

## Youth Exchange Chair Report

This report is based primarily on the meeting held at Kelowna on May 6th, attended by Al Fennig, Ann Ng, Cindy Robison, George Sim, Steve Muenz, Tim Ng, Wayne Atkinson and myself, and the February 18th meeting at Langley attended by Cindy Robison, Kathy Schumer, Rob Schumer, Shelley Costello, Wanda Carisse, Janet Rinehart and myself.

At the beginning of the two meetings we reviewed some problems being faced by the MD19 Youth Exchange Program. This includes the decision of many clubs to not participate, for a variety of reasons. Some clubs are not familiar with Youth Exchange, some have a sister city exchange, some participate in a zone or district exchange program that operates apart from the MD19 program; some have members who feel too old to participate; some have difficulty accessing resources such as high school students; and many other reasons. A common problem is the inability of many district YEP chairs to visit all their clubs due to the size of the district. Even in the more compact districts such as B & C it is difficult for one person to visit each club, urge the club to participate and try to recruit a club YEP chair. Other districts are complicated not only by travel distances but state or national boundaries or both. For many Lions, who generally pay all their own expenses for travel and meals, being a Youth Exchange Chair can be a huge financial burden.

In the past, the MD19 Youth Exchange Committee provided full service by coordinating exchanges to and from other countries, locating host families through the District Chairs, scheduling transfers between host families, arranging air travel, training outgoing youth, providing YEP banners and paraphernalia, etc. Loss of volunteers to do those jobs prevents operation as done in the past.

One option that was discussed briefly at both meetings was for MD19 to terminate the Youth Exchange Program as an MD function and simply allow any club, zone or district that so desires to operate its' own program. Although that continues to be an option, the consensus was to keep looking for a solution other than termination.

Other than as mentioned above, our discussions started with recognition of the problems being faced by the MD 19 Youth Exchange Program itself. The problems started several years ago as it became more and more difficult to find host families and youth desiring foreign travel. It was then compounded by not being able to obtain younger Lions to replace the Lions who had long served as area coordinators, foundation officers and district Youth Exchange Chairs. Many Lions have served for a long time and expressed a feeling of "burnout". Attendees expressed a consensus that to revive the Youth Exchange Program in MD 19 requires active intervention by the Council of Governors, the Governors and the Vice District Governors.

The Youth Exchange Committee would like for the District Governors to support the program and help in rebuilding and energizing Youth Exchange, by doing the following right away:

1. Ask every District, Zone and Club that has an exchange program to send me an email explaining their program, including how it works, basic rules, type (sister-city or other) and the pros and cons that they see in their own program. This will help in identifying what works best in differing situations and what might work on a district level. It would provide an opportunity to develop trial programs that could be used in a zone or district to see how an approach works when done by the Multiple District. It will also help in developing training for district YEP Chairs by teaching proven to work. My email address is [georgerobison@centurytel.net](mailto:georgerobison@centurytel.net).
2. Ask that the Youth Exchange Program be included in future Leadership Institute, Multiple District and District conducted training. Each meeting attendee confirms meeting club and zone officers who know nothing about youth exchange. Inclusion of specific youth exchange training at the Institute and officer training at all levels would at least assure that clubs become aware of the program. Attendees would also like the opportunity to have Youth Exchange seminars at MD and District conferences.
3. Ask that DGs encourage each Zone Chair and each Club to have a Youth Exchange Chair and that Districts go back to having two Youth Exchange Chairs, to divide the work load. The Youth Exchange

Program is spread across thousands of square miles in this multiple district. In most of MD19 it is not possible for a District YEP Chair to visit every club, seek participation in high schools and publicize the program in all local newspapers. In many locations only members of a local club will have access to a school. It is imperative that DGs ask that Zone Chairs and Clubs have a Youth Exchange Chair.

4. Ask that DGs include Youth Exchange in every presentation as they visit their clubs as part of their official DG year and that every newsletter have a message about Youth Exchange. Information about the YEP Committee meetings in Langley and Kelowna was widely disseminated by the MD19 office, by myself and was in the Border Crossing twice. Although several Lions indicated a desire to attend but were unable to attend for a variety of reasons, as I visit clubs I find Lions who were unaware of the meetings. A couple of more meetings are being planned for locations in Washington State.

5. It would also be nice if every DG and CC hosted a visiting youth or sponsored an outbound youth. Actual hosting imparts the value of the program

The Committee plans to pursue the following:

1. Recruit volunteers to fill coordinator and Foundation positions so that YE Program activities will be able to resume. Currently exchanges are being handled as a courtesy by Kathy and Rob Schumer as part of the 19B program. Records are in Quesnel because most other functions were being handled by PDG Ron Silver. DG Wanda Carisse has agreed to help obtain transfer of the records.
2. The MD19 YE Program has an FAQ brochure that will be updated as soon as further decisions are made. Those will be available on the YEP web site, as attachments to emails and as print documents at conferences and training programs, to hopefully broaden knowledge of the Program.
3. At future meetings, we will discuss some changes to the Foundation that will require Bylaw revisions to implement. That includes offering financial incentives to clubs or youth to assist in paying hosting or travel expenses.
4. Discussion of changing security problems for travelling youth and host families, which may result from personal conduct or government action and the systems or methods that are available to clubs and the YE Program.

Respectfully submitted,

George Robison, MD19 Youth Exchange Chair