

REQUIRED FIRST REPORT DOCUMENT

FIRST REPORT

Received 1/23/06 – Phil Morris

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My sponsor counsellor, Pat Vreeland (Greensboro Club), as well as Scholarship Committee members John Womack and Mike Conrad, could not have been more helpful as I prepared for my departure during the summer months. I visited the Gate City and Greensboro Clubs before I left for Leicester, and was pleasantly surprised by the laid-back and casual atmosphere at the meetings. I felt warmly welcomed and I was excited to see the 'ABC's of Rotary' come to life before me. I know that Pat, Mike, and John, are more than happy to help or lend a shoulder should I need to call on them for anything.



I can say the same for my host counsellor, Moira Bartlett, who is also president of the Leicester Club. She is very busy! And she and her husband, Howard, have taken time and invited me to attend various events with them. We played skittles, a traditional British pub game, with the Leicester Club and lost to the Hinckley Club. It was fun nonetheless to meet other Rotarians and enjoy traditional English pub food. We also visited a Christmas tree festival in their village, it was so nice to get out of the 'city' and back out into the 'country.' And last week we volunteered and

served Christmas dinner for Age Concern. As I am not going home for Christmas, I was truly moved by this experience. I have always wanted to volunteer at a soup kitchen on a holiday, and smiles are always the best reward for hard work! I have done only one presentation so far, it seems as though the clubs have been very busy the closer it has gotten to the Holidays. I am looking forward to 2006 when I will be able to visit many more clubs. I visited the Kibworth & Fleckney Club in November and will be interested to see how their club compares to others in Leicester, as far as size, meeting style, etc. Mike Kellett of the Leicester Club, who is on the Scholarship Committee, has been very generous to me as well as the other two Scholars here in Leicester, Bronwyn is from Australia and Beyza is from Turkey. He took us out for a pub dinner during our first few weeks and hosted an amazing dinner out at his house where we were able to meet Rotarians from the Leicester Club. Mike is also arranging most of our presentations and arranging transportation to the meetings.

I have now been at my assigned study institution, University of Leicester, United Kingdom, for a full term. It has been an adventure thus far I must say! The program I am undertaking, MA Art Gallery and Museum Studies, has about 68 students from ten different countries, which makes for diverse discussions and a wide range of perspectives on the many issues in our course. We have many opportunities to express our opinions and experiences in museums and have had several study site visits to museums where we are able to put what we have learned into action, interacting with curators and educators at museums as well as critiquing various exhibitions. Visits so far include Oxford, Norfolk, London, Duxford, and Nottingham. Going 'behind the scenes' is always fun! The Museum Studies Society has organised several evenings for its members, the most recent being an international holiday evening to round out the term, complete with sushi and tapas, all made by students from the course. My cupcakes were quite the hit! I am looking very forward to the start of the next term in January when I believe I will be able to focus more on art museums, as our tutor has just returned from maternity leave. I am honestly still adapting to the English university system, and in particular, essay writing! My one year out of Uni at home in the US has left me feeling quite challenged by the essays and assignments thus far. I am hoping to improve with each passing assignment and balance my writing time more effectively against my research time (my favourite part!).

I have also been involved with LUSH 107.5 fm, the University radio station. I was a DJ and board member during my time at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, so it has been nice to be 'back in the studio.' I co-hosted a show called 'Outside Britain' with a fellow international student, Grethe, from Norway. As the title might suggest, we played music and artists from 'outside Britain.' We featured tracks from our own countries as well as contributions from other international students here at the University, and were given a two-hour time slot after starting out with a one-hour slot, which means the executive team really liked our show! We also discuss our difficulties as international students living in the UK. I am hoping to continue the show next term, and bring in international students for interviews about music and concerts in their home countries.

Overall, I have been very pleased with my experience here in Leicester. On days when I am feeling homesick and would really like to go and have dinner at Cracker Barrel, it is the people I have met here and the friends I have made who help me through it. The generosity of the Rotarians I have met and come into contact with motivates me to learn more and more about the organisation that has given me this incredible opportunity. I am always glad to meet someone who does not know about Rotary International and tell them everything I know about the organisation and its programs. Meeting scholars from other countries and hearing about their involvement with Rotary at home and here in the UK is also valuable. Leicester is a city with lots of hidden treasures I have decided, lots to discover indeed. I am looking very forward to the coming months as I become more involved not only in my studies, but in my duties as a Rotary Ambassadorial Scholar. The more I learn about Rotary the more enthusiastic I become about my year here in the United Kingdom and the life-long connections I am making. They will prove invaluable no matter which path I choose in the future.

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