

Mandarin NewsLineSM

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Rotary International sponsors foreign exchange student Found: adventurous, studious youth

By Connie Lewis

Meet Olof Ahlen, age 17, born in the country of Sweden. Chosen by Rotary International as a foreign exchange student, Ahlen states, "Life has many possibilities. This is one: to explore, to leave home and move on with your life. If you have the desire [to do this], I highly recommend that you apply to the Rotary."

According to Ahlen, the Rotary requires an application one year in advance of the year one would like to study abroad. Applicants are asked to list three possible host countries and then are interviewed, as are other applicants.

The Rotary seeks to create contacts with other countries and learn about their cultures. Students who are selected have the opportunity to live with as many as three or four different families in the host country, in order to gain a wider influence and spectrum of experiences.

Ahlen states that living abroad provides the opportunity to get to know and challenge himself to grow. Highly motivated, personable and intelligent, he believes in doing the best he can in every endeavor. To that end, he is continuing his piano lessons here in the United States and practices two to three hours daily. He enjoys listening to the Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra and the opera.

Ahlen's Swedish home is located in a rural area of countryside, where he resides with his parents and sister. It is located approximately one half hour from the city of Gothenburg, which is the second largest city in Sweden with a population approximately the same as Jacksonville.

He is currently enrolled at Mandarin High School, which is approximately twelve times the size of his school in Sweden. The schools also differ in that specialized programs are offered to Swedish students. For example, upon



Olof Ahlen enjoys playing the piano at the Lindell's.

his return to Sweden, Ahlen will be studying in the field of Natural Science. Previously, he was studying in a field he has enjoyed all his life, Electronics and Computer Science. His passion is the study of chance, probability and physics.

While it is challenging to make and maintain new friends here, due to the fact that he is not permitted to drive, his love of music and magic fill in his free time. In addition, Ahlen enjoys the eclectic tastes found in our restaurants including the variety of cafes, stores and the Little Theatre in San Marco. He likes our pancakes and people. He will miss both, he says, when he returns home.

Most of this year, he will be with the Lindell family in Mandarin. His host parents are Debbie and Mike. They have four children, Jennifer, Brent, David and Sarah. Rocky is the family pet. Mike Lindell is an attorney and an active member of Rotary. Ahlen is the fourth student his family has hosted.

Mike Lindell states that this is a great opportunity for the host family to experience other cultures, political views and opinions. It is also very rewarding to have some influence on the student's opinion of our culture. He explains

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Mandarin Christian School's annual Medieval Feast enjoyed by all

By Contributing Writer Madison Nichols, MCS teacher and parent

Imagine you are walking on rolling hills of beautiful grass that lead to a spectacular medieval castle. As you enter the castle, the sound of music fills your ears and you smell the delicious aroma of what is sure to be a magnificent feast. The lords and ladies of the court, displaying layers of silk and velvet, lead the procession to dinner. As the guests move through the castle into the dining hall, their eyes fall on a Jester who is entertaining the crowd with his juggling. Authentic sword-fighting occupies the open area that surrounds the banquet. Fair maidens walk through the crowd, handing out treats as they speak with each guest.

The guests witnessed the crowning of the Queen (Sydney Norris, sixth grade) and the King (Spencer Nichols, sixth grade) while anxiously awaiting the exciting events to follow. The horn sounded (Wesley Bush, sixth grade) to signal the serving of the feast. The guests enjoyed a delicious meal (eaten with their fingers, of course). The fifth grade parents and students

buzz around as servants, providing for their guests and taking care of their needs.

Mandarin Christian School's annual sixth grade Medieval Feast provided yet another magnificent and authentic feast, complete with all the trimmings. Students and parents participated in traditional medieval dancing and enjoyed a spectacular show. After the meal, the families moved into the auditorium for a brilliant medieval



Medieval maidens Jeannette Dearing (music teacher) and Marianne Vargas (music teacher) share a laugh.

story and concert, performed by the sixth grade students' Performing Arts class. The concert was

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Over 400 bears donated to Sheriff's office

Local insurance company commits to helping others in the community

By Martie Thompson

On Wednesday, December 20, the local sales and customer service office of Liberty Mutual Insurance Company met up with representatives of the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office outside the Police Memorial Building.



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that many students come to this country believing that the violence portrayed in movies is the way we live. Both Mike Lindell and Ahlen recommend the exchange program. They believe it is a wonderful experience.

Anyone interested in becoming a host or exchange student will

receive written information giving a detailed description of personality, family expectations, academic achievement, religious beliefs, food preferences and hobbies. Please contact Bill Walker at the Mandarin Rotary Club at 629-6110 for additional information.



Olof Ahlen and his host family.