NAYEN Fireside Chat

Focus: District Governor Line Onboarding

Zoom 9-13-26

Quick recap

This NAYEN Fireside Chat focused on District Governor (DG) involvement in Rotary Youth Exchange (RYE) programs, led by Mary Lynn Kagan with Mike Markley, DG 5400, the topic expert. The discussion covered challenges DGs face in supporting youth exchange programs, with participants sharing experiences about inadequate training and the importance of involving DG Nominees (DGNs) in YE activities from the beginning. Key topics included the need for better education about YE programs for DGs, strategies for building partnerships between governors and YE committees and handling difficult situations with exchange students. The group discussed available NAYEN resources including onboarding materials and first-night questions for governors, and participants shared successful models from different districts, including North Star's multi-district approach and early involvement of DGNs in committee work. The conversation also addressed specific challenges like dealing with problematic students and the impact of negative stories shared at International Assembly events.

Introduction

Mary Lynn introduced Mike Markley as the topic expert for the District Governor line training topic. Mike, DG for District 5400, led the discussion about training DGs on YE programs, sharing that he developed training materials after learning some governors received limited information about YE during their training.

Governor Education on Youth Exchange

Participants discussed strategies for engaging the DG line, including starting involvement early with DGNs, adding them to YE committees, and inviting international partners to speak at district conferences. The group also addressed concerns about ensuring DGs receive accurate and constructive information about the program rather than scare-based training.

Krystyna from Poland shared insights from recent RYE European, Eastern European, and Mediterranean Area (EEMA) conference about the need for better governor education on YE programs, suggesting combined efforts to increase training time at DG Zone trainings, for one. Marcel confirmed that making the NAYEN conference mandatory for DGNs has been effective in his district, with governors coming away with greater appreciation for the

program's complexity and impact. Glenn described North Star's successful model of automatically funding governor and governor-elect attendance at NAYEN conferences through district dues, which eliminates funding concerns and ensures consistent participation.

Youth Exchange Program Governance Challenges

Discussions around the YE challenges, particularly decision-making authority for sending a problematic student home. One of the attending DGs explained that Rotary International requires DG approval before sending students home, which created tension when a DG intervened in a specific student situation. Pat, DGE - Northern Oregon District 5100, emphasized the importance of building systematic trust between DGs, RYE chair and committee. It was suggested that DGs should receive regular updates on youth exchange operations and that clubs and host families need proper training on hosting international students.

Governor Onboarding Resources Discussion

The discussion concluded with a brief overview of NAYEN resources available to support DG training. Onboarding resources for new DGs, including a customizable slide deck and first night questions to help build relationships with program chairs was presented. While NAYEN resources are available on www.NAYEN.org under YEO Resources/Documents, there are challenges with notification to all relevant stakeholders. Current communications only reach previous conference attendees and youth exchange chairs. The group agreed to explore expanding notification to include all district governors and their lines, with Mary Lyn and Becky Fontaine taking this matter offline to address.
