



Youth for Understanding
South Africa
International Exchange



Youth For Understanding South Africa

NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 2010

Dear YFU Friends and Families

This is most probably the most over used cliché in the world, but honestly, how time flies when we approach the end of the year. Just a few months ago we welcomed our new exchange students and now we are heading into preparations for the famous December Tour and many of the students will celebrate their first summer Christmas and New Years Eve.

Since our last newsletter we have had our regional 6 week orientations with the inbound students, and they are absolutely enjoying their stay, experiencing our warm (and sometimes too warm) weather and many of them seeing rain for the first time since their arrival. It is really great that at this stage they enjoying their experience, it can only get better from here.

The inbound students can now look forward to the Cape Tour which takes place in December. Staff, volunteers and members attended the Annual General Meeting in October during which two new board members were elected. These are most probably the two most exciting events of the YFU calendar during this period and with both events being held in the Cape all roads lead to Cape Town this summer, it seems!

Without any further ado here is your latest update on what's happening in the YFU SA world. Enjoy!

Ngoako Mashitsho
Limpopo Junior Co-ordinator
JVC Portfolio Representative

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**MY EXCHANGE TO FINLAND – Chantelle,
Outbound 2009**



It started with an arrival orientation, which prepared us for our time in Finland. I met 60 exchange students from all over the world. It helped to have friends that had to go through the same thing as you.

I had a wonderful family - A mum and dad with two sisters. The one was my age and the other two years younger than me. Milla, the older sister and I, attended the same school. It felt strange being in a school where everyone spoke

a language you do not know. I took different courses from my sister so we were not in the same classes. At first I was lonely in the classes. No one to talk to me and I did not understand the teacher. Luckily I made (had to) new friends in the second week. From then on I went to school to see my friends.

There was another exchange student in my school and we were close friends. I walked to school and back everyday which were 8 km in total. My exchange friend Ellen lived half way between the school and my home. I went to her house a lot. I spend time with my friends as much as I could. I wanted to experience as much as I could. The rule in the family where I stayed was that I at least try everything once. I did, and liked most of it, except the salmiyakki. My family liked to experiment with other

countries dishes especially Chinese. They also let me make some South-African dishes.

My family took me to Estonia, which is a country 30 minutes by boat from Helsinki. It is small and in the town where we were one part is old fashioned and one is modern. It was very nice. I had a lot of first experiences during my exchange period. My first time on an airplane





(alone), my first time on a big boat, first time in a hotel, first time to ride in a train and I had the privilege to travel a lot by bus. It was nice to be able to go to another city by bus. I did not have to ask my host parents all the time.

Finland is beautiful. Everywhere you look it is green and there are lots of forests. I experienced a little of summer, autumn and winter. They were all nice except the rain. Living here in South-Africa, I have never seen real snow. There it everywhere and lasted two months. When my family took me up north, the temperature dropped till minus 25. That was really cold. You do not dare go out without gloves, a hat, scarf and thick socks. I had the privilege of doing cross country and downhill skiing. It was not that easy. We also skated on the frozen lake. That was awesome.

Then something that was very nice was the YFU meetings. I got to know a lot of different cultures and types of people. Sometimes it is just nice to talk to people that understand how you feel or just to hear about their time in Finland and whether their families are as nice as yours.

I made a lot of new true friends. I saw a beautiful country and had the privilege of enjoying a lot of other stuff. I also matured, became more independent and I am not shy anymore. I would never exchange my five months for anything. The time just flew by.

CHANTELLE VAN DER MERWE





FROM FRANCE TO SOUTH AFRICA

Leave one year in South Africa like exchange student with YFU ,was the most important decision in all my life and certainly the best.After six months of impatience and excitation arrive the 'Big Day' ,the leaving ! Leave family,friends,culture, home-language,and country to go to the Unknown, a new country with new cultures, and a new LIFE! Is not easy but what happiness!!!



These two first months in South Africa spent very fast it was sometime difficult to adapt in a new culture,new school,and new family with an english not always perfect ,but during these two months everyday I tasted discovered,learnt,tried,something new or met new people I was so happy.

At the beginning everything is not easy but 'trying is the best' like repeat my host sister and experiences good or bad are experiences and enrich you.This trip need lot of efforts but these efforts are nothing compared with the joy and great moments or memories you can have after.Of course the family is missed but now I can say that I have a South African family and YFU is here for me ,the relationship between exchange students are incredible because YFU is like a big family=D.

During this year I discover my host country SA with its amazing diversity and friendly people but above all I discover myself I understand now what is really important in my life

. After only two months I feel at home I just enjoy and I feel grow up . My exchange year is an unique opportunity which I will never forget

It is a year of share,exchange and learning of differences to be after more open on the world of today and tomorrow .

AYOBA !

Just Thank you YFU

Clara Rothmann



VISITING HOST FAMILIES WITH 'BIG BOSS'

The chairman of YFU South Africa board, Hans Strijdom, visited Gauteng province in a first week of October, together with regional director Rynette Scholtz and her current intern Monika from Lithuania. They travelled around the province meeting up with host families and their exchange students. We drove more than 1500km in 5 days, visiting Pretoria/Johannesburg, Nelspruit and Thabazimbi areas.

Since the students knew Hans from the orientation seminar (introductory seminar for foreign students preparing them for the exchange experience), it was a good chance to talk to the 'big boss' in person, sharing impressions of life in the host family, school system and free time activities. The families also could express worries, questions and of course, joy about having a new family member. The majority of the exchange students seemed to be fitted good in the host families, happy to experience new daily life and challenge themselves with foreign languages at home and at school. Likewise their new children, host

families were mostly glad to learn new culture, teach own children tolerance and see other perspective just by hosting exchange student.

**MONIKA
SKORUPSKAITE
(INTERN IN YFU
GAUTENG)**



Yannick Braecklein (Germany) and Andreas Meyer (Switzerland)
at the student-hostfamily get-together during Hans's visit



FAMILY DAY IN PRETORIA

On a sunny Saturday, the 9th of October, the park at Deon Malherbe swimming pool got full of exchange students, their host families, friends and YFU volunteers. It was a Family Day, an informal get-together, so beloved amongst exchange students. Not to forget, everybody was supposed to bring their own national dish (home made!), so we laid a little table full of interesting, traditional and mouth-watering dishes, table could hardly keep the load!

So as soon as everybody gathered together, we had a prayer and started opening the packages and discovering new tastes. Yummy! Which was, of course, followed by asking to share the recipes, so the exchange students came up with a plan to bring all recipes to the December tour. Afterwards it was swimming time! Students with host brothers, host sisters and YFU volunteers jumped in the water, playing like little children, competing, laughing and playing again. Other visitors were often looking at crazy YFU people and wondering why they are so hyperactive! Answer was clear – it is fascinating for exchange students to discover that even if they come from

different parts of the world, the exchange experience makes them so similar. Guys were sharing experiences of security issues here, dependency on the (reliable!) transportation, unusual school restrictions, religion-related issues and other stories. Sun was shining all day and people in the pool seemed to be having lots of fun, and soon after students who initially didn't want to go swimming, joined the crowd in the water ☺ In the meanwhile, some YFU volunteers were having conversations with host families, some problems were discussed with exchange students. It was both productive and fun time! As the Family Day was just few days after Regional Director of YFU Gauteng Rynette Scholtz had an operation, we signed two 'get well soon' cards which Rynette was very thankful for. Only as a lady from swimming pool staff started pointing at the clock, saying that they are closing soon, we noticed that the time just flew and it was a moment to start packing. So all the swimmers were asked to hurry up, the food was



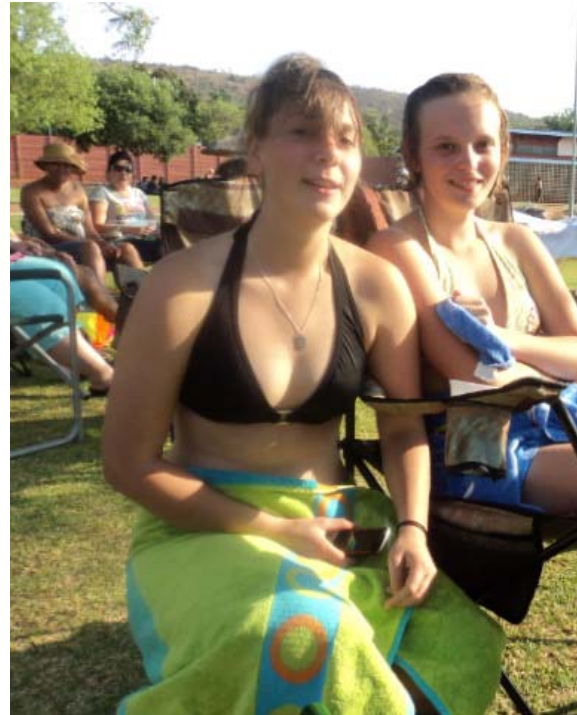
once again confirmed to be very interesting and delicious. Soon we said good bye to each other, also mentioning how nice it was to see each other. Finally everybody left the swimming pool, just three YFU girls – exchange students Jeanne from Chile and Clara from France and the intern Monika from Lithuania found themselves waiting to be picked up, starrng at colourful bushes and palm trees, listening to unfamiliar birds and talking how much one gains from the exchange year. Greetings to everybody who was there and who wanted to be!



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Monika Skorupskaitė,
Intern at YFU Gauteng



YFU

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YFU Annual General Meeting

by Erin Lotz

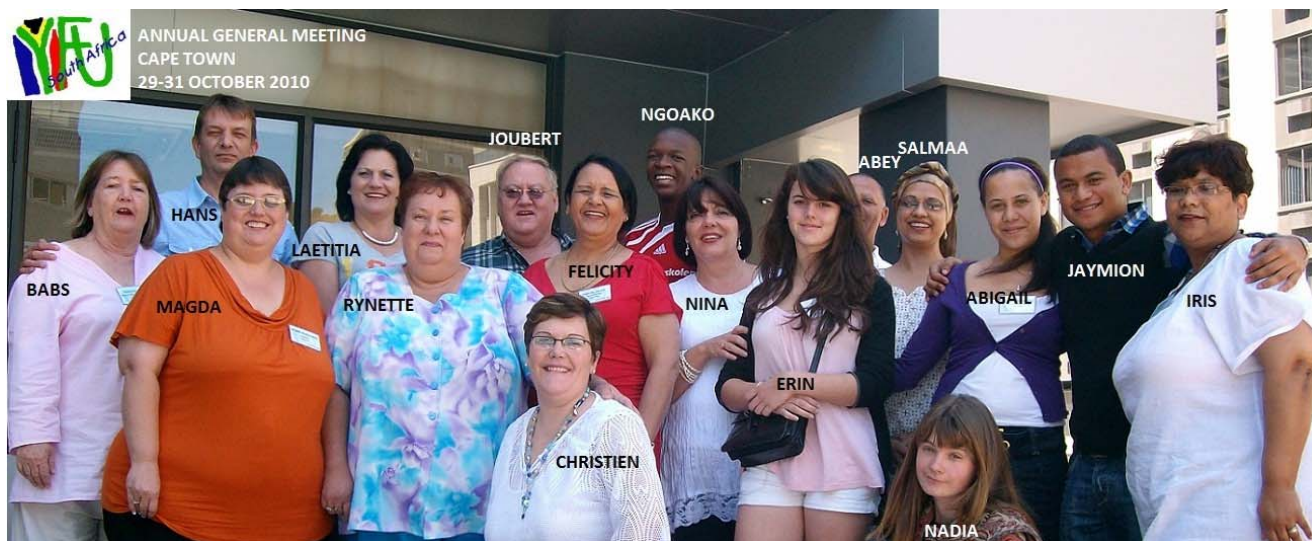
Saturday 30 and Sunday 31 October might make one think of Halloween, or in Saturday's case, the Absa Currie Cup Final between Vodacom Western Province and the Sharks. However, in the case of 18 dedicated Youth For Understanding volunteers, these dates bring to mind much more. On this weekend, the dynamic YFU Annual General Meeting took place at the Stand Tower Hotel and Conference Centre in Cape Town.

The YFU South Africa board members, delegates from all active YFU regions in South Africa and members from the newly formed Junior Volunteer Council attended the AGM. The weekend marked the largest AGM held in the history of YFU South Africa. Innovative strategies and ideas were brought forward by all, and the senior volunteers were blown away by the emergence of the Junior Volunteer Council and their contributions to discussions and presentations.

Focus areas for the organisation were identified and discussed by the volunteers, and it can be expected that YFU South Africa will be ready to shift up to the

next gear, as chairperson, Hans Strijdom put it. Sending learners abroad on exchange and marketing strategies shall be the organisation's main objectives next year. YFU welcomes an abundance of friendly foreign learners each year, yet it has seen a steady decline in the amount of students being sent out in to yonder-world. This can be due to many reasons, from financial constrains to untapped markets. The goal is that these challenges shall all be addressed and before long, the world shall be blasted by the exuberance and uniqueness of YFU South African exchange learners.

The new board for YFU South Africa was also selected. The new board comprises of Hans Strijdom, Joubert van Zyl, Iris Goeda, Jaymion Hendricks, Magda Buitendach and Ngoako Mashitisho. The board and YFU South Africa also paid a sad farewell to board member Felicity Smith who had served YFU South Africa with distinction for ten years. It is of no doubt that all the volunteers left the meeting feeling highly motivated and passionate, but also a little sad. The outstanding presentations were inspiring, and it was disappointing to have to return to the 'real





world' and take off the YFU superhero suits to continue as quite civilians in South African society. Volunteers such as these are unbeknownst to many, and the good that they strive to achieve is worthy of many awards. As individuals, they shine, but as a group, YFU volunteers spontaneously combust, like a brilliant super nova, on its way towards its prime. Next year's AGM promises to bring together even more volunteers and is eagerly anticipated by all.

In the mean time, be on the lookout for the new, awesome YFU South Africa T-shirts this December, as the inbound students go on their annual December tour around the country! For more information on Youth for Understanding South Africa and it's international exchange programmes, hosting opportunities and volunteer options, visit the new-designed website: www.yfu.org.za

GERMAN EXCHANGE STUDENT FLOWN TO SOUTH AFRICA TO ATTEND MATRIC BALL

Elena Eger, on exchange to South Africa Germany during August 2009 till July 2010, had such a great time in Port Elizabeth that her friends at Linkside High School decided that she just had to come back and attend the matric farewell.

As Elena's friendly personality has befriended her to everybody, her friends approached her parents for permission during their visit to South Africa earlier this year. Not only did they want Elena back in South Africa but they also wanted her to experience a proper South African matric dinner and dance which she will not have in Germany.

Then they started to raise money for the air fare. They raised an amount at the school; her host family contributed however the largest amount was donated by the local branch of Standard Bank in Port Elizabeth.

Elena stayed for a week before returning to Germany.



Jean-Marc Suntah, Joy McBryne, Elena Eger and Michael Wood



FROM DENMARK TO SOUTH AFRICA

My first few months have been anything but boring! I was asked to do some sort of writing for the newsletter, but I find it very difficult – Where to start?

I would wish for everyone to experience South Africa, it's such a wonderful country. It's impossible for me to capture my almost 3 months on a piece of paper. But I'll try, which reminds me of being an exchange student. A lot of times you end up in insecure situations, but you just have to try your best and most of the time things will turn out to something positive!

Well, let me start by saying that South Africa is a lot different from any other country – Especially Europe! I arrived in Jo'burg with a bunch of other exchange students and went to Pretoria, where we had to spend the weekend on the orientation Camp – Boy it was fun! There was the typical YFU atmosphere with a lot of understanding and open-mindedness, and a bit of excitement in the air – I can now say that I've eaten chicken heads and feet's, plus some funny looking worms!

After a fun weekend we went to our new families, and the start of an unforgettable year was taking off! I live on a farm, which is as different as it can be for a City-person like me, and suddenly having five dogs and feeding sheep's everyday was literally a new culture and life. The first couple of weeks I spend on adapting to my new family and surroundings. Then school started, and with newly bought school cloth I went to my "First day of school, again" And wow, what a difference – Nothing like the school I was used to!



I was introduced to the school at an assembly as "Chris from Denmark", which has become one of my many nicknames. Just like "Great Dane" "Denmark" "Chrissie" "D" and so on it goes. With a new guy from overseas the learners greeted me with shouting and dancing – Suddenly Chris felt a bit embarrassed! Still this very day, after almost 3 months, things still surprises me at school, the strict discipline, the school uniform, and my long

hair – which I had to cut! Luckily no detention for me.



But the school is good, and have been my opportunity to really get into the South African culture. I play cricket now, and I had never played nor seen cricket. So I had to learn everything from scratch – And I actually broke one of my dad's windows practicing. Ups, that's something I won't recommend doing! I also went to the matrix farewell, which is for learners who graduate High school. As a waiter I had to serve food and fill up the juice all night. The waiters got strictly order not to dance when the music started, but as soon as the music started everyone went to the dance floor – even some of the teachers! The South Africans really like to dance!



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There is so much more I want to say, but I am running out of paper. It is impossible to describe what I am experiencing. It's fantastic, weird, funny, different.. All in all gathered in a package called South Africa! I can only say I'm looking forward for tomorrow's challenges and experiences!



I just quickly want to mention the animal wild life; we stumbled over this Iguana on the way to Lichtenburg – Awesome!

Christoffer Kjaer from Denmark.

YFU

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