

## Returning to High School

We all know coming back from an exchange year is followed by lots of mixed emotions. Everyone takes his or her return differently, but there's one thing that's for sure; come September, we all have to go back to high school.

Some students, when they come home from exchange, struggle with how similar or different the circumstances back home are. Some students have hoped that everything stayed the same and that they can jump right back in where they left off; others feel they have changed a lot while abroad and want the people back home to have changed as well. Ultimately, **the circumstances back home are never just how you think they will be, so have an open mind** about your return home and re-acclimation there.

Your year back is like a second exchange year, so treat it as one. Learn to appreciate the things that make your state so unique after your year! **Get Involved!**

### At School:

- Befriend the exchange students at your school
- Join whichever clubs that relate to your exchange year or fuel your new interests
- Talk to your school principal about putting you in charge of the exchange student welcoming committee at your school
- Join a tutor service so you can teach others your language and practice it at the same time
- Look into PSEO if you're having a hard time connecting with your peers

### Outside of School:

- Explore places that you didn't spend much time at before your exchange year
- Contact your local university and see if they offer your language at their school. If they do, ask to take a final for University credit, or at the very least for a letter that demonstrates your proficiency
- Stay active in Rotex
- Put time aside to be with your parents so that you can talk openly about how you feel, and what each of you would like to see happen
- Say yes to opportunities
- Offer to give presentations about your country to your school, and local communities
- Keep in contact with your friends and families in your host country

And remember, always feel free to contact any Rotex!

Or go to "Rotex – North Star Rotary Youth Exchange" on Facebook

## Message for Rebounds

Rae Thompson (Brazil 2009-2010)

I definitely had some rough days, but overall, going back to high school really was not as bad as I thought it would be.

I immediately became friends with the other exchange students in my school. I feel as though that helped me transition so much. I was able to relive my exchange year through them, and it felt so great to be able to help them out since I knew exactly what they were going through.

I also kept myself busy and did American things that I missed while in Brazil. I joined a soccer superfan group with some of my friends and we would go to every soccer game, home or away, that my high school's team had. I went to a lot of football games and I was really active in my school government. I made a lot of new friends through being active in the school, and by doing all these things, I was able to cope with the return more easily.

Something that helped a lot also was being really active with Rotex! They are all so much fun, and helped my transition so much since they know what everyone's going through.

During my free time, I would go explore places that I didn't spend much time at before my exchange year. I went to the Sculpture Garden, I went ice skating more often, I would go explore Minneapolis, I went to Twins games, and I spent a lot of time in Uptown and Lake Calhoun. It seems so simple, but you learn to appreciate the things that make your state so unique after your year!

Of course, all the things I did after coming back helped me appreciate my life here more, but I still had a whole other life back in Brazil. I was able to get through this by the best invention ever – SKYPE!! My host family and I would talk on Skype a few times each month. It made it seem as though they were right there in the room with me.

So to sum this all up, my advice to all of you is to BE INVOLVED!! Do as many things as you can in your school and with your friends. Enjoy the little things that you couldn't do back in your exchange country and remember that you WILL see everyone again someday. Have an awesome return year!