



Photo by Bill Tubbs

Cody Birely gave all the money he had to provide mosquito nets and save the lives of children in Africa ...



Photo provided by Gary Welch

... and Simon Estes was so touched that he will arrange for a four-year scholarship for Cody to study music at Wartburg.

RYLA student's generosity leads to four-year scholarship at Wartburg

By PDG Bill Tubbs/North Scott

Editor, District 6000 News (reprinted from *The North Scott Press*)

The act of generosity was something Cody Birely had to do, he said, and he did it with no expectation of anything in return.

When world-class opera singer and humanitarian Simon Estes said that children in Africa would die without mosquito nets, Cody gave everything he had: 34 dollars and 16 cents.

"I just felt moved," said Cody. "All my cousins are younger than me and to picture any one of them in that spot, I would do anything to keep them basically from dying. After Simon spoke, I felt it upon my heart to give him everything I've got because there are people who have it a lot worse than me."

Cody's gift was life-changing in ways he never expected. The next morning at breakfast, Loring Miller, who was a Rotary Volunteer at the week-long Rotary Youth Leadership Awards conference at Wartburg College, said Simon wanted to speak to him.

Estes, the Iowa native who is a distinguished professor at Wartburg, told the North Scott High School senior that a full scholarship would be waiting for him if he enrolled at Wartburg.

"Simon, he's such a great guy. He's one of a kind," said Cody, in an interview with *The North Scott Press* on Aug. 22.

The feelings are mutual. "He (Cody) displayed a humanity and a beautiful heart for those children in Africa. I can't tell you how much I admire that young man," Estes said in an interview on Aug. 26. "I related that to a passage in the Bible (the parable of the 'Widow and the Mite') of the woman who gave everything she had."

The gift made such an impression with Estes that he said he remembered the 16 cents more than the 34 dollars. When Estes learned that Birely's family had a financial setback and that he has maintained excellent grades, he commented, "I'm sure we will be able to give him a really good scholarship. I will see that he gets one."

Cody said he's already been accepted at Wartburg. He will be enrolled in the School of Music where he will major in music therapy and music education. He is a pianist who took lessons for

five years and played on his own and sight-read for seven years. He plays percussion and piano for North Scott's award-winning Jazz Band and played piano at meetings of the Rotary Club of North Scott that he attended as a Junior Rotarian, and which sponsored his scholarship for RYLA.

"I love the piano," he said, and he fearlessly offered to play for Simon Estes. "I told him if you ever need an accompanist, feel free to call. Wouldn't that be awesome!"

Cody said the RYLA experience was vastly different from the one-day RYLA he attended the previous year. It was such an extraordinarily positive experience that he wants to go back next year as a counselor.

The week was exceptional, he said, because leaders like Rotary Past District Governor Gary Welch, a retired educator who lives in Ankeny, planned activities that let the 112 RYLA students explore their deepest feelings in a safe environment.

Cody commented, "I thought it would be where you sit in a lecture hall and take notes for eight hours, but this conference was not that. It was getting you out of your comfort zone and being yourself. You were willing to throw everything out there that you had and not be judged. Those eleven people in your team know as much about you than your friends back home. My team members that I was with only six days, I'm as close to them than my friends I've gone to school with all the years. I could write a novel about what goes on at RYLA. Personally, I loved this week-long thing."

Welch, who attended RYLA in Colorado to bring ideas to the new two-district RYLA when the Rotary Club of West Des Moines decided not to continue sponsoring the one-day RYLA, was pleased with the result.

"It was an amazing week," Welch said. "You could see the kids grow right before your very eyes."

You'll find no arguments about that from Cody Birely and the students from across Iowa in Districts 6000 and 5970. For them, Rotary was engaged and their lives were changed.

'The most significant program change we have provided for youth in 52 years'

By PDG Gary Welch/Ankeny

RYLA Co-chair

It was not a conference, event or lectures; it was an "experience." There is no doubt that the value of RYLA for your student is worth every penny your club invested. For those clubs that sent students, be sure to schedule a student RYLA presentation!

This year's RYLA was held at Wartburg College July 7-12 with 112 students from around Iowa. I can say without a doubt that this new program is the most significant program change that District 6000 has provided to youth in the last 52 years, when the Youth Exchange program began.

The events are 90 percent experiential, to develop skill, i.e.: self-confidence, communication skills, and fundamentals of positive leadership, conflict management and elements of citizenship.

It was amazing to watch the young people develop team-building skills and gain self-confidence. What was the most amazing was to watch them discover their abilities and begin the process of "self discovery." The purpose of the conference was to kick them out of their comfort zone so they could learn that they are capable of anything they choose.

It is difficult to put into words the experience that these young

RYLA/continued on next page

What students wrote about RYLA

- "It saved my life." "I will not run away as planned." "I know I am capable of anything I choose." "I thought it was going to be boring, but it was the most amazing experience of my life, yet."
- "Every moment of RYLA was its own little miracle in the sense you wouldn't expect it to be so rewarding, but it was." "I don't know how to word my feelings on RYLA other than it's truly an award. I'm not a superstitious person, but RYLA has made me believe in magic."
- "Previously built up walls came crumbling down as the hours ticked away."
- "I did not want to be there to start with, but it was the best experience ever."
- "One can't be blamed for not realizing what they have before it is gone though."
- "There was something about RYLA that imbued people with a trust so deep within each other that they don't question it."
- "It's usually the smallest things that make the biggest difference."
- "It was a surreal experience that I have wanted to have all of my life; a moment where people truly listened and understood."
- "I remember all the amazing people that I met and how they taught me so many different things."
- "Now that I am a RYLA'rian I am no longer the person from my past."
- "Knowing that I am not alone now and that I never will be again, gives me the strength I need to move ahead and face the challenges from my past and beyond."
- "I needed to get out and meet new people and what better place could I have chosen than RYLA!" "This group of people brought a whole new meaning to the word team."
- "It just made me feel like I was wanted, which wasn't what I had been feeling prior to RYLA."
- "By having that spark ignited in me, I just felt amazing and I wanted to get up and do something with that spark. I have never felt so refreshed and uplifted as I did after EVERY word of focus that was given."
- "I have been suicidal before and to be with a bunch of people that went through the same thing as I did meant the absolute world to me. It truly was what I needed."
- "Talking about the solutions to suicide and depression really helped me because I know ways to help myself if I ever get depressed or suicidal again, and also how to help others if they have the same problem."
- "Ever since RYLA, everything has been extremely positive."
- "If I had to put my RYLA experience into one word, it would be 'life-changing'."
- "The Best Week Of My Life...YET!"
- "I will admit it, when I applied for RYLA I thought it was going to be some dull, boring, lecture-filled leadership conference. I was completely wrong. RYLA was everything but that. As I'm writing this reflection it does get somewhat emotional because of this tremendous change I've had in my life. Even though the conference is over, RYLA isn't. RYLA goes on forever. RYLA will always be in my heart and will NEVER be forgotten."
- "I'm extremely grateful and will forever be for having the opportunity to attend RYLA."
- "On my way to Wartburg College, where RYLA took place, all I was really expecting of RYLA was listening to a lot of boring speakers, taking a bunch of notes I would never look at again, and living for a short period time with complete strangers who I would never speak/talk to or meet again. Boy was I wrong!"
- "The first thing that happened at RYLA was taking us out of our comfort zones and to pushing the limits."
- "I've listened to a lot of motivational speakers, teachers, counselors, books, etc. But never did it hit me the way RYLA hit me."
- "Not only did I learn to practice everything about leadership, but I learned how to lead by following, how to feel empathy for other people, what the Four-Way Test and what Rotary means and so many, many other things that I just can't put into words. The most important thing is, though, that this will all stay with me for the rest of my life."

RYLA: ‘Difficult to put the experience into words’

RYLA/continued

people went through, watching them grow and develop before your eyes. Therefore, I am going to let the students speak for themselves. The young men and women shared their reflections, of which I am sharing just a few with you (see below left).

The young people have taken what they experienced at RYLA and are applying it to everyday life because it is something that made a significant impact on their lives. I have talked with several parents and they were amazed and pleased at the positive impact that the RYLA week had on their sons and daughters in such short time.

A major surprise was how it affected me, as a Rotary Volunteer. As I watched, in amazement, they went from individual students to confident young adults before my very eyes, it touched my heart in a way that is hard to describe. The love and support that they

provided for each other was beyond words. They became more confident, willing to take risks, and work as a team. They began the path of self-discovery that they could accomplish anything they chose, that as a person they were OK – flawed,

but OK! It opens the youth to their possibilities in a way that they have never experienced before.

If you believe in your youth and want to have a major impact on their lives, then your students deserve and need RYLA. If your club does not send students to RYLA, you are cheating them out of an experience of a lifetime that will truly impact them far into their future.

By “Engaging Rotary” (RYLA) we HAVE “changed lives”!

A list of D-6000 clubs who sponsored students is on the next page. For further information or to request a presentation, please contact PDG Gary Welch, cell phone (515) 419-3707, or e-mail: gwelch3002@msn.com.



Volunteers, front (l-r): Melissa Dalen (Dubuque), Kris Markham (New Hampton), Colleen Welch (Ankeny), Mike Babcock (New Hampton). Back: David Kutter (RYLA chair, Cedar Rapids), Dick Rasmussen (Waukee), Linda Nudd (Bellevue), Mary Ellen Stanley (Leon), DGN Loring Miller (Leon), Mary Shepard (Cedar Falls), Barb Gannon (Johnston), PDG Gary Welch (RYLA co-chair, Ankeny).



The spider web was one of a dozen matrix activities at RYLA designed for students to work together to solve a problem. The object was for the team to figure out how to get the entire team on other side of the web without touching it.



Simon Estes with RYLA participants from the Rotary Club of Decatur County, (l-r): Rotarian Volunteer Mary Ellen Stanley, Monica Irving from Central Decatur High School, McKenna Jones from Lamoni High School, and Rotarian Volunteer Loring Miller.

Provided by Mary Ellen Stanley



PDG Gary Welch’s team, front (l-r): McKayla Sturtz (Ankeny), Rachel Wagner (Boone), Allison Mark (Chariton), Thea Thronson (New Hampton), Josie Leeper (Cedar Falls), Callie Coulter (Johnston), Arika Allen (Davenport). Back: Beth Heims (counselor, Cedar Rapids), Heather Kemp (Dubuque), Rahul Seshappa (Ames), Jonah Marks (Fairfield), Adam Wisner (Atlantic), Tori Rothman (Waukee), PDG Gary Welch (Rotary Volunteer, Ankeny).

Photos provided by Gary Welch

RYLA: 'The best week of my life so far'

From the Bloomfield Democrat

"It's been the best week of my life so far. I'm so thankful the Bloomfield Rotary Club sponsored me," said Bethany Bremer in reference to the RYLA (Rotary Youth Leadership Awards) conference, which she attended July 7-12 on the Wartburg College campus.

Bremer said high school guidance counselor Marla Wilfawn recommended her for the opportunity and the Bloomfield Rotary Club paid her registration and transported her to and from the camp.



Bethany Bremer

The six-day conference was filled with group activities and inspirational speakers from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. The group activities, said Bremer, required working together to solve a problem. She described one activity where half the group was blindfolded and the other half had to give directions on how to successfully move a bucket with a ball on top from one circle to another. During another activity, nonverbal communication and trust were needed to direct group members through an artificially constructed spider web to the final destination on the other side of a tree.

Inspirational speakers, Bremer said, were not only camp counselors but outside speakers as well. Topics of several speeches were truth and lies, listening, and developing personal strength.

Dr. Mollie Marti, author of "Walking with Justice," obviously touched Bremer with her speech when she said, "A leader is one who by the power of positive actions compels others to positive action."

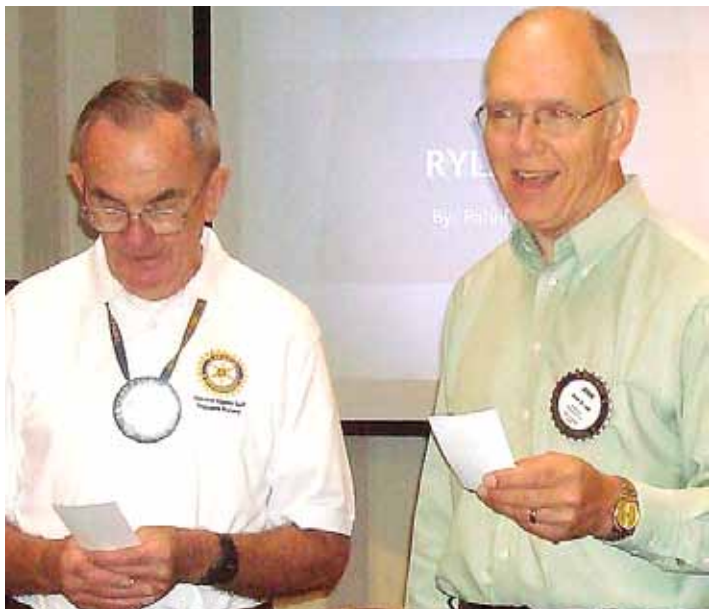
When asked how she would put her conference experience to good use, Bremer stated that she plans to start an Interact club at Davis County High School this coming year. "It is like a Rotary club of high school students," she said. "It will be a good way for students to earn Silver Cord points as we do com-munity service and develop leadership skills."

Bremer also said she would like to return to the RYLA camp in the future as a counselor.

"It was an amazing life-changing and inspirational experience," she said. "The people there become your support system for a week and your family for a lifetime."

She said no date has been set yet for a reunion of conference attendees, "but we will get back together. It's not if, it's when."

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Provided by Helen Schroeder



John Lott (r) leads the Rotary Club of Ames Morning in singing a tribute to Frank Amos. Provided by Carolyn Jons

Fellowship: 'Lotts of Songs' lightens morning spirits at Ames

By Carolyn Jons/Ames Morning

Rotarians know that singing at meetings is a great way to build camaraderie. John Lott, a member of the Ames Morning club, takes this tradition to a new level. He has a unique talent for creating ditties set to familiar tunes in order to feature club members and their interests and contributions.

John accepted the role of music director for the Rotary Club of Ames Morning in 1996. For a number of years he focused on leading songs related to news, weather, or other current topics. In those years he kept a list of melodies he used each week and was proud he didn't repeat any one for over two years.

In recent years, John began creating personalized lyrics about individual Rotarians, typically the Rotarian who is the greeter. On Wednesday mornings John arrives at his office desk very early to compose and print a new song before the 7 a.m. meeting.

Club members marvel that John knows so many melodies and can write such clever verses so quickly. It is also impressive that he knows each member so well that he can highlight what is special about them.

In the words of Ames Morning Rotarians:
 "John is one of the treasured assets of our club!"
 "We could just rent John out for a fundraiser!"
 "John makes our club special, that's for sure!"

Jacki Foley summed it up nicely when she declared, "We sing the praises of John Lott!"

Rotarians aid Oklahoma

A handful of District 6000 Rotarians and District 6000 Rotary clubs donated an amazing \$4,445 to help with recovery efforts after the tornado in Oklahoma. The District will add to that, to bring the total amount to \$5,000. The money goes to the Foundation for Oklahoma Rotary, Inc. for the Bi-District Tornado Disaster Fund. Thank you again to those who generously gave to this effort!

Wear your Rotary pin with pride!

Clubs that sponsored RYLA students

Thanks to these clubs who sponsored a student or student(s) for the inaugural District 6000-5970 RYLA conference July 7-12 at Wartburg College in Waverly. Let's build on this success and engage more students and change more lives in 2014!

Adel	Clinton	Iowa City D'ntown	North Scott
Ames Morning	Corning	Iowa City	NW Des Moines
Ankeny	Davenport	Iowa Quad Cities	Ottumwa
Atlantic	Decatur County	Jefferson	Perry
Bettendorf	Des Moines AM	Johnston	Tipton
Bloomfield	Des Moines	Kalona	Washigton
Boone	Fairfield	Keosauqua	Waukee
Carroll	Indianola	Lenox	West Des Moines
Chariton	Iowa City AM	Nevada	West Liberty
			Winterset