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Blind River Rotary Club changes presidents, changing lives

KELLY JAMES

The Standard

Change was the order of the day as the Rotary Club of Blind River held a special meeting along the edge of Lake Duborne last Wednesday.

The local service club welcomed a new president, as Kirsty Locke took over from past-president Bea Jensen. The out-going president told the new leader that she will have the full support of the club, terming them, "a great gang to work with." "Bea has done a great job as president, and I look forward to following her footsteps," Locke told the assembled club members. "I marvel at my good fortune to be a member of such a dedicated and genuine group of people who are making a real difference in our community and around the world."

Locke paid special attention to four young people in attendance who are committed to Rotary's goal of improving international understanding through their participation in the Rotary Youth Exchange

Zimbabwe is currently spending a year in Blind River with local families, while Blind River native Jeff Moore has recently returned to the community after spending a year with three families in Thailand.

Julia Hall of Blind River left Monday to spend a year with Rotarians in India, while Cattie Casavant will be leaving in September to spend her year in the Rotary exchange program in Russia.

Club secretary Dave Marshall, who has been active in Rotary's youth exchange program for many years, hailed the exchange students for their spirit of adventure and commitment to international understanding. He also lauded their parents, noting that, "Without parents who entrust their children to Rotary exchange, it just wouldn't be possible to operate such a worthwhile program."

Returning student Jeff Moore is proof positive of the impact of a year spent abroad. He points out that

now realizes the incredible opportunities that are available to him.

"The exchange program is a great way to find out who you are and what is important to you," Jeff explains. "It truly helps to build connections between cultures, and it really helped me to grow up."

Jeff reports that his host families in Thailand were wonderful, stating that, "They accepted me as their son and treated me with the utmost of respect."

He notes that, "The Thai people are very generous and very positive in their approach to life, and I hope to visit my host families again some day."

Although he did miss his friends and family, Jeff is extremely happy that he participated in the Rotary Youth Exchange Program. He emphatically states that, "If you don't take advantage of this opportunity to see the world and meet new friends, you'll be missing out on one of the greatest experiences of your life."

"This experience has changed me. I know now



Kirsty Locke (left) and Bea Jensen share a laugh as Jensen turned over the presidency of the Rotary Club of Blind River to Locke last Wednesday evening.

Delayed water project

committed to Rotary's goal of improving international understanding through their participation in the Rotary Youth Exchange Program. She noted that Julie Bukutu from

a worldwide program. Returning student Jeff Moore is proof positive of the impact of a year spent abroad. He points out that during his year in Thailand, he grew enormously as a person and

missing out on one of the greatest experiences of your life.

"This experience has changed me. I know now that I can succeed in whatever I choose to do in my life," Jeff concludes.



Rotary Club of Blind River secretary Dave Marshall is proud of the current crop of Rotary exchange students: Julia Hall (who left for India on Monday), Julie Bukutu from Zimbabwe (who is staying with three families in Blind River this year), Cattie Casavant (who leaves for Russia in September) and Jeff Moore, who just returned to Blind River after spending the past year in Thailand.

Photos by Kelly James