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Thai student and host family are both getting education through Rotary exchange program

By **STEPHANIE THIESSEN**
The Champion

Though exchange student Anurak Saranyapharit is the one out of his element visiting Milton from Thailand, host Carolyn Keyworth is having her share of new experiences — particularly those of the culinary variety.

"I've been eating a lot of rice and seaweed," Ms Keyworth said, adding, "It's really delicious."

Last week after returning home from a long day, Ms Keyworth was greeted with the smells of a home-cooked authentic Thai pork and mushroom stir-fry Anurak, 16, had cooked.

Ms Keyworth said Anurak tends to find the food here a bit bland, so sitting in her fridge is a box of chilies "that will take the roof of your mouth off," she exclaimed.

"He's had burgers, he loves ice cream and he's learning to like chocolate, but sweets, bread and pastry is foreign to him."

A night out for dim sum was another experience with Anurak Ms Keyworth said she's not likely to forget. "There were lots of things with tentacles," she said, laughing.

Anurak arrived last month and is staying in Milton for a year as part of the Rotary International Youth Exchange Program. He'll be staying with Ms Keyworth for three months, after which he'll stay with a different host family every three months providing learning experiences not just for him, but his hosts.

Each year, the Rotary Club of Milton sponsors an inbound and outbound student. The group's currently accepting applications from Milton students who, like Anurak, would like to experience a completely different culture and way-of-life for a year. In past years, the Milton club has had to sponsor students from nearby communities rather than home-grown students due to a lack of interest. Ms Keyworth said members are hoping to change that by getting the word out about the program.

The program is open to 15, 16 and 17-year-old students. Applicants should be above-average academically and demonstrate leadership in the community. They should also be emotionally able to handle the experience.

"They have to be prepared to spend a



year away from home — it's not for everyone," Ms Keyworth noted, adding the selected student doesn't choose the country he or she visits.

In the past, students have been cultural ambassadors to countries including Chile, Japan, Thailand and France. While Rotary pays for most of the expenses, there are some that parents and students must incur, such as air fare and some spending money.

Host families are often, though not always, families of students selected to participate in the program, Ms Keyworth said, adding they're always in demand.

Ms Keyworth has hosted about five exchange students over the past six years. She said it's been an enriching experience.

"This is a period of their lives when you can have an impact on their growth and development," she said. "I learn from them and they learn from me."

She said it's exciting to show off Canada and to watch as students become comfortable in their host countries. This is the first

time she's hosted a student in his first three months here.

"When he first came, he was shy and quiet. He was overwhelmed, but in three weeks he's blossomed."

Anurak has the challenge of learning written as well as spoken English since Thai script is different from our alphabet. But Anurak is already communicating using some English sentences as well as a lot of gesturing, Ms Keyworth said.

"We usually find by Christmas they're (exchange students) pretty much fluent."

Anurak is attending Bishop Reding as a student to truly get a feel for the Canadian way of life.

"He was very frightened the first day, but he was buddied up with other students who took him under their wing," Ms Keyworth said.

Paul McDougall is a Halton parent whose daughter, Amy, travelled to Argentina four years ago as part of the program. He said it was an invaluable experi-

ence — and challenge — for her.

"Amy was always adventurous, but she needed to get out on her own. It gave her a whole lot of confidence," Mr. McDougall said, adding she also acquired not one, but two new languages.

"She went not speaking anything other than high school French, and she came back fluent in Spanish and Portuguese."

He said one of the key differences she felt in Argentina was the gap between the rich and poor.

"In North America, there's not a huge difference between upper, middle and lower classes. In Argentina, there's a huge difference. The people she stayed with were quite upper class. There's not a whole lot of middle class."

For more information on the exchange program, call Amit Karia, chair of the Youth Exchange Committee, at (416) 616-3014 or e-mail him at tecl@rogers.com.

Stephanie Thiessen can be reached at sthiessen@miltoncanadianchampion.com.

Rotary exchange students Alex Husband (left) — just back from a year in Japan — and Anurak Saranyapharit from Thailand compare Rotary jackets adorned with souvenir pins from their travels.

Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

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Programming Schedule — Tuesday, September 21 - Monday, September 27, 2004

Tuesday, September 21	Wednesday, September 22	Thursday, September 23	Friday, September 24	Saturday, September 25	Sunday, September 26	Monday, September 27
9, 10, 11am & 12:30pm Plugged In!	9 & 10am Plugged In!	9, 10, 11am & 12:30pm Plugged In!	9, 10, 11am & 12:30pm Plugged In!	9, 10, 11am & 12:30pm Plugged In!	9, 10am Plugged In!	9, 10, 11am & 12:30pm Plugged In!
1:00pm SportsZone Live (Replay)	11:00pm Halton Hills Council - Sept. 13 *Special Time	1:00pm Miss Acton Pageant 2004	1:00pm Halton Region Council	4:00pm TV Cogeco Sports: HS Football - Assumption Vs. Nelson	10:30am TV Cogeco Sports: HS Football - Assumption Vs. Nelson	5pm, 6pm & 7:30pm Plugged In!
5pm, 6pm & 7:30pm Plugged In!	5pm, 6pm & 7:30pm Plugged In!	5pm, 6pm & 7:30pm Plugged In!	5pm, 6pm & 7:30pm Plugged In!	7:30pm Plugged In!	5pm, 6pm & 7:30pm Plugged In!	8:00pm SportsZONE Live
6:30pm Optimist TV Bingo	8:00pm Auto Experts (live)	8:00pm Halton Region Council Sept. 22, 2004				
8:00pm Halton Hills Council - Sept. 13	9:00pm Miss Acton Pageant 2004					

"Auto Experts" Returns Live Wednesdays, 8:00pm on TVCogeco.