

Finding HOST Families

- Please go into this with the attitude that there are three wonderful families for each student that you host. Don't let that positive thought leave your thinking. Even if you have struggled in the past, try to go into this year with a new attitude.
 - Use positive language, you will feel better and your invitations to host will go farther
 - Use opportunity to host instead of have to host.
 - Use only 3.5 months to host, so that we get to share the opportunity to host with others, instead of saying "burden" or something like it.
- Host families have to be personally asked. Announcements plant ideas, but a personal ask produces the YES. Nearly every one of our host families was personally asked....after hearing or thinking they might be interested, they were personally asked. Seldom do folks jump into the boat without an invitation.
 - "I heard you might be interested in hosting an exchange student, I think you would be wonderful, your family would get so much out of the experience and the student would be so lucky to live with you."
 - "We have a committee to give you the needed support to host, you are not doing this alone"
 - "Have you ever thought of hosting a student? It is for a short 3.5 months and you will likely develop a special relationship that will last for a lifetime, it is so easy to become very attached to these students."
 - If they have a student thinking about RYE outbound in their future...."Hosting a student is a great way to have a deeper understanding of what it is like to be an exchange student, why don't you become a host family?"
- You must look for host families 12 months of the year. Keep a running list.
 - Folks that think their student might be an outbound in the future
 - Friends of a current inbound student...
 - Family with no children, family with young children, family that is an empty nester
- This is an *opportunity*, make sure host families know the rewards as well as the possible challenges. Make sure they know they have a strong support system to help them through their short 3.5 months of hosting.
 - They share the student with two other families...create a "team" and it becomes more fun and less daunting
 - The student has a Rotary counselor; in case the student needs some guidance...takes some of less-than-fun stuff away from the host family.

- Recruit other eyes and ears to help locate the families
 - Announce to the club that you are looking for host families; they can help be on the watch, but don't expect much recruitment from the Rotary members.
 - Recruiting non-Rotary members is the best; they are the potential future Rotarians to bring new growth and energy to your club.
 - Whenever you are in social situations, casually bring the topic up
 - Have you ever thought of hosting?
 - Can you think of anyone that would be a good host family?
 - Always have it in the back of your mind....do the casual asks all of the time...if there seems to be some interest, write their name down and follow up with a formal invitation later.

- Have a party with wine and cheese and search the school or other directory for possible host families to contact. Make phone calls together. Make the brainstorming time fun, recruit others, and get excited together.

- Hold a public gathering of potential host families...advertise in the paper or whatever ways you can think of. Perhaps hold it at a back area of a coffee shop or something easy to get to and explain to the potential hosts what the program is how it works, what is needed. It is a great idea to have past host families there that can share what their experience was and encourage others.

- Who has sent a student out? Even if it was a year or two ago, maybe they are ready to host. Who is thinking of sending a student...they can get to know the program by hosting.

- Who has hosted in the past? Even if it is five years ago, perhaps they would like to host again.

- Friends with kids, friends with no children, retired folks, people who like travel, who would like to travel

- Ask for referrals; ask families who have hosted before if they know anyone that would be interested. If a family can't host, ask them if they know of someone who might like to.

- Who are friends with your current inbound? Whose house has he/she gone to? Keep track of these families and follow up with an invitation to host next year.

- Ask your current host families if they know of any potential hosts for next year. They will know who their student has come in contact with. Host families are often asked by others what the experience is like; perhaps they have planted seeds you can follow up with.

- Take really good care and show lots of appreciation to host families....this will help the reputation of hosting and lead to new or renewed hosts. Acknowledge and thank them often, do it publicly too. They are the rock stars!
 - If there is an “issue” act on it quickly, take the burden off of the host family to figure it out.
 - Check in with them regularly to see if everything is ok, any “issues”?
 - Thank them whenever you speak to them.
 - Invite them to Rotary meetings, especially when it involves YE, treat them like royalty and have the club President acknowledge their service.
 - Have a running list to display who has hosted in the past...bring this display out on special occasions. This reinforces how special and appreciated our host families are.

- Does one host family have a friend who wants to share the student with them...keeping it all in the family sort of idea? If one family wants to host and they have friends that might consider it too, have them consider it together. Since they already get together as friends this is a fun way to share the student.

- Have a current inbound student talk to a youth group, a girl scout group or some other organization, get students dreaming about having an exchange student in their home. Have your Rotex speak to these groups too. Have them talk about the wonderful relationship they developed with their host families.

- Follow up on any leads. Inform, ask, inform, ask...

- Talk to everyone about what your inbound student is doing ...how wonderful they are, fun things they are doing or you have learned from them.

- Knit the host families together, so it feels like they have support with one another instead of three isolated host families.
 - Have joint potlucks early on. Have the families meet each other, become friends with each other.
 - If we support families and give them the opportunity to have a positive experience the easier it will be to recruit in our communities. Word gets out how fun it is and soon families will be contacting you to be put on the list.

- A couple times host families have told me the year after hosting that they missed not only the student but the “community” that was created around that experience. Families often host again because they don’t want to be outside that circle.
- If you have relatives in St Michael and you think they would like to host, have them get in touch with the YEO there or better yet, give the YEO there their name and contact information. Let’s network more together. I have a brother in law in Chaska, maybe he knows of some host families....
- Visit the schools webpage and look for language, social studies, service clubs to speak to and invite students in those classes to speak to their families about hosting. Perhaps the teacher would send a flyer home with the students after you speak to them.
 - This is from Highland Park High School in St Paul. This is the kind of class one would look to for finding host families....

The Highland Park Senior High School Social Studies department offers a comprehensive curriculum of classes, which focuses not only on cultural literacy, but also concentrate on developing global awareness, sharpening analytical skills, and challenging students through a variety of teaching methods.
- When your inbound student gives their presentation have them invite their friends, this will lead to students going home and introducing the idea of hosting to their families.
- Develop a brochure or flyer to hand out, with contact information on it, but write down the name and number of whoever takes one to follow up with them.
 - Personal testimonials are the most powerful tool we have. Whether it is on paper or in person, we need to use these stories to get the word out
- There are two videos on the District website about host families. The site is: <http://northstaryouthexchange.com/inbound/families/>
 - Use these videos; send links to them to potential host families.
 - Print the site in any brochure or flyer you give.
 - I can try to make a copy of this video and distribute it to you, if there is a request to do so.
- Look on your school’s website and look for service clubs, social studies clubs/ classes and language classes/ clubs to speak to you. If a student’s interest in hosting is peaked, then they can encourage or inform their parent’s to volunteer. Give the student’s a flyer to take home with your contact information or take the student’s name and follow up from that direction.

Seeing host families...they are everywhere, they just need to be asked.

Finding host families:

Continually network in the community with:

School officials

Rotarians

Other or past host families

Friends of current or past inbound students: whose house did they hang out in?

Church leaders, church youth group leaders

Friends everywhere

Outbound families, past, present and future

- Let everyone you know that you will be or are looking for host families....start many months ahead of the time that you need them. Put them on a list that you don't lose, add to it and refer back to it. Keep an email file labeled "host family" and add emails from inquiring minds and leads you are given.
- Always try to weave it into appropriate conversations.
- Give very personal invitations to potential host families. People need to be personally asked.
- Tell the stories of families that have been forever connected and how their lives have been changed. Tell them that the children in the house can become more outgoing, more helpful, more interested. How they become curious about the world. This should be seen as an opportunity to host not an obligation or a burden.
- Tell potential host families that they are not having "company" for three months, they are having another family member for three months (and longer). From the moment the student comes into the house they are treated as one of the family....complete with chores and responsibilities. You don't have to be on "perfect"...perfectly cleaned house, perfect meals, perfect everything. You get to continue to be yourself. If you are tired and don't want to make dinner...pizza is ok.
- Tell the potential host family that they will become part of a larger "family"...the Rotary family and there is a lot of built in support with that family. From the YEO to the counselor assigned to the student, to the club to the District to the other host families....lots of support. This makes the idea of hosting seem much more manageable.
- Tell host families they are not expected to take their students on trips or indulge them in anyway other than providing a safe and loving home. If another student gets to go to Big Sky with a family, that was never expected, that was just a lucky student.