knowing what the acronym stood for, and it would have hurt my image to ask. I even

participated in the program - interviewing candidates, providing transportation to and from camp and setting up club presentations for conferees. But I still did not know the meaning of RYLA.

Then one day, while browsing through the Rotary International website under Programs, I saw *Rotary Youth*

Leadership Awards (RYLA). Finally I thought I knew the meaning of RYLA. However, not until I served as a Senior Counselor did I learn the true meaning.

When considering giving up a week of your life to babysit kids, the prospect is not very exciting. However, consider investing a week as part of a team of professionals who transform a few hundred young people into tomorrow's responsible leaders. Then the opportunity becomes compelling.

Prior to each RYLA program all adult leaders, senior and junior counselors are acquainted with the fundamentals of the program and are trained to handle the activities of the upcoming camp. At the camp in Estes Park, CO,

the junior counselors conduct the day's activities for about 12 conferees, under the supervision of the senior counselors. Senior counselors require no specific skills, but help build their team and mentor their junior counselor.

Rotary's training program for young leaders emphasizes leadership, citizenship, teamwork and personal growth. Started in Australia nearly five decades ago, the program has been an official Rotary program since 1971. RYLA is now functioning in a majority of Rotary districts worldwide. Our District 5440 teams with District 5450 to sponsor RYLA each summer. District 5450, primarily the Denver area, sends many city kids, while District 5440 hosts youngsters from rural communities. The demographic mix is broadening for everyone.

Several years ago the Districts 5440 and 5450 hosted several young adults from Russia, who planned to take their experiences back to their homeland and initiate the first RYLA program in Russia. In 2004, with the assistance of District 5440, the first RYLA was born in the city of Saratov. It continues today.

As a RYLA senior counselor, I suppose I have helped many young people become the responsible citizens of tomorrow, but I am overwhelmed with the impact RYLA has made on me. To witness a bunch of rag-tag kids arrive on Sunday afternoon, and see them leave a week later as a close-knit, bonded team of young adults, is powerful. At the conclusion of the camp, conferees and adult leaders are filled with a sense of bonding, fellowship and love. At the parting

there are no dry eyes, mine included!

*"The best way to find
yourself is to lose
yourself in the service of
others"*

Ghandi



RYLA 2006 concludes under a brilliant rainbow

Advanced RYLA Debuts in 2006

When RYLA ends, the RYLA magic doesn't stop there. In August 2006, Rocky Mountain RYLA, Inc. added a new member to the RYLA family and a new chapter to the RYLA experience. Advanced RYLA was started with the goal of enhancing real world leadership skills and re-lighting the RYLA magic for former conferees. The day featured several speakers including former RYLA Senior Counselor Kimra Perkins and Andrew Romanoff, Speaker of the Colorado State

House, as well as several leadership building activities. Advanced RYLA originated in Australia and found its first home in the United States in Englewood, CO. The Colorado Mills Mall in Denver, CO hosted nearly 80 Conferees, 10 staff members and a number of interested Rotarians. The Rotary E-Club One of District 5450 sponsored the day of leadership, the first such conference outside of Australia.

Look for Advanced RYLA II to be held in the summer of 2007.

Extreme RYLA Setting Records

By Doug Armbrust

Records are made to be broken . . . but records first must be set. Although this particular record might never be entered into the Guinness World Records, it will perhaps never be removed from the hearts of some of us fortunate enough to witness such an accomplishment by such an outstanding and special young man. This year a record for RYLA attendance and participation was set by a young Coloradoan named Jason Griffith.

Jason began this RYLA year by attending Rotary International RYLA in Malmo, Sweden during June, along with three other attendees from our joint Districts. While there, he continued to be involved in, along with Heather Amen as Co-Head JC, the entire planning and administration of the RYLA Conference to be held July 16-21 at Estes Park, Colorado. After a week's rest from RYLA, he volunteered to serve as a junior counselor at Rotary Districts 5440-5450 Young RYLA down in Larkspur, Colorado. At the conclusion of YRYLA he headed that very day to Greeley, CO, where he and Heather served Rotary and RYLA by personally directing this RYLA's first organized and sponsored Post-RYLA Service Project at the Greeley Area Habitat For Humanity with approximately seventy Rylarians and Rotarians present offering support. And if that wasn't enough, Jason and last year's RYLA Head JC Samira Rajabi developed, promoted, and held in conjunction with assistance from the E-Club One of Denver, the first ever Advanced RYLA in the U.S. (see page 2). Amazingly, this University of Colorado junior from Greeley, CO participated in four different RYLA conferences in ten weeks.

I initially met Jason in the spring of 2001 when he was finishing his freshman year at Northridge High School in the inaugural season for the institution. The occasion was the American Cancer Society Relay For Life at Aims Community College in Greeley where he was serving as Captain of his Relay Team. I was introduced to him by his sponsoring counselor since he also was the president of the first Interact Club at Northridge in its initial year. Our next encounter was during the interview and selection process for the RYLA candidates from Greeley prior to his junior year. Not only had he matured socially, but now he stood about a foot taller than I remembered him.

His poise and accomplishments so impressed the interviewers that he received a named RYLA Scholarship in honor of Past District Governor Richard L. Neet who also was the first treasurer of RYLA. His RYLA experience was so captivating for him that he applied and was selected as a junior counselor the following year. His performance and achievements during his years at Northridge are still legendary for subsequent students there. Graduating as class valedictorian in 2004, he was awarded a Boettcher Scholarship and commenced his undergraduate studies at the University of Colorado in Boulder. A rare opportunity to attend a special Leadership Conference at CU kept him away from RYLA for a year, but he begged for the chance to return to the following year for a second year as a JC. From among an outstanding group of JCs, he then was chosen as co-head JC along with Heather Amen.

Their contribution as head JCs this past year raised the bar to an all-time high perhaps never to be exceeded, but then again . . . records are made to be broken. And for RYLA, it is not about what we are, but rather who we are. We are leaders, and as the saying goes, 'True Leaders Make More Leaders.' In Jason's case he has always been a leader; however, we would like to believe that we fine-tuned him a little . . . maybe a lot . . . but those who have had the pleasure of meeting this young man would probably feel we tuned him pretty fine! As Jason himself so nicely states, "At RYLA I am the me that I want all the time to be." And he indeed is that . . . all the time! A record setter . . . a leader among leaders . . . and a friend . . . a friend to everyone he meets.

RYLA JC's Receive Paul Harris Fellows

For their extraordinary efforts in planning and leading the RYLA 2006 conference, Co-Head Junior Counselor's Heather Amen and Jason Griffith were awarded Paul Harris Fellows during the RYLA 2006 conference. Our sincerest thanks go to Heather and Jason for their dedication to the ideals of RYLA.