



Waunakee Rotary Club

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Although an earthquake and tsunami cut Derek Fuerstenburg's student exchange to Japan a few months short, he still absorbed a lot of culture during his stay there.

Derek presented a slide show and told about his stay in Rokkasho, Japan, during the May 25 Rotary Club meeting.

He stayed with three different host families although he had originally planned to stay with four. The fourth family was unable to accommodate him after the natural disaster.

One family's home stood out in that it had a bed for Derek; in the other two, he slept on futons, as is the custom. The mats are folded up each morning to prevent mold from forming in the straw matting floor.

In each of the homes is a speaker phone equipped with a system that allows government announcements to reach residents in emergencies. Music plays at the same time three times per day, sort of a reminder of what time it is.

Derek said the phones have batteries and can operate for several weeks without electricity, so they are an effective means of communication. They informed families during the disaster about which parts of the area had electricity back on.

The Japanese have a rating system that describes the severity of such disasters, and in Rokkasho, the disaster rated about a 5. Derek nearly had a bookcase fall on him during the earthquake.

At school, Derek and the other students wore uniforms, including sneakers that identified which grade they were in. In Japan, the students clean the schools – there are no custodians – and they take pride in the buildings, he said.

But Derek found it awkward that the school had no changing rooms, so girls and boys changed for gym on the opposite side of the room from one another.

Each morning, greeters welcomed students as they arrived at school, Derek said. And each day came with long opening and closing ceremonies.

Derek described a cultural festival at school with lots of decorating and entertainment.

The school also arranged a five-day a trip for students to visit Kyoto, Osaka and Okinawa. Some of the highlights included high speed rail, large temples, Universal Studios and an aquarium at Okinawa, an island off of the mainland.

Derek said the Japanese live by a sort of group code. They conduct themselves as a group and are often mindful of how their actions affect others. It contrasts with American individualism, he said.

Derek said he is applying for a scholarship to attend university in Japan.

Other items:

•Rotary Scholarship recipients attended the meeting and thanked the club. Kyle Dahmen said he plans to attend UW-La Crosse. Sarah Caulfield will attend Winona State University. Karli Roessler will go to UW-Madison, and Olivia Knier will attend Marquette University.

•Aaron Vikemyr invited club members to a fundraising breakfast for the Boy Scouts June 21.

•John Cullen said he enjoyed the International Rotary Convention in New Orleans. Harriet Statz is already making plans for next

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Calendar of Events:

- June 12, Hanoulia's farewell party.
- July 12, Pontoon Boat Ride on Lake Wisconsin.
- July 28-31, WaunaFest.

year's convention in Thailand.

•A going away party for Hanoulia is planned for June 12 at the Johnsons' home from 4-7 p.m. To RSVP, email hstatz@quallinefence.com or call 575-4837.

•A sign-up sheet circulated for the July 12 pontoon boat ride and dinner at Fitz's on the Lake. Two separate departure times are listed at 3 and 5 p.m.

Guests: Shawn Smith, guest of Connie Blau.

Birthdays: June 5, Ed Niebuhr.

Anniversaries: June 7, Craig and Judy Larson.

Prayers: June 2, Susan Vergeront; June 9, Pat Durden; June 16, Leonard Allen.

Programs: June 2, Club Assembly; June 9, Hanoulia Salame, student from Belgium on her exchange in Waunakee; June 16, TBA; June 23, Rob Grede, author of Civil War drama, "The Spur and The Sash." Mr. Grede will donate a portion of book sales to Polio Plus.

Greeters: June 2, Fritz Durst and Gary Epping; June 9, William Erickson and Larry Felsheim; June 16, Betsy Flanagan and Greg Garton; June 23, Paul Gilbertson and Richard Harris.