



By Jan Rahn

Managing Editor

Grant Rotarians proudly hosted a team of Brazilian public school teachers recently through the Rotary International Exchange Program.

The team, led by Waldir Francisco de Andrade, spent time in Imperial, Ogallala and Grant while making their home base in host homes in Grant. Furnishing overnight stays during their time in Grant from May 6-10 were Garry and Ronda Lawyer, Jeanie Daiss and CJ Rezac.

““I enjoyed them immensely,” said Grant Rotary President John Long.

The local Rotary coordinator for the educational team from Brazil was Brenda Styskal.

While in western Nebraska, the team has also visited Rotary clubs in North Platte, Curtis, O’Neill and Chadron.

This is the first time the Grant Rotarians, as part of the Rotary District 5630, have hosted a South American study exchange group since the 1990s when a group from Argentina visited.

The leader, Waldir, is a 70-year-old retired colonel in the Brazilian Air Force. The four female teachers ranged from 28-35 and taught in both public and private schools as well as adult education English.

At a supper hosted by Gerald and Jorje Geisert at their home, one of the school teachers said, “It wasn’t necessarily about “what” we saw in Nebraska, but about the relationships we developed with the people in Nebraska, especially the Grant people.”

A highlight of the trip for the school teachers was a trip to the mall in North Platte with Daiss and Lawyer, who said they had to finally come home because they couldn’t get anything more in the trunk of her car!

The Brazilians also visited several sites in Imperial and Ogallala, in addition to Grant before being transported to Grand Island by Daiss and Styskal.

The last time an exchange team was hosted in Grant was in 1995, when, coincidentally, Long was president. Local resident Robert Richter was on the U.S. exchange team to Argentina that same year while the Argentinian exchange team came to Grant.

Grant Rotarians meet weekly at noon for a meal at the Perkins County Senior Center. Rotary's primary motto is "Service above Self."

About the Program

The Group Study Exchange (GSE) program of the Rotary Foundation of Rotary International is a unique cultural and vocational exchange opportunity for young business and professional men and women between the ages of 25 and 40 in the initial years of their professional life.

The program provides travel grants for teams of participants to exchange visits between paired areas in different countries.

For four to six weeks, team members study the host country's institutions and ways of life, observe their own vocations as practiced abroad, develop personal and professional relationships, and exchange ideas.

Team members can come from corporations, small businesses, community organizations, medical and educational facilities, government offices, and nonprofit agencies.

Individuals who participate in this rewarding, once-in-a-lifetime experience will return home with a broadened cultural perspective and new understanding of a nation's history, language, commerce, and government.

A Group Study Exchange offers a unique opportunity to develop leadership skills, work on team building, and increase self-confidence.

The program is designed to have an invaluable impact on the career of a young professional in the increasingly global workplace by creating networking opportunities and lifelong friendships.

GSE enhances the international perspective of the next generation of young leaders that will take a company into the future. GSE participants return with new communication and facilitation skills that promote tolerance and collaboration with professional people of other cultures.

GSE fosters a creative approach to problem solving by expanding the employee's skill set, exposure to alternate methodologies, and preparation for addressing community needs.

In addition, GSE provides a great public relations opportunity to promote awareness of your business or organization, as local and international media may feature interviews, photos, and articles about the exchange.

Eligible team member applicants must:

- Be between the ages of 25 and 40
 - Be fully employed with at least two years of work experience in their chosen field
 - Be in the early stages of their careers or professions
 - Reside in or be employed in the sending Rotary district and also be citizens of the country in which they reside
 - Be proficient in the language of the country being visited
 - Be personable, articulate, cooperative, motivated team players, and enthusiastic about their vocations
 - Seek to gain a maximum educational value from the program, as well as be able to fulfill the rigorous demands of international travel and active participation in an extensive itinerary
- The best candidates for GSE are rising leaders who meet the qualifications above and who have an interest in people of other cultures.

GSE can be an excellent way to recognize top-performing staff or provide exposure for potential young leaders with limited international experience.

Teams are composed of four to six non-Rotarian team members, usually of various business

and professional backgrounds, and one Rotarian team leader.

During the exchange, teams will visit local businesses, government offices, and community organizations in the host district, tour historical and cultural sites, stay with Rotarian host families, and make presentations about their home countries and professions.

Team members receive orientation and cultural preparation from the sponsor Rotary district before their departure. This may include language training, practice of oral presentations, visits to Rotary clubs, and background about Rotary International's mission and the programs of its foundation.

The host country is determined before a team member's application and selection.

What is provided? For each team member, The Rotary Foundation provides the most economical round-trip air ticket between the home and host countries.

Local Rotarians in the host area provide for meals, lodging, and group travel in their district. Each team member is responsible for all personal and incidental expenses incurred before, during, and after the study tour, including any personal travel arranged after the exchange.

Those interesting in applying can contact their local Rotary club for application deadlines.

Applications must be made through local Rotary clubs; those sent directly to the Rotary Foundation will not be considered.

Candidates are selected by a qualified committee of Rotarian leaders. Additional information about Rotary club locations, GSE application materials, and program guidelines can be found at www.rotary.org.

Rotary International is an international service organization whose stated purpose is to bring together business and professional leaders in order to provide humanitarian services, encourage high ethical standards in all vocations, and help build goodwill and peace in the world.

It is a secular organization open to all persons regardless of race, color, creed, religion, gender, or political preference.

There are 34,282 clubs and over 1.2 million members worldwide who usually meet weekly for breakfast, lunch or dinner, which is a social event as well as an opportunity to organize work on their service goals. Source: Rotary International