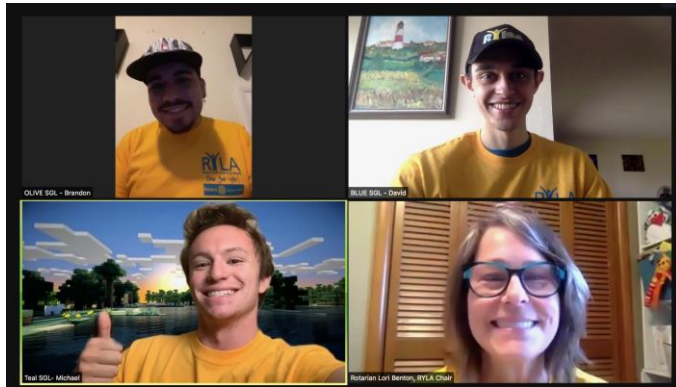


Rotary Youth Leadership Awards 2021, *Shine Your Light*

Final Report

“Don’t let someone dim your light simply because it is shining in their eyes”



RYLA SWAG and RU University leaders and District 5650 RYLA Chairperson, Lori Benton

From a well-planned 2020 camp cancellation to an online 2021 reinterpretation, District 5650 RYLA 2021 was a fun and interesting challenge.

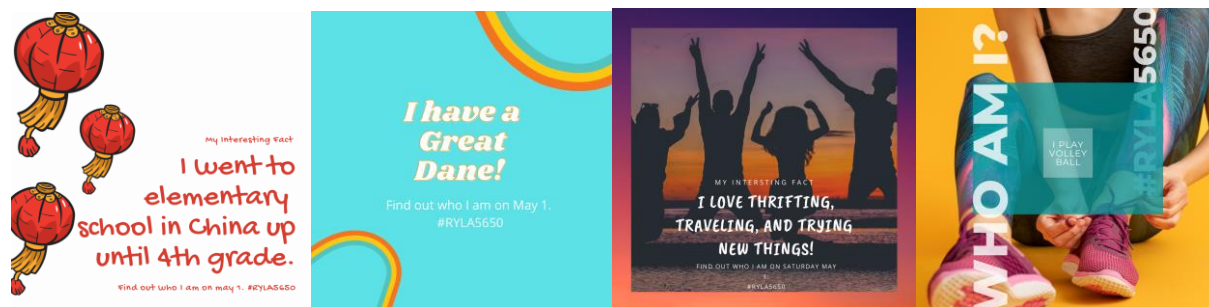
RYLA 2021 Camp ultimately unfolded online because of lingering concerns for everyone’s health and welfare. Most 2020 camp activities were transferrable to online and we secured a brand new RYLA University Program created by the Rotaract Club of Leadership and Service of New Jersey (Tuition paid for online program, planning, all group, and small group led discussions, with unlimited support.) Each student was paired with a Rotarian mentor to help with engagement due to the nature of Zoom. Thank you all who volunteered for this very important aspect of RYLA.

RYLA University (RU) was created in response to the constrictions of COVID and provided an online, interactive approach to the tenants of leadership to include Individual, Team, Community, and Global. [RYLAUniversity.com](https://rylauniversity.com), was self-directed homework that students completed each week prior to the Saturday discussion. And then that discussion was rolled into the day’s activity. Each session began with a check-in, then small group discussion of the RU coursework, followed by the day’s activity and more discussion, we closed the day in small groups.

- RU segment one – Individual leadership, was combined with the Clifton Strengths Top Five Strengths discussion (Tuition paid for assessment, book, and professional interpretation.). <https://www.strengthsquest.com>
- RU segment two – TEAM, was combined with Miss Representation Documentary discussion led by Council Bluff Afternoon volunteer Kathy Reiger, class session three was a Mask You Wear Documentary discussion led by volunteer-at-large Henry Hallgren (Tuition paid for movie licensing fee and discussion syllabus). <https://therepproject.org/>
- RU Segment three – Community, was combined with our Extreme Event Community Resiliency Activity coordinated by Omaha West’s Warren Whitted III). <https://labx.org/extreme-event/>
- RU Segment four – Global was combined the Business Ethics Alliance “Ethical Leadership” presentation (Tuition paid for presentation and books.) <https://www.businessethicsalliance.org/>



*AMAZING! I thought it was amazing especially considering COVID, I thought it was beneficial and I learned things about myself and leadership that are priceless. –
RYLA 2021 Student*



Before RYLA, and to pique interest, students shared an interesting fact about themselves that was then posted on the RYLA5650 Instagram page.

RYLA 2021 hosted 42 students from 14 clubs, including students from Canada and Israel. (18 previous year students rolled into 2021).

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Bellevue/Papillion – 1 | 9. Omaha Downtown – 2 |
| 2. Blair – 1 | 10. Omaha Night – 1 (International Student from Israel) |
| 3. CB Centennial – 2 | 11. Omaha West – 8 |
| 4. CB Noon – 2 | 12. Red Oak – 2 |
| 5. District 5580 (MN and Ontario, CA) – 7 | 13. Seward – 2 |
| 6. Lincoln East – 2 | 14. Suburban - 5 |
| 7. Lincoln South – 1 | |
| 8. Millard – 6 | |

“I learned a lot about myself, my leadership style, and how to effectively work in a team.” RYLA 2021 Student

RU issued completion certificates to students who submitted their completed worksheets. [See completed worksheet sample here.](#)

I thought that going through these (RU) modules were really helpful in learning more about leadership and they were all very interactive and overall a wonderful experience! – RYLA 2021 Student

We had hiccups with a few of the activities, yet the students were good sports about it. Regular weekly student engagement was sporadic due to sports and jobs. Students got to know each other better on our RYLA Instagram page. Some mentors had a great experience, some did not due to lack of student response. We regularly had three or more Rotarians on the Zoom meetings. Many thanks to all Rotarians who helped, volunteered, and morally supported District 5650 RYLA 2021.

It was a great experience! Even with RYLA being virtual this year, I thought it was an effective and eye-opening opportunity – RYLA 2021 Student

Financially, RYLA was a success with a remaining balance of \$10,460.42 for 2022 (the Business Ethics Alliance invoice has yet to be paid after which I guess will make the balance around \$9,700+. Omaha West was the 2020 gold sponsor by donating \$4,000 in addition to their 2020 tuition pledge of \$2,400. Doane University funded SWAG. Student tuition was \$200 at 50 students. We experienced an unexpected expense for background checks which, in addition to other increased expenses, could have set us back if camp had proceeded.

It couldn't be any better! I had the greatest time! I LOVE RYLA University! I've learned so much about myself and I'm sure I'll become a better leader and a better human being thanks to you. I would LOVE to be on the physical RYLA University next year in America or at any place in the world :) – RYLA 2021 Student

RYLA 2020 monies were rolled over to 2021 with several refunds for non-returning students. 2021 tuition was raised to \$300 to cover overall and suspected increased camp activity costs. 2020 students who rolled over to 2021 remained at \$200 yet any new students increased to \$300. The participation of District 5580 was a great addition. Unexpectedly going online was a savings as well (even with all the postage!) which puts us ahead for RYLA 2022.

It will be new and exciting to have a proper camp in 2022 led by Co-chairs Kathy Reiger, and Jennifer Leverett.

COVID-19 caused the cancellation of RYLA 2020, which was planned by District RYLA Chair Lori Benton (Omaha West), and co-chaired by Jennifer Leverett (Council Bluffs Centennial) and Kathy Reiger (Council Bluffs Noon). Nevertheless, the personal club visits, increased awareness, and school outreach easily garnered the 50 students and the many volunteers we sought. Thank you to all the clubs that took the time to recruit fantastic students and to each Rotarian who volunteered their time.