

It's the Holiday Season--Don't forget to include your Rotary Youth Exchange student! It's a hard time of year to be away from family for many of them. But with a little support from local Rotarians and others, fun can be had by all!

Whether you celebrate Christmas, Hanukkah or Kwanza—or more than one, your traditions may be very different than those of your exchange student! It's a great opportunity to learn more about each other's customs and religions.

For example, we were surprised to learn from our first exchange student that in most countries outside of the United States, they do not carve pumpkins or do Halloween trick-or-treating! It was because of that awareness that we now take our youth exchange student together with other students to the pumpkin patch to pick out their own pumpkins, then return to our house so they can carve their pumpkins and participate in a pumpkin carving contest, complete with neighborhood judging and prizes.

Thanksgiving dinner can also be new and exciting for your student...lots of food they've never tried before and relatives and potential new friends to meet.

You might also consider, as we have done, post-Thanksgiving Day Black Friday shopping. Our group headed out at midnight last year to catch some of the best door buster deals!

But don't think you'll do all the teaching or sharing! Last year we learned all about St. Nicholas Day from our Belgium student! What a fun celebration, and she was thrilled to wake up to a shoe filled with chocolates. A bit of home for her!

Whether or not you choose to do some of the suggestions we've offered, the important message here is that if your Rotary club is hosting an Inbound Youth Exchange student, now is the time to get on their calendar and share the holidays.

If your club does not currently have an exchange student and you are interested in learning more, please contact the District 5160 Rotary Youth Exchange team at [YEX@ROTARY.5160.ORG](mailto:YEX@ROTARY.5160.ORG).

