



PROFILE: JULIE OSLUND (FEBRUARY 2016)

BY MIKELL MELIUS

Inviting someone to stay in your home is inviting them into your world, your space. They experience and witness a special part of your life that many may never see. It leaves space for vulnerability, which isn't something most people enjoy. But for Julie Oslund, embracing the vulnerability and accepting people into her home has been a life-changing experience. Rotary International is the backbone of Oslund's hosting endeavors. She has been a member for 10 years; during that time, she has hosted three groups of international Rotarians, with no plans of stopping any time soon. As an avid traveler, making the decision to open her home for fellow Rotarians was an easy one for Oslund. Her objective through Rotary is to use her professional skills to mentor young people, help those with special needs and improve the quality of life in her community and the world.

Oslund hosted for the first time in 2007, shortly after joining Rotary. Luigi Villacreses Poggi, from Guayaquil, Ecuador, was her first guest. She hosted a second time in 2013 for Ladislav Vonz, a man from the Czech Republic, and she hosted again in 2015 when Vilma Dal Luz and Claudio Giovanni Barbosa, a married couple from Cacador, Brazil, stayed with her for a couple of days.

The visiting Rotarians have short stays in multiple communities during their two-week visit to the U.S. Oslund's guests typically stay with her three to four days. Oslund makes sure they get the most out of their short visits. From bike rides on the Sakatah Singing Hills State Trail, to sharing invaluable conversations over a bottle of wine, this is something Oslund plans to do forever.

GF: What made you decide to start hosting people in your home?

JO: My husband and I travel a lot internationally so we've experienced different cultures. Hosting people from other countries is another great way to experience their culture. We spend a lot of time around the table, eating and talking about a variety of topics. It's great.

GF: What do you do with your guests during their visits?

JO: All three visits were a little different. My first two guests (Luigi and Ladislav) were part of a business exchange. At the time my husband and I owned a nursery, so they observed how we ran our business and we took them to see other businesses as well. My most recent guests (Vilma and Claudio) were part of a friendship exchange, so that was a little different than the first two visits. It was their first trip out of their country, and they just wanted to experience what our everyday lives were like.

GF: If you had to choose one thing about your hosting experience, what would be your favorite?

JO: The relationships you form. I know that if I were to ever visit Ecuador, the Czech Republic, or wherever, that I would be welcomed. When my husband and I were visiting Chili, there was a terrible earthquake. Afterward, we were driving, and I spotted a sign for Rotary. I about cried. I knew there would be help if I needed it.

GF: How do you feel these experiences have changed you?

JO: They definitely have changed me. It's opened my eyes to not only their worlds, but mine as well. When people visit, I think that I learn just as much as they do from the experience. It's helped me to appreciate so much of what we have here in the U.S.

GF: Do you think that more people should host guests from around the world?

JO: Absolutely. One of the objectives of Rotary is the advancement of international understanding. By getting to know people from other cultures you realize how similar you are. We have similar family lives, similar ideas and the exact same feelings. It's important to be reminded of that.

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