

## ROTARY INTERNATIONAL GROUP STUDY EXCHANGE PROGRAM

*Submitted by Constable Jennifer Jacobson,  
Chatham-Kent Police Service*

I am a Police Constable with the Chatham-Kent Police. I have been a Police Constable for 5 years, starting my career with Hamilton Police Service before transferring to Chatham-Kent. This past year I was given an amazing opportunity through Rotary International to participate in an exchange program to Japan, called the Group Study Exchange Program (GSE).

For those not familiar with Rotary it is a worldwide service organization that provides humanitarian service, encourage high ethical standards in all vocations, and help build goodwill and peace in the world. There are 33,000 Rotary clubs in more than 200 countries and geographical areas. Clubs are nonpolitical, nonreligious, and open to all cultures, races, and creeds. As signified by the motto Service Above Self, Rotary's main objective is service — in the community, in the workplace, and throughout the world.

The Group Study Exchange Program is a vocational and cultural exchange program designed for young professionals to experience their career in another country and learn about the cultural and life of the host country.

I was immediately interested when I heard about the GSE program. I applied for the next exchange that was being offered for the month of October 2009 to Japan. The application procedure consisted of an application, an essay and a large panel interview and obtaining sponsorship from a local Rotary Club. I was sponsored by the Tilbury Rotary Club. Four non-Rotarian team members were selected to travel to Japan, all from different career backgrounds

and one Rotarian team leader from Rotary District 6380, which encompasses Chatham-Kent, Ontario and parts of Michigan. The team was selected in April 2009 in order to have some preparation time as time was needed to

get to know your team members, learn about the customs and traditions of Japan and learn as much of the language as possible. Part of the commitment while in Japan is to give presentations on your country and your career, the catch is to do it in Japanese!

The next step after getting selected was to get support from the workplace and try and get 5 weeks off work. My work gave me their support, and through holiday time, flex time and overtime I managed to get 5 weeks off.

The area my exchange was in was in Tochigi Prefecture, which is about 60 miles north of Tokyo. On September 30th, 2009 I met up with my team in Detroit and it was off to Japan! We arrived in Japan on October 1st, 2009 and were given a huge warm welcome by Japanese Rotary members! The first couple of nights we were put up in a hotel to try and get over our jet lag and to somewhat adjust to our new surroundings and culture before being sent off to live with our different host families. Throughout our month long stay we all had 4 different families to live with as we moved around Tochigi Prefecture.



Our daily schedules in Japan were packed full as our host wanted to ensure we experienced as much as we possibly could while in Japan. This consisted of several vocational visits, cultural visits, museums, tourist attractions, government offices and presentations. Our team consisted of a physiotherapist, music therapist, engineer, retail manager and me a police constable. This gave us a wide range of vocational places to visits and a great learning opportunity for the entire group to experience each other's careers.

I was able to visit 5 different police stations within Tochigi Prefecture as well as meet and have dinner with a Tokyo Police Officer. Japan has a National Police Agency that oversees all policing in Japan, each Prefecture (province) runs as its own service.

Their policing was very strongly based on community policing. I visited a number of Kobans, which basically translates to "Police Box". These are very small substations that are located throughout the community and are generally the first line of police response for the public. The Kobans are usually only staffed with about 3 to 5 officers. These officers become

a part of the community. Part of their shift duties is standing out front of the Koban, just to be visible and that the public sees their presence. One of their duties is checking residences during the night, as they go from house to house they leave a small note indicating that the police checked around their residence. Most people appreciate this and feel safer knowing there are regular checks. In the more rural areas a Police Officer may live with his family at the Koban and become an integral part of that community.

There were many similarities between the police services here and there, even with their use of force training. In Japan, all members must have a martial arts background before entering a policing career. I was given several demonstrations of their Kendo and Judo training. One of the major differences I found was in the frequency of training; as their officer's train at work on a weekly basis.

I also found very interesting that gun related crimes are extremely low. Generally firearms are not an issue



and I was informed that there are only 400 gun permits in the whole country and they are extremely difficult to get. I would have thought this would possibly increase the number of illegal guns, but was informed that guns are generally not a part of their culture and more of the violent crimes involve knives and martial arts skills. I asked one officer about prostitution stings and I was quickly informed that they do not conduct these types of projects as it is against the way of the samurai and they can't use any form of trickery.

In visiting the police stations I brought with me crests and pins from my police service as gifts. They were all shocked that I was able to give out the crests as they are not allowed to. Needless to say I was never able to acquire one of theirs. However I was honoured with several gifts from the services and their association. One of the other things that I noticed on my vocational visits is that there are very few female officers. One station I visited had one female officer employed out of approximately 180 officers. One of the other stations there was 7 females. I was informed that there is not a large interest from females for this profession.

I had opportunities to visit the vocations of my other team members as well and was able to visit various hospitals, nursing homes as well as many industries such as Honda, Fujitsu and Rheon which were some of the larger companies. Part of the exchange also involved completing several presentations and speaking engagements. These presentations



were to be done in Japanese, a challenge for all our team! One of the presentations was to over 1000 Japanese people at their District Conference in Utsonomyia. The best part of this was it was near the end of our trip so we had some practice with speaking Japanese, but still didn't help with the nerves; but we all succeeded and better yet we were understood!

We had the opportunity to visit many museums, universities and cultural sites as well as a UNESCO World Heritage site in Nikko. Fall is a beautiful time to visit Japan, the fall colours are world renowned. It was also a great time to get to experience some of their annual fall festivals. One of which was the parade of 1000 Samurai's, it was amazing to see. Another highlight was getting to meet the Governor of Tochigi and the Mayor of Utsonomyia when we were made honorary friendship citizens of Utsonomyia City.

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One of the best parts of the exchange program for me was living with my host families. I was welcomed with open arms into their homes and made to feel a part of their family. It was a complete immersion into their daily lives. Sometimes language communication was challenging, but it was always good for a smile. It was amazing to feel at home when you are so far from 'your home'. It truly brings meaning to the saying 'home is where the heart is'.

I am very grateful for having this opportunity in my professional life and in my personal life. The experiences were endless and the people I met amazing. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions or comments about my exchange [jenniferja@chatham-kent.ca](mailto:jenniferja@chatham-kent.ca).



*Cst. Jacobson is in her sixth year of policing. She began her career with the Hamilton Police Service before transferring to Chatham Kent Police. She is currently working as the Domestic Violence Bail Safety Officer. Jennifer also works with the Ministry of Natural Resources as a Deputy Conservation Officer. In her spare time Jennifer enjoys travelling and experiencing different cultures.*

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