

Shelburne Rotary Club seeking student applicants for youth exchange program



Written By PAULA BROWN

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

The Rotary Club of Shelburne is looking for a student from Centre Dufferin District High School (CDDHS) to participate in a youth exchange.

The Shelburne Rotary Club has announced they are now accepting inquiries and applications for its 2026/2027 Youth Exchange program, where two students swap places with one another in different parts of the world.

"It's a wonderful opportunity to learn about another country, its culture, and its people. When you're immersed there, living as they do, you learn a lot, and it opens up to amazing experiences of other cultures," said Bill Waite, youth exchange officer for the Shelburne Rotary Club. "You're experiencing something that a lot of people don't get a chance to experience, and it might be the best thing you've ever done in your life."

The Rotary Youth Exchange is a program for young students, typically between the ages of 15 and 19, to spend time living in a foreign country with host families while attending school. During the exchange program, students act as ambassadors for their home country and culture, gaining valuable personal growth, acquiring new language skills, and broadening their worldview. The goal of the program is to foster global understanding and cultural exchange.

"It really is a once in a lifetime experience," said Caroline Mach, publicity director of the Rotary Club of Shelburne.

The Shelburne Rotary Club used to participate in the Youth Exchange program on a regular basis, but discontinued the program more than 25 years ago.

Speaking with the Free Press, the Shelburne Rotary said they decided to revive the program after they were approached last year by Mike Niedzwiecki, a student at Centre Dufferin District High School.

"Mike had read about it and asked if the Shelburne Rotary Club does the youth exchange. We all kind of looked at each other and said 'no', but maybe we could," explained Waite. "It was a wake-up call to ask why are we not doing it again. We're glad Mike did

[ask] because we're all excited about doing it again. Mike was the instigator for getting back into it so that was one of the reasons we selected him.?

For the 2025/2026 school year, the Shelburne Rotary Club has sent Niedzwiecki to France and has welcomed Natalie Worst from Switzerland.

While the school year has just started, the Rotary Club of Shelburne is already looking for a local high school student for the 2026/2027 school year, with applications open.

The application process for the Youth Exchange program starts with the student reaching out to the Shelburne Rotary Club to inquire about the program and filling out the first of two application forms. The student will then go through an interview with the Shelburne Rotary Club, followed by an interview with the Rotary District.

The Rotary Club of Shelburne is expected to select the student for the 2026/2027 Youth Exchange sometime in the new year.

Only one student from CDDHS will be selected to participate in the next Rotary Youth Exchange.

?We're looking for somebody who is open to the experience and who will be able to come back as an ambassador for the program. The Rotary has a lofty goal that people who go through this program can be the peacekeepers of tomorrow,? said Waite.

Students interested in learning more about the local Rotary Youth Exchange program are encouraged to contact Shelburne Rotarian Bill Waite by email at bwaite999@gmail.com before Oct. 31.