

Lions International Youth Exchange Report

Distinct 27-D1 Cabinet Meeting – October 15th, 2017

- **2017 Camp Summary**
 - We hosted 54 youth from 26 countries dispersed statewide. 9 youth were hosting in D1 and sent 7 youth aboard, 6 of whom received \$1000 district scholarships.
- **Youth Exchange Scholarships.**
 - We are currently soliciting scholarship applicants from Leo Clubs, Lions/Lioness member's relations, Campus Lions Clubs and the community at large. Informational brochures and handbooks are available. Note that we recently changed our scholarship policy to comply with LCI's policy on expenditures of publically raised monies. Now, ANY youth residing in D1 can apply for our District D1 scholarship, provided they have a sponsoring Lions Club.

Fundraising We are currently soliciting funds from our district Lions and Lioness clubs to finance this year's program. Funds collected are used to pay our districts' share of the Youth Exchange camp-related fees; youth exchange scholarships, host family stipends & other direct expenses. All the funds collected are used only for direct youth exchange related costs. There are no indirect fees; all individuals involved in this program are volunteers including camp counselor & all support staff. **To assess funds available for the December 15th scholarship deadline, please consider donating early.**

Finances/Budget

Total cost/meal - **\$2.08/meal** (\$1.87 in 2016)

Total cost/attendee/day - **\$28.98** (\$24.73 /2016)

Previous Balance \$5916.68

Donations - \$460.00

Expenses: Host Family Activity Support – 5 planned activities:
\$340.79 Lazer Tag (in lue of canoe trip cancel due to weather.
\$165.05 Bowling Trip to UW Union South
\$0.00 Concerts on the Square
\$0.00 Vilas Zoo/Obrich Garden
\$0.00 Madison Mallards Baseball Game

TOTAL Host Family Activities – 505.84

(Previous host family stipend @ \$100-\$150/family would have cost \$700 - \$1050

\$ 17.78 Postage (outgoing youth t-shirts, flags and pins)

TOTAL ACCOUNT BALANCE – \$5853.06

Projected Expenses: ~\$7325.00

Camp fee - \$1700 (paid by each of the 10 state Lions Districts) **NO INCREASE!**

Scholarships - \$1000 x 5 = \$5000 (the scholarship amount is determined by # of applications & available funds)

Host family support \$600

Postage \$25.00

Attachments: Outgoing Youth Essays including photos. Please take some time to read these first hand reports from the youth that traveled abroad this past summer. Also included is an essay from on of our incoming youth.

There are currently 3 volunteers on the District 27-D1 youth exchange committee; **Terry Miller** – Pardeeville, **Dave Easley** – Marshall and **Ben August** – Token Creek.

It's a pleasure serving on this committee and participating in a program that satisfies the **first objective** of the Lions **"To create and foster a spirit of understanding among peoples of the world"**

Lion Ben August - Youth Exchange Committee Chair

- **Chloe Riniker - Italy - Sponsored by the Hazel Green Lions Club**

Hello, I'm Chloe Riniker. This past summer I got the chance to travel to Italy for a month. For the first two weeks I got to live with two Italian families. They showed me their culture and their lifestyles as well. I know consider them my families and hope we meet or see each other again.



My last two weeks were spent in Camp Italia. In the camp we traveled to many places like Naples and the island of Sicily in Italy. We saw many churches, architectural structures, and beaches. I loved meeting all the other campers too. I made some friends from all over the world that I still talk to and will never forget.

This trip and the people that I have meet have shown me that maybe we aren't all that different. That we don't have to follow the stereotypes of the world and hate each other. It showed that there can be a better understanding of each other and more importantly peace. Peace that can help slowly change the world and change the way people think.



- **Abby Last - Italy - Sponsored by the Token Creek Lions Club**



This summer I was fortunate to be able to visit Italy through the Lions Club. This trip changed my world perspective of how I view the world.

My month in Italy taught me so much about not only Italy, but about many different cultures from meeting others kids at the camp. My experience was like nothing I've ever done before. Walking the roads of Milan to making homemade pasta with my host Mom were some of my favorite memories. I remember sitting in my first host mother's kitchen and just loving

watch and help her cook. I've never been great at cooking, but with her help, I can now say that I can make several dishes. She would talk me through her dishes and make every effort to teach me what each price of her dish was in English. Another of my favorite memories isn't going someplace new, but sitting down and talking to other campers about their own home life. Learning about their culture and how they live was fascinating. There was so many cultural differences that I learned about. I found that my own lifestyle was so different from the rest of the world. I have so many small moments of awe from learning about these campers that changed my whole perspective. They showed me through their words and actions, a different way of life that I had never experienced. I made many new friends that I still keep in contact with today.



- **Emily Erschen - Finland - Sponsored by the Hazel Green Lions Club**

This summer, I was able to visit Finland for three weeks thanks to the generosity of the Wisconsin Lions Club. The experience was nothing short of amazing and truly life changing. My camp was made up of about 25 young people like myself from all over Europe and the USA. We did many group activities that were designed to show us beautiful Lapland, but were also given opportunities to explore on our own during free time. I then moved to southern Finland close to Helsinki for my host family stay. I am very grateful that I was able to see the two very different parts of Finland and to spend my time with amazing individuals.



A big part of camp was international friendship and what connects us. We were assigned to bring a piece of our country to camp that we used to build and art installation for a local market. All the pieces connected to show us that we are all very similar and peace isn't hard to attain. As a camp, we swam in some of the cleanest lakes in the world, breathed some of the freshest air that can

be found, and even witnessed the sun high in the sky at midnight. We bonded over our visit to the real Santa Claus, taught each other about our home countries, and shared our favorite foods with everyone. My host family showed me what normal life in a different country is like while I taught them how to make s'mores and chocolate covered strawberries.

Going on the Lions Club International Youth Exchange was an amazing experience that I will never forget. I made life long friendships and became part of a new family. I learned so much about the importance of global friendships and partnerships as well as how we are all similar. I couldn't have asked for a better exchange trip. As they say in Finland, kiitos, thank you!



Photos: The first picture is both Allie and my host families, we did almost everything together. The second is at the top of Mount Levi in Lapland at midnight and the third is the camp also at midnight.

- **McKenna Cook - Italy - Sponsored by the Pardeeville Lions Club**

My Trip to Italy - By: McKenna Cook

My trip to Italy was better than any experience I ever could have imagined. I was able to stay in Italy for a month and make international friends from about fifteen different countries all thanks to the Lions Club Youth Exchange. My first two weeks in Italy with my host families allowed me to really become immersed in the Italian culture and gain a better understanding of what life is like in Italy, and let me tell you, it's pretty great! The time spent with my host families is time I will cherish forever as I was able to see many local places the average tourist would skip over. One of my



favorite adventures was with my second host family; we were able to visit the islands of Murano and Burano near Venice and learn all the history behind the islands and what each one is known for.

The Youth Exchange camp was the best two weeks of my summer. I met so many beautiful, talented individuals from so many different countries. Traveling Italy with these people for two weeks really was an amazing adventure because I was able to learn new phrases and words in five different languages, I was able answer questions many people

had about my country while also getting answers to the questions I had about their different countries and the best part was we were all experiencing a new culture together while still learning and understanding each other's' culture.

One of my favorite moments was when we all were sitting down one night to have dinner and I could hear seven different languages being spoken at once, it was incredible to hear. The language differences never were a problem because everyone was teaching each other how to say certain things and when people were uncertain of grammar or sentence structure in English they would all come to me and ask if what they were saying was okay or not, it was really great to see everyone practicing their different languages, I was even able to practice my Spanish while I was there! All the memories I made, places I visited, and people I met will forever be carried with me. This experience has definitely changed my life and I am beyond thankful to have spent a month in Italy experiencing new cultures and making new friends from around the world.



- **Leonie Tollefson - Japan - Sponsored by the Token Creek Lions Club**

*My Japanese Experience
by Leonie Tollefson*



I came to Japan hoping to discover the culture and traditions that created this beautiful country, and I think it's safe to say I found it. In my three weeks here, I've learned so much more than I thought possible, and I owed that to the wonderful Lions Clubs (Sakura and Kisarazu Clubs) and host families (Uesugis and Namekatas) that welcomed me to Japan. I feel like I've gotten an authentic Japanese experience, and that is absolutely priceless.



I was able to learn all about Japanese culture by the places we visited. By going to many Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples,

I was able to experience traditional culture and learn about the religious and spiritual beliefs that influence the Japanese people. When we went to Tokyo and Harajuku, I was able to learn so much about modern Japanese life and everyday experiences of Japanese teenagers.

These very immersive experiences into the culture are something I could've never acquired through a history book or museum, and they are something I'll never forget.



Visiting Japanese sightseeing places is another memory I'll always cherish. From Chinatown in Yokohama to Mt. Tsukuba to the Tokyo Sky tree, these sights allowed me to see the vibrant life that makes up Japan. They were also all beautiful!

The food in Japan is another thing I surely miss. I pushed myself to try everything that I can, and I've discovered so many new tastes and flavors. I found out that I absolutely love sushi and ramen, as well as tempura. I also love Japanese snacks like

pocky and Calbee chips. I found out that restaurants in Japan are quite an experience compared to American restaurants, from the atmosphere to the seating, the whole meal is something to be remembered.



One of my favorite memories is doing a professional photo shoot in a kimono. Although the kimono was extremely tight and hard to breathe in, I had a blast! My photos are even featured on the photo company's website! It was such a cool experience and I'll never forget it.

I want to thank everyone that made this trip possible for me, my host families, my receiving Lions clubs, and of course my sponsor Lions club! I learned so much about the Japanese culture and people, and I am now much better able to appreciate their culture. I feel like a more informed and accepting of a person, because I've seen more and I understand more than I did before. This experience was once in a lifetime, and I am so grateful that I got to embark on such a life-changing journey.

- **Maeve Kim - Switzerland— Sponsored by the Cottage Grove Lions Club**

*Lions Club International Youth Exchange
Maeve Kim*



Going to Switzerland this summer through the Lions Club International Youth Exchange was one of the best experiences of my life. I spent the first 2 weeks with a wonderful host family who live in Kirchberg, Switzerland. It is a small farming town about 20 minutes outside of the capital of Switzerland, which is Bern. They live in a typical swiss farm house and they raise cows. I thoroughly enjoyed my time with my host family. They have two boys who I played soccer with



nearly every single day. They took me to numerous amazing places. Throughout my stay with them, I was hiking at the top of mountains one day and swimming in lakes filled with fresh glacier water the next. I not only got to enjoy the magnificent



landscape, but I also had the privilege of experiencing their culture. My host family introduced me to many traditional dishes from their country such as: fondue, raclette, and zopf. My favorite experience from my time with my host family was going to the Niederhorn mountain. We took a cable car to the top and ate lunch with one of the most beautiful views I have ever seen. We then rented special scooters to ride down the mountain with. We rode through beautiful traditional swiss villages on the way down, and the whole time we had the amazing views of lake Thun to gaze upon while we rode down the mountainside. That day with my host family is one that I know I will never forget.

Although I thought my time in Switzerland could not get any better than what I experienced with my host family, I was proven wrong. I spent the next two weeks in Arzo, Switzerland in the camp. There are truly no words to describe how special it is to bring so many people from so many different countries together. We had 23 kids in the camp and 21 different countries were represented. The memories I made during my time in the camp are some that I will honestly cherish forever. It has now been over a month since I left Switzerland, and I still talk nearly every day with some of the friends I made there. The camp was very well run, and we got to explore, what felt like, every inch of the canton of Ticino. Majority of our days were spent visiting different cities around the lake of Lugano, and nearly every day we had a view of Italy. It was so wonderful to meet the different Lions Club members from each city we visited. You could clearly see how proud and happy they were to show us around their town and teach us some of their rich cultures. They made us feel welcome at every place we visited, and for that I am extremely grateful. My favorite memory from the camp was being in Lugano for the 1st of August. This is Switzerland's independence day, so we went down to Lugano and sat by the lake while we watched the firework show. I am very grateful for the friendships that I have made because of the camp. Being able to sit and listen to people talk about their countries and their different cultures is extremely eye opening and I believe everyone should have the opportunity to do so. It is not everyday that someone gets to listen to an opinion about world issues from a completely different perspective than their own. Overall, this trip was one of the best experiences of my life and I would not trade it for the world. And again, I am extremely thankful to the Lions Club for giving me the opportunity to travel across the world.

Incoming Youth - Sammy Gleed – UK – Hosted in 27-D1

I just want to start by thanking the Ringwood and Fordingbridge Lions club and those in Madison Wisconsin for this amazing opportunity. Not only did I gain valuable life experiences but I made friends for life. If it hadn't of been for the Lions club I would never of had this opportunity.

My host family, Mindy, Mark and Molly couldn't have been any better. As soon as I arrived I was treated like family. Molly my host sister was brilliant, we shared so many common interests, which made us a perfect match. We are planning to meet again next year after our exams. Molly is a true friend I will never forget.

Mindy and Mark, my host parents were extraordinary, if ever I needed anything they were there, nothing was too much trouble. I feel so fortunate to have experienced my month away in Wisconsin with such a brilliant family.

My week at camp was even more amazing than I anticipated it to be. Everyone was so welcoming, especially our camp director and my district leader Ben August. I couldn't have asked for anyone better to be leading camp and leading my district. Not only did he make an effort with everyone at camp but even before camp began he was inviting Molly and I round for a barbeque and to swim in his pool! However, even when camp had finished he would invite us to go kayaking and to the Olbrich Gardens etc. Ben played a big part in my experience in America and I can't thank him enough for all he did.

My time away was full of fun, laughter and memories I'll never forget due to the amazing people I met from so many countries around the world.

Yet again I just want to thank the Lions organisations whether that's in England or America for their hard work and enthusiasm throughout the whole process making it such an amazing experience.

THANKYOU!!

