

District 1040 Rotary Youth Leadership Awards Course Report 2012

I was proud and delighted to take on the role of Course Director and RYLA Chairman when District Governor Keith Davison offered it to me in September last year following the retirement of PDG Ken Robertshaw after sixteen years. In my professional life, I enjoy a training and development responsibility as part of my role and we invest in young people to bring them on in the profession. When our Rotary clubs sponsor a candidate, they are making an investment in a young person for which they will always be grateful and will never forget. RYLA does actually change these young peoples' lives as they start to realise their leadership potential and gain in confidence throughout the course and it is a huge privilege to work on the team that helps deliver this fantastic programme.



We have just completed two successful courses for sixty four 16 and 17 year olds from throughout District 1040. The course was run along similar lines to last year but we took on board feedback we had received from previous courses and also introduced some small changes to keep the course fresh. On the final evening, certificates and RYLA polo shirts were presented by DG Keith followed by a talent show. We decided to ask the awardees to use some of the leadership skills they had learned to run the show this year, including appointing comperes, organising the acts and arranging the running order. They did this very successfully and we had acts ranging from an Opera singer to Indian classical music, from street dancing to a short pantomime. The Thursday evening is an opportunity for everyone to let their hair down after a week of working hard and the awardees embraced the challenge that we set them. Please do feel free to come and visit RYLA on either of the Thursday evenings at the end of the course – I can guarantee you will enjoy it and the awardees enjoy chatting about the experience they have had.

We also held a Service above Self evening where the awardees filled aquaboxes with items that they had volunteered to bring, we had presentations from Rotarian mentors about projects they are passionate about within their own clubs and Trevor Woodward, New Generations Chairman spoke about "Life after RYLA". Rotarian Tim Dale, our Deputy Course Director and RYLA Secretary gave a moving presentation about the Laura Crane Trust, the teenage cancer charity and encouraged the awardees to use their leadership skills not just to help themselves but to help others too. I am pleased to report that during the two weeks we raised £522 for the Laura Crane Trust from the tuck shop, selling wristbands made and donated by one of the instructors and donations from Rotarians for refreshments. Thank you to everyone who contributed.



RYLA is most definitely a team effort and thank you to the Rotary Clubs in the District for sending us the best young people in your communities. Your selection processes and the work you put into RYLA are very much appreciated by us all.

I would also like to thank all the Rotarians who worked as mentors on the course. Mentors hold a very special place in RYLA. They are allocated a team of eight and support and encourage their awardees throughout the week as they learn and develop. The instructors may only see a particular group once or twice but the mentors are always there and provide consistency throughout the week as the awardees undertake tasks and learn from the feedback they are given. I would like to thank Rotarians David Hastings, Lesley Hastings, Sue Leach, Chris Aldred, Richard Greenwood, Nigel Wales, Paul Hughes and Honorary Rotarian Steph Budby for their commitment, time and energy. David and Lesley have asked for a year off next year after four years so I would like to thank them for their huge contribution to RYLA but I will be chasing them again in 2014!

I would also like to extend my thanks to Tim Dale for the hard work he puts in throughout the year. RYLA actually takes nearly a year to organise so we are already thinking about next year would you believe. Tim also works as the Deputy Course Director at RYLA and he ensures everything around the camp runs smoothly. I would also like to thank Honorary Rotarian and Past Awardee Steph Budby for her work as the Assistant RYLA Secretary and as the Assistant Course Director on week one of RYLA. Steph asked if she could work as a mentor on week two and did this very successfully. Tim was assisted by Christina Cooper and Emma King as Assistant Course Directors too and as past awardees it was good to see them return to the course that they felt had given them so much.

Last but not least, I would like to thank Awesome Adventure, our professional instructors. Their dedication to the learning experience of the young people is wonderful to see and we are very lucky to have them as part of the team.

If you would like to be involved in RYLA, I would be delighted to hear from you. If you would like to hear more about how Rotarians can get involved then please do let me know and I would be happy to come and speak to your club.

I had big boots to fill following Ken's retirement from RYLA and would like to thank him for everything he has done for RYLA over the last sixteen years. I have relished the challenge and have enjoyed every minute of RYLA 2012. We are now preparing to issue the application forms for next year in October's District Mailing.

Thank you for letting me have the opportunity to be Course Director and Chairman and here's to RYLA 2013!

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