



Kendra
From Georgetown to
Brazil

Rotary has given me the gift of worldwide connections for life

The past three months have gone by so fast, and I am now writing my very last BeaverTale. Three months ago, it seemed like this day would never come, but now it has gotten here too fast. During this next month, I will have to try to take advantage of the short time I have left in Brazil before I say goodbye to the most exciting, difficult and worthwhile year of my life.

During the past three months, my Portuguese has really improved. I would say that I am semi-fluent now, the semi being from the occasional squints I get from people while I speak Portuguese. My host family has been helping me out a lot in relation to the endless list of verb conjugations and “non-existent-in-english” verb tenses that I have troubles with. I have been doing a lot more Portuguese lessons outside of school for the past 2 months in preparation for my Portuguese proficiency test.

This year in February, I started terceiro (the Brazilian equivalent of grade 12) with a new class. This new class is a lot better than my old one, but I still have some troubles identifying with the Brazilian friendship vibe which is a lot different than in Canada. However, I have made some good school friends who I will miss when I go home. They have really helped me

out a lot in the language department (more swearing and slang) and it will be hard to say goodbye next month.

The absolute highlight of the past 3 months was my Amazon trip. The trip was 10 days long, and consisted of 3 days in Manaus (the capitol city) and 7 days travelling down the Amazon river with 75 other exchange students. We were separated into groups of about 25 people, and we were placed on 3 different boats for the week. My boat was called "bicho-preguiça" - which means sloth in portuguese. During that week, we had so many amazing experiences that I hardly remember everything we did. We hiked through the forest (complete with tarantulas and monkeys), swam with dolphins in the river, visited an indian tribe, fished for piranhas, planted trees, we even got to hold crocodiles and sloths. The crocodiles we got to hold were wild, and one of our excursions was to go and find them. If you ever want to find a crocodile in the rainforest, the way to do that would be to wave a flashlight so the light reflects off the red eyes of the crocodile. Our guide successfully did this, and then proceeded to stick his hands in the water and just grab the crocodile – it was pretty intense. I could really go on about this trip forever, but I just wanted to highlight the most exciting parts in my Beaver Tale.

Out of this whole year, the thing I value the most is the friends I have made and the connections I now have all over the world. The exchange students in my district are some of the nicest and most interesting people I have ever had the pleasure to meet in my life. The experiences we have had together have been unforgettable and I will truly miss my exchange friends.

When I was first selected for my exchange year, all I could think about was the fact that it was an exchange *year*. I thought about how much time I would lose with my friends, how much school I would miss, and what missing a year of a very important stage in my life would mean for my future.

Now that I look back on this year, I see that I have not *lost* time with my friends, but spent time with new ones. I haven't *missed* school , but have

experienced it in another hemisphere. However, most importantly, I have gained a year of knowledge; patience and experience that will help me decide my course in the future. My experiences in Brazil have been some of the hardest and best in my life, but every single moment of my exchange has been worth all of the fear and doubt that went through my mind last year. If I had not gone on exchange, I would not be who I am today – an open minded, patient and adaptable person.

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