

Erin Dunn

Community Comment 5/24/16

This is Erin Dunn from the Fortuna Chamber of Commerce with a Community Comment.

Two weeks ago, I was reunited with three of my Rotary Exchange kids. My first two daughters came to visit us in Fortuna for a few days before heading down to the big Rotary conference in Napa. What a joy it was to have them here.

I'm not a mom, I don't have parenting skills, and for the most part—kids scare me. Or at least they did before I became a Rotary Youth Exchange host mom.

My first two daughters were a true blessing. Both beautiful inside and out, incredibly worldly and loving. My first Simone, is from Switzerland. She is Swiss-German so everything was thought out, organized, and methodical. She introduced me to the music of Amy McDonald and was good natured about my first attempts at cooking.

My second daughter, Pernille, is from Denmark. She has a smile and manner that melts every heart it runs into. We went to a lot of Rotary events together and logged many miles in the car singing and eating bags of snap peas.

When they came and stayed with us Fortuna earlier in the month, it was the first time they had met each other—so much alike and yet so incredibly different. They shared not only me as a host mom, but another family as well. Would there be jealousy? Arguments? One-upman-ship? They were here in a crowded house with one bathroom and one sleeping in the living room on a blowup bed, I guessed anything could happen.

It couldn't have been more magical. Just like old times—only better, because both of them were here at the same time.

When we got to Napa we were joined by my last Youth Exchange son Pedro from Brazil. He joined them and became part of this delightful trio that did more for world peace and understanding than any other three people that weekend.

I want to give a shout out to the Rotary clubs of Fortuna and Fortuna Sunrise for making the reunion possible.

Why am I even telling you this? Because this is the time of year that Youth Exchange counselors from our local Rotary clubs are looking for hosts. This might be your time to consider being a host parent. Three months out of the year that will change your life forever.

Not every kid is a Simone, Pernille or Pedro—I had one I don't stay in touch with anymore—but you can travel the world and never leave your living room.

An extra bonus for a bunch of us at this Rotary conference was meeting Pedro's parents who came to the Sunday session.

It happened to be Mother's Day. Pedro had all three of his American moms there, a special Fortuna aunt and his mom from Brazil. All in one room—a room bursting at the seams with a special love that only comes when you are involved with Youth Exchange.

If someone asks you to consider being a host parent to a Rotary Youth Exchange student, it may be your lucky day. Think about it, talk it over with your family, take the plunge.

We have signed up to host next school year. It's a boy. From Switzerland. We can't wait.

This has been Erin Dunn with a Community Comment.