Dear Student Name:

I am excited to welcome you to beautiful City, Colorado! Learn more at City's Visitor Website. The following information will help you prepare for Exchange.

**ROTARY YOUTH EXCHANGE**

Rotary Youth Exchange is one of the most important activities in Rotary, in respect to improving understanding among the countries of the world. Take utmost advantage of this opportunity to live in another continent and country. Study and learn to understand our people, school system, history, our habits & customs, as well as our problems. Your stay with us is meant to be a learning experience which will influence you the rest of your life. This exchange is a great and rewarding challenge, not a vacation. For more information about Rotary Youth Exchange, visit <https://www.rotary.org/en/get-involved/exchange-ideas/youth-exchanges>.

As a Rotary Youth Exchange Student, you serve as a good ambassador of your country. You should help us to gain insight into your culture and way of life, and your hosts will help you to better understand our culture and our people. You should be eager to integrate into new surroundings. Traditions, culture, customs, etc. may differ from those in your home country. It is your obligation to adapt to this new environment. There is no “better” or “worse”; things are just “different.”

Though there is a lot of support from your hosts, you have to be proactive. An exchange student is expected to take the initiative. Do not always expect others to approach you; go and approach them. Your host parents and you will invest a lot of confidence in each other; use it wisely. Become a member of the family with all the rights and duties that ALL family members share.

In your application, you have accepted the rules for the exchange year, which will also be discussed at the Inbound Orientation. You are expected to act as an ambassador for your country and for our Rotary program at all times. You will **not be able to:** Date In A Serious Relationship • Do Drugs•Drink Alcoholic Beverages•Drive A Motorized Vehicle • Decorate Your Body (no tattoos or piercings while on exchange). Your Rotary Club has the right to Drug Test you while on exchange.

**ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE INFORMATION**

**Arrival:** You will need to arrive at the Airport (Airport Code). High School starts Date, so you should plan to arrive the week of Date. If you have to deviate from these dates, do **not** purchase an airplane ticket without approval from your host family AND Youth Exchange Officer. You should send your complete travel itinerary to your YEO, host family, and your Country Coordinator as soon as you have it (see their contact info below).

**Visa:** You will need the Rotary Visa Guarantee Form and DS-2019 from the U.S. Department of State in order to obtain your visa. This is the first year that we have been permitted to send electronic documents. To stay compliant with the new rules, we will send the DS-2019 only to you; and we will send copies of the Visa Guarantee Form, Host Club Letter, and High School letter to you with copies to others involved in your exchange. If you have a visa interview, you will need all of these documents and the forms sent to you by CISI when you purchase your insurance.

**Departure:** You will need to depart from the same airport you arrived to. Rotary is an Academic Year program so the length of your exchange follows the Academic Year of your school regardless of whether your visa gives you more time than the length of the Academic Year. You should **plan to depart within 10-days of school ending, or during the week of June 10, whichever is later**. Your Youth Exchange Officer may approve a later departure date for reasons such as going on a Rotary tour but permission from your Youth Exchange Officer is required for any departure later than June 15..

**YOUR HOST ROTARY DISTRICT**

<http://www.mountainandplainsrye.com/>

**Like us on Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/mprye](http://www.facebook.com/mprye)

District 5470 covers the southern 2/3 of Colorado, which includes communities that are very different from each other. There are ski resort towns like Vail, Aspen, and Telluride; small cities like Colorado Springs; and high desert towns like Grand Junction and Durango. We have 57 Rotary Clubs, all with their own character, so you might experience differences from what you have learned at home. Your host club will invite you to their meetings. The club expects you to give a presentation about yourself, your family, city and country. Other clubs and schools might ask you to speak to them. Our host clubs will assign you a Counselor who will assist you to solve possible problems. Remember that Rotary activities overrule your private plans. Our district will form a WhatsApp group for our leadership team and other 2023-24 Inbounds, and we will add you to that group:

***District Chair:*** John Stroud [districtchair@mountainandplainsrye.com](mailto:districtchair@mountainandplainsrye.com)

***District Inbound Coordinator:*** Kristi Redlinger [inbound@mountainandplainsrye.com](mailto:dj@thebrownhouse.com)

***Country Coordinator:*** Name, Email

**YOUR HOST ROTARY CLUB**

Host Club Website

**Like us on Social Media:** Host Club Facebook/Instagram links

You will be hosted by the Host Club (see Letter from Hosting Rotary Club for more information). Your contacts are:

***Youth Exchange Officer:*** Name, Email

***Youth Exchange Counselor:*** Name, Email

**YOUR HOST FAMILY**

You should contact your host family immediately after you have their addresses to introduce yourself, give them additional information about yourself, and learn about them. Your host family is looking forward to welcoming you as a member of their family, not just a visitor. Americans are known to be very casual; and we expect students to exercise independence. You will be expected to keep your own room clean, to help with preparing meals and cleaning the kitchen, bathroom, etc. You need to adapt to the family’s specific habits and rules. Communication is very important from the beginning. You and your host family have to get to know each other. Let your host family be a part of your life and inform them about things that are important to you. You should expect to stay in 2-3 host families, which is the decision of the Rotary Club. In case of difficulties, your Counselor will help you whenever possible.

**YOUR HOST HIGH SCHOOL**

Host High School Website

Host High School Facebook

You will be attending Host High School (see Letter from the High School for more information). You must attend all classes regularly during the whole exchange year; otherwise the school may expel you, which would result in an early termination of your exchange. School is required for all students whether or not they receive credit at home. The American school system is different from yours at home, so try to adjust fast to it. You will change classes and mix with different students every hour, so your efforts to be outgoing and reach out to students and teachers are essential. Your effort and grades will be tracked during your exchange – effort is required and your Youth Exchange Officer may set minimum allowable grades depending on your level of language understanding.

**FINANCES**

**Emergency Fund:** You are expected to **bring $500 USD for an emergency fund** that your Rotary Club will hold during your exchange. This money is only needed in special cases and cannot be paid from your other allowances. If the money is not needed, you will get it back at the end of the year. You should plan to bring cash with you, or withdraw from an ATM within your first 2 weeks.

**Money:** Your Rotary club will provide a monthly stipend of $Amount, and you will have the opportunity to use a local bank account. Still, you will need access to money for trips, clothing, souvenirs, etc. Using cards to make purchases or to get cash from a machine is very common in the USA. If you plan to use a Visa or MasterCard from your home bank, please ask if it will be compatible in the USA, and make sure you know the PIN numbers. You should register for online banking so that you can manage your account balances online. Make sure your parents have access to the account so they can deposit more money when you need it. You should do this right away.

**Cell Phone:** Bring your unlocked cell phone and plan to use a new SIM card in the USA.

**INSURANCE**

**Insurance:** You are required to have Medical, Liability, and Sickness Insurance while you are in the USA.  We participate in CISI-Bolduc Plan B+. We will email you a link, which will allow you to provide your information and pay for the correct insurance policy. Please be sure to use the link in the email.

**CULTURAL**

**Clothing:** Our climate is different throughout Colorado; but everywhere we enjoy four seasons. Bring clothing for warm and cold weather. If you want to follow the latest American fashions, set aside money to buy the necessary clothes here. Keep in mind that most Americans wash their clothes after each wear, so you will need to plan to wear different clothing every day. Your clothing will need to stand up to frequent washing and drying.

**Food:** Food and meals may be different from what you are used to. You will have to get accustomed. Americans don’t always eat fast food. You should try all food being served in your host family and talk about the taste. Your host family will enjoy seeing your reaction; but don’t expect your family to change the menu for your sake.

**Hygiene:** Hygiene habits can be very different. Most Americans shower and change their clothes daily (twice each day if playing sports). We have different scents of deodorant and cologne, as well as different flavors of toothpaste. You will probably want to bring these items with you; but it is also wise to plan to buy American items after you arrive. As strange as it may seem, it will impair your ability to make friends if you smell “different.” You’ll need to bring any personal care items that you use regularly, such as skin care, medicine, feminine products (tampons). Of course, we have these items here; but they will likely be different from those you’re accustomed to. Americans expect all girls to shave their legs and armpits.

**Language:** It is very necessary for students to communicate in English. Of course, we know that our new students do not speak perfect English when they arrive, but you should indicate to your hosts that you have some basic knowledge and are willing to learn the language. This will ease your integration at school and in the families. Before you arrive, learn as much English as possible to overcome the language barrier. Study English intensively. Watch American movies. Read American magazines. Become accustomed to our accent and the words we use. Without good English skills, your time at school will be very disappointing and frustrating, because it will be difficult to learn and make friends.

**TRAVEL**

Travel is a privilege, not a given activity of your exchange.  We do not have good public transportation that many countries enjoy; and you will NOT be able to travel without adult supervision during your exchange. You will likely have some opportunity to travel with your host families, Rotarians, or with your school; and you will also have the chance to participate in an organized Rotary tour.

**Tours:** There are several spring and summer tours available to you.  Registration materials will be available at our first Orientation Meeting in September.  Cost varies from $1,000 USD to $4,000 USD.  These trips fill up very fast (especially the USA Tour) and you will need to plan to register early if you want to participate.  Most trips will require a deposit of up to $1,000 USD at the time you register so you should discuss these possibilities with your parents before you come on your exchange.

**Visits:** Family and friends from home are **not** encouraged to visit you while on exchange. Any visits must be pre-approved by your YEO AND District Chair. If a visit is approved it will only be near the end of your exchange, not the beginning or middle and your visit may not be approved at all. If you have an approved visit planned and your exchange is terminated early by your Rotary Club due to your poor behavior then your visitors will risk the cost of their travel arrangements.

During the coming school year, you can expect an interesting year, your “Colorado Adventure.” Use your time well, and treasure your experiences. We are looking forward to meeting you and learning about your family and your country. We do hope that you will have an interesting and enjoyable exchange year with us!

We are required to provide the following information prior to your arrival:

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE**

The U.S. State Department has activated a helpline to ensure the health and safety of its exchange participants. Participants can contact the State Department at any time via the hotline 1-866-283-9090 or at [JVisas@state.gov](mailto:mailto:JVisas@state.gov). Please visit <http://mountainandplainsrye.com/resources-forms> for the Department of State Welcome Brochure, Department of State Welcome Letter, and Department of State Regulations.

**EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE**

* Dial 9-1-1 for emergency assistance anywhere in the USA

**IDENTIFICATION CARD**

We will email you a Rotary Youth Exchange Identification Card containing helpful contact information.

With Best Wishes!

**Your** **Name**

*Youth Exchange Officer*

*Your Rotary Club name*

Email

Mountain & Plains District 5470 Youth Exchange

[www.mountainandplainsrye.com](http://www.mountainandplainsrye.com)

[www.facebook.com/mprye](http://www.facebook.com/mprye)

Please **sign** your acknowledgement of receipt and understanding of this document and **return the signed copy me**. E-signatures are acceptable.

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Exchange Student’s Name

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Natural Parent (1) Name

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Natural Parent (2) Name