

# Rotary



**PEOPLE of ACTION**

STEP - Short Term Exchange Program  
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Co-Coordinators

Carl Kisely  
Janell Schneider  
Tom Chambers

Dear Youth Exchange Officers of District 6250,

November 22, 2020

I'd like to quickly introduce myself and my two co-chairs of the District 6250 Short Term Exchange Program. After a decade as chair of 6250 STEP, Janine O'Rourke has decided to step down. She will remain active in Rotary and in Youth Exchange, but with a little more breathing room. She recommended that the program continue under 2-3 people in order to reduce the workload, and Tom Chambers, Janell Schneider, and I volunteered. Tom is a HS Principal in Black River Falls, Janell is a HS School Counselor in Oregon, and I'm an insurance agent out of Tomah. We look forward to working with you all in the coming years to bring this wonderful opportunity to our students.

As you are all aware, the status of Rotary Youth Exchange is in limbo due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The long-term exchange already faces challenges as agreements with other countries and schools both here and abroad need to be in place very soon. However, they are committed to remaining as flexible as possible and will make a decision to exchange or not early next year, despite already reduced opportunities.

Students travel on a tourist visa which is quicker to obtain, and for which no school agreements are required. As we have more time to let the situation develop, we are still holding open the possibility for a summer exchange program in 2021. Because of this, we will accept STEP applications until mid-March (the exact date is still flexible). What this means for you is that we would very much appreciate it if you could distribute the STEP materials to the schools in your area and stay in contact with them regarding the program. Please let them know that if students wish to sign up for the program to do so. We will not begin collecting fees or completing background checks until and unless we know we will have a program, so at this point it is about gauging interest. Also, the students from last year are welcome to exchange as long as they have not turned 19.

One last item, this is our first year for all three of us at the helm of this program. Whether this first year ends up being a great success or a trial run, we intend to get our feet wet and prepare to send students on the best experience of their lives. If you see something that we aren't doing, or could do better, please let us know. Our students deserve it, and we intend to deliver.

Thanks for everything you do,

Carl, Tom, and Janell

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