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Shelburne Rotary Club welcomes Swiss exchange student at Town Council meeting

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LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

The Rotary Club of Shelburne's exchange student has officially been welcomed into the community.

During their meeting on Monday (Oct. 6), Shelburne Town Council met with Natalie Worst, an exchange student from Switzerland who will be staying in the community for the school year as part of the Rotary Youth Exchange program.

Worst is from Wettingen, Switzerland, a community of over 20,000 residents, roughly 30 minutes from Zurich. She will be attending Centre Dufferin District High School (CDDHS) for the 2025/2026 school year. During the school year, she will be studying a number of courses, including French, drama, gym, English, art, history, and cooking.

Worst shared with Shelburne Council that she has tried out for the local high school's play and will be involved in the May production.

While she hasn't yet decided her plans for post-secondary, Worst told Shelburne councillors that she is thinking of studying marine biology.

?I always wanted to do an exchange, and my neighbors told me about Rotary and it was really inspiring,? Worst told Council.

Shelburne Mayor Wade Mills asked Worst what her favourite part of Canada has been so far.

?Everything is so far apart, the houses are really big and there are farms. We went potato picking the other day, I could never do that at home. It's just so different from what I'm used to,? said Worst.

During her time in Shelburne, Worst will be staying with three host families, including local Rotary Club President Karen Webster.

?We had no idea what we were going to get into bringing a 16-year-old from another country into hour home, but it has been fantastic to see Canada through the eyes of a young person who's never seen Canada before,? said Webster.

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.

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. The Shelburne Rotary previously told the Free Press that they decided to revive the program after being approached in 2024 by Centre Dufferin District High School student Mike Niedzwiecki about doing the program.

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.

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

The Rotary Club of Shelburne will be at CDDHS on Oct. 15 during the school's lunch break to provide interested students with more information.

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.