

ROTARY AMBASSADORIAL SCHOLARS from District 6220

(Rotary Ambassadorial Scholarships were awarded through 2013-2014 after which Rotary changed the scholarship to a Global Grant Scholarship supporting post graduate education.)

TESTIMONIALS ON THEIR ROTARY SCHOLARSHIP EXPERIENCE AND IMPACT ON THEIR LIVES AND WORK:

Sarah Wheeler (2001-2002)

Serving as a Rotary Ambassadorial Scholar is all of the things that you would imagine it to be: an honor, a privilege, and an amazing adventure. This opportunity extends an incredible invitation to become a part of a strong, driven, and unique community of individuals who share a vision to create understanding in the world. It is impossible to immerse yourself in such a task and not grow tremendously as a human being. Since spending my ambassadorial year in **Ghana, West Africa**, my life has never been the same. Almost a decade later, the impact of this experience still resonates in virtually every aspect of my life. The Rotary Ambassadorial Scholarship gave me the incredible gift of knowledge, refined my worldview, fostered precious life-long friendships, and truly ignited my passion for public health. At present, I am about to embark on the next phase of my career as a nurse practitioner and public health professional. I know without a shadow of a doubt that I would not be where I am today if I had not been granted the Ambassadorial experience. I am forever indebted to the Rotary Foundation for providing me with an opportunity that allowed me to truly confirm my calling. It is my genuine hope that the work that I do and the relationships that I form will continue to bear witness to the power of such an amazing program and organization.

Justen Thomas (2004-2005)

The best thing about being involved with Rotary as an Ambassadorial scholar is being part of something larger than yourself. We are never alone, always have someone to call, and are part of a network of like-minded people who, like us, want to leave the world a better place than we found it. But the true gift of Rotary isn't just about what we get out of it as scholars--being a Rotary Goodwill Ambassador should also become a title that defines you. As Ambassadorial scholars, we represent more than ourselves--our actions represent Rotary, our families, our region of the United States, and our country as a whole. My advice to any Ambassadorial scholar would be to tap in fully to the Rotary network, and let it define a part of your overseas experience, be it through service, regular Rotary events, or simply by living by the 4 Way Test, both during and long beyond your Rotary year. Take the title of Rotary 'Ambassador' seriously and wear it proudly as a symbol that guides your thoughts, words, and deeds."

I could go on and on, of course, but I think this is what you're looking for. If you want something more personal, just ask, I'll respond quickly (you're right, it's much easier to get a hold of me on Facebook than Hotmail these days!)

We're receiving President Obama here in **Brazil** this weekend, which means it's non-stop work at the Embassy preparing every last detail of his visit. A lot of late nights, but worth every minute! I can't wait to see him give his speech to the Brazilian people in Rio on Sunday!

Glen Young (2005-2006)

I attended Lincoln University near **Christchurch, New Zealand** as a Rotary Ambassadorial Scholar in 2006. During that time I studied Parks, Recreation, and Tourism with a focus on Outdoor and International Education. I had chosen to study these forms of alternative education because of experience I had working with Indigenous populations in the United States, Canada, and SE Asia. I also had experience with at-risk youth who were rarely successful in traditional education settings. I felt that the hands-on learning that took place in outdoor activities and through travel was the best way to help these individuals find the joy in learning.

Following my scholarship year, I began working for a New Zealand company called Pacific Discovery, where I led semester study abroad programs in Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Burma for university students from the United States. Although I loved the work, and learned a great deal myself, I felt that tourism was not the most effective way to help people understand and appreciate other cultures. There needed to be more substance- more real connection with the local people--A greater sharing of not only money and positive experiences, but also of difficulty, struggle, and hardship.

I returned to the United States and resumed working with at-risk youth. I also began working for a Service Learning program for a private high school in the Seattle area where students stayed in a small village in Peru for one month, living with families and completing a service project along with house-hold chores. The students developed close relationships with their adopted families, and gained a real appreciation for the community that they lived in. By the end of the month it felt like a second home. This was closer to what I had envisioned, and I signed-up to lead the trip again the following year.

In the meantime, I was contacted by the parents and therapist of a student I had in a wilderness therapy program. The therapist felt that the relationship I had developed with the student was one of the best things the young man had in his life, and hoped that we could find a way to continue the relationship beyond the bounds of the program. I became a life-coach and mentor, and was put in charge of the student's higher education, which was to include international travel and exposure to poverty in the third-world. I am currently in the process of designing an international trip that will include travel to remote regions of the third world, home-stays, and volunteer opportunities for the student. I have also started a company called Direct Experience International, whose mission is to expose participants to a diversity of environments and Peoples through human powered travel (bicycling, hiking, mountaineering, etc.), home stays, and education. The company operates in the United States and overseas through affiliations with international organizations.

The path I have chosen to follow in my personal and professional life is a direct result of my time as a Rotary Ambassadorial Scholar. Although I had a strong interest in international education before my time as a Scholar, my scholarship year provided me with experiences that solidified my commitment, and helped me understand what elements were necessary in order to create meaningful experiences that would affect peoples' behavior into the future. My concern about the international community has been a product of relationships that I've developed with people from other countries, and much of this has been possible because of my time spent living in the international housing at Lincoln University. Through my work, I hope to help design experiences that result in long-term relationships with people whose lives and experiences are drastically different than those of participants. In effect, I am trying to provide others with an experience that the Rotary Ambassadorial Scholarship was able to provide for me. It's the only way I know how to give back after being given so much.

Alessandra Brignola (2006-2008) Inbound scholar-- **Houghton, Michigan USA**

The RAS Program has definitely shaped my life both personally and professionally.

It not only has given the opportunity to attend a prestigious university and fulfill the path I was professionally looking for; but it has even more importantly impacted my look to - and knowledge of - cultural diversities, local identities, and history.

If in some way studying abroad and meeting international students certainly is an enriching experience in general, through the RAS Program one has the unique opportunity of knowing, understanding, and taking part into Rotary as a whole: a worldwide family that operates and services both locally and internationally; a worldwide and individual effort that invests in the youth in order to build intercultural dialogue, and mutual respect among countries and cultures.

Despite the bad news we daily hear on the media, being an active part into Rotary`s programs makes you realize that the world is not only about hate and murders. Makes you understand that there is a huge part of us that want, do and can make the difference: both daily and within specific agendas. It is a strong, impressive, inflexible, untiring team committed to build peace, goodwill, leadership, and understanding. You will be proud of being part of it, and you won`t be able to ignore the future of our world anymore.

YouTube 2013 Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3k7dFwD3F2E>

Juliana Hagembe (2007-2008)

The year I spent in **Hong Kong** was a great year. I had the pleasure of participating in numerous Rotary activities and gave presentations to groups of diverse audiences where we experienced the joy of international fellowship. Interacting with so many successful and intelligent Rotarians helped shape my thoughts, ideals, career plans and future goals. Furthermore, the valuable personal contributions from my MPH classmates at HKU (mostly doctors from China or Hong Kong), reinforced with a visit to the China Leprosy Village with my Host Club, fueled my desire to utilize my talents and abilities to help people less fortunate than me. It also increased my determination to pursue my ultimate "goal" – to contribute towards decreasing healthcare inequity at an international level. I acquired a Master`s in Public health degree in Hong Kong and I am currently working for the Institute of Human virology (Dr. Gallo, the person who discovered HIV causes AIDS is the Director- We support different countries in Africa build their capacity towards fighting the AIDS epidemic) and hope to continue in this line of work in the future.

I can honestly say the relationships that were formed were the best part of the year. I was the first African a lot of my "now good friends" had ever had direct contact/conversation making the interaction special. In addition, Vivian (my host counselor from Hong Kong) was kind enough to attend my first presentation in Marquette (where I shared about my year in Hong Kong), all the Rotarians and friends who had the opportunity to meet her really enjoyed it! Last year I had the very special opportunity to attend Vivian`s wedding. That is just an example of how I am still really enjoying all the relationships I formed as a result of my affiliation with Rotary and as a RAS scholar.

I am very thankful to all the Rotarians for supporting such a magnificent program, for district 6220 for sponsoring me and district 3450 for being such a wonderful host district.

Nick Bisley (2008-2009) Sweden

Here is a short schtick on my experience with the Rotary Foundation's Ambassadorial Scholarship. I hope this gives viewers some idea of the positive impact that Rotary has had on my life. I hope with time I can help to continue the work of Rotary locally and internationally.

YouTube 2013 video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ruoA4ajans>

Kimberly Martino (2008-2009)

With my heart pounding so hard I would have sworn that I was going to jump right through my chest, I laid the first foot fall of the most earth shaking experience of my life. Eyes like saucers, I navigated my way through the Indira Gandhi Airport and, two hours later, emerged in the thick air of a July midnight in **Delhi, India**. At nineteen, in the middle of an environmental science degree in Michigan, with no experience traveling, let alone living outside the US, I had been honored with a Rotary Ambassadorial Scholarship and the opportunity to engage the world I was so eager to know. While I am unsure if I will ever sufficiently wrestle that year into words powerful enough, full enough to convey my experience, I will say this: Walking out of into that first summer night filled with the sounds, smells and souls of the nearly twenty million people bustling through Delhi, I was a girl both intrigued and terrified by what stood in front of me. Years later, I write to you as a woman who remains confident, convicted, motivated, and moved on a daily basis to engage the world and share the powerful oneness of humanity that my year as a Rotary Ambassadorial Scholar has left in my soul.

Nicole Weber (2009-2010)

Being a Rotary Ambassadorial Scholar in **Geneva, Switzerland** was an amazing experience and I think I realized it even more so after the year had ended. Now looking back, I am happy that I was able to experience as much as I did in Geneva but I wish I had taken even more time to become closer to my host club. As Swiss culture is a bit more reserved, I felt at the beginning the Rotarians in Geneva didn't want me to participate in the meetings and events. It wasn't until I was a bit more persistent that they opened up to me and became much more welcoming. My advice to future scholars is do not be shy. You've been picked as an Ambassador of Goodwill because Rotary believes that you have the capacities to fill those shoes and most Rotarians are excited to meet you and hear about your experiences. It may take some warming up to you depending on what the Rotary environment is like in your host club, but if you work on forming a relationship, it makes your year that much more enriching for both you and Rotary.

YouTube 2013 Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xw3Tro1_QrA

Natalie Gratten (2010-2011)

Feb. 2011 **What I've learned in 6 days: Notes from a Scholar Newly Arrived**

As a scholar just beginning my year abroad (**Dunedin, New Zealand**), I don't have too much wisdom to impart. One thing I've realized, however, is that I am going to learn a lot just by being here and being open to new experiences. I've already been here 6 days, and I have already learned so much! Here are some examples:

- Believe the weather report. If Accuweather says 500F and raining, but the calendar says that it's summer, pack sweaters and a raincoat.
- Learn to convert to Kg, Km, Litres, etc
- DON'T BUY ANYTHING (the #1 rule of my host sponsor); chances are, your club has hosted a RAS before, and therefore has bedding, bikes, dishes, etc stored and waiting for you
- Go to Rotary meetings; if getting the most out of a year abroad means knowing the right people, then Rotarians are certainly the right people to know!
- Look ALL ways (not just left and right) when crossing the street; you never know where a car can appear from, especially when they're driving on the left.
- Relax; things will be slow at first, and you will get lonely. Expect this. Journal, read the local newspaper, walk around, and get involved as soon as you can. The more places you go, the more people you meet, the more you will start to feel at home.
- Keep your eyes and ears open; there are so many new things to see and hear, taste and smell. Even if it looks just like home at first glance, look again. There is always something to surprise you.

...and so much more! This is an incredible opportunity, and I am looking forward to a wonderful year of learning.

Sarah Ehlinger (2011-2012)

YouTube Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yHI6bxmZdt4>

The Rotary Ambassadorial Scholarship brought me to Accra, Ghana in 2011 to study Geography and Resource Development. Though I had conducted research in West Africa before, living there was unlike anything I had ever experienced. I had witnessed too many aid projects fail in developing countries and was disillusioned with the workings of large international aid agencies. Dealing with Rotary in Ghana made me realize that you did not have to be a genius, have the fanciest technological solution, or be overly philosophical to change the world. Talking with your roommate, trying new foods, showing pictures of your home and your family, and simply listening to others makes a world of difference. In this sense, the scholarship experience gave me hope. Rotary had invested in me, and I contributed to world understanding as a return on their investment. It worked.

Rotary changes the world because it recognizes that young people know how to change the world.