

*This testimonial was from Victor Perrier (from Annonay, France) who did an exchange with Spencer Bonawitz (of Clifton Springs, NY) during the summer of 2018:*

Hello, I'm Victor Perrier. I was with Spencer Bonawitz this summer.

During this exchange, I enjoyed being immersed in a family on the other side of the world while being considered a member of Spencer's family. I've visited such beautiful places as Niagara Falls and the falls at Stony Brook State Park. I've met many Americans who are friends with Spencer, his family, and even other Rotarians. I also got to meet Martina Chignola, an Italian girl my age, who was on a Rotary STEP exchange in Spencer's town.

I discovered a culture, traditions, and customs peculiar to the US through local markets, among others. The Bonawitz family wanted to show me the history of their region, so I learned a lot about the Indian populations that once lived there.

I liked the American food, rather different compared to France, especially your ice cream. I enjoyed visiting Niagara Falls and the state parks around Finger Lakes.

This experience allowed me to be more comfortable with the English language especially with the oral comprehension, but also I insisted to communicate with the others and to be more open-minded. The Bonawitzes insisted that they wanted me to come back, that a room would be available for me to continue this sharing; similarly we open for Spencer to return.

I draw a very positive conclusion from the exchange which will not be limited, I hope, to this summer, but which will rather mark the beginning of a friendship between our two families.

Thanks to Rotary for allowing these very constructive exchanges.

*The following "testimonial" was sent to me on September 4, 2018 by Spencer Bonawitz, a 17-year-old boy who lives in Clifton Springs, NY. Spencer, who just began his senior year at Midlakes High School, went on a Short-Term Youth Exchange (STEP exchange) to France for four weeks. His family later hosted Victor Perrier (from Annonay, France) in their home*

*for four weeks as part of the STEP family-to-family exchange. Here is what Spencer wrote:*

Through the courtesy of the Rotary program and the amazing support of my parents, this summer was the most surreal and beautiful experience of my life. I had the opportunity to spend two months with the kind, gentle, and patient Victor Perrier, a resident of Annonay in the south of France.

This summer meant a huge deal to me. I was able to improve on my language skills and immerse myself in a culture so unique and diverse compared to that of my small, rural town. Through the buzz of metropolitan life and the tranquility of the local farmland, both of which I was surrounded by daily, I learned to be patient and understanding with others and to step out of my comfort zone and try something that may never present itself again.

The joy I felt inside each day as I discovered a new area of the country cannot be put into words. Unlike a field trip or short vacation abroad, living with a family allowed for an intense bond that has the potential to last for the rest of my life. The care and compassion I felt from every individual in Victor's household and his neighborhood was amazing. I experienced how people from around the world are open to learning and listening—and how different yet similar we all are.

Thank you, Rotary, for allowing this incredible experience to happen; I could not have asked for a better way to spend my summer!