

## GROUP STUDY EXCHANGE (GSE)



### District Hosts Fantastic Italian Team From District 2060

by Christine Goodin , Rotary Club of Terra Linda, District 5150 GSE Chair

Rotary changes lives. Group Study Exchange (GSE) is no exception! During the entire month of April, our district hosted a fantastic team of young professionals from District 2060, the Venice region of Italy. The GSE team from Italy included Diego Vianello (team leader) and four team members—Carlotta Casotto, Francesca Mariotto, Monica Poli and **Filippo Zanella**.

We shared the best of everything in District 5150 with our new Italian friends. The team visited important cultural places, met interesting people, learned about many businesses, tasted new foods and of course experienced an abundance of Rotary fellowship.

The Italian GSE team visited fascinating places with special focus on their own personal vocational interests, cultural and historical sites and even places they didn't know they would be interested in seeing! They visited: Google, Ernst & Young, Oracle, NASA, Stanford University, United States Geological Survey Western Regional Offices, Ano Nuevo State Preserve, Foster City Police & Fire Departments, Japanese Tea Gardens, Union Square, Frog Design, Venture Capitalists, SF Visitors & Convention Bureau Fisherman's Wharf, Chinatown, a private meeting with the Italian Consulate General, SF MOMA, Buck Institute for Aging, Guide Dogs for the Blind, Pixar, Disney ImageMovers, Equator Coffees, and so much more!

Local Rotarians welcomed team members into their homes for personal homestays. It's fantastic that we have so many Rotarians willing to open their homes...it's this kind of unconditional, personal touch that provides a very enriching and important part of the cultural exchange portion of the program. A very special heart-felt thank you to all the host families who

volunteered to host a team member this year! There is no doubt the Italian team will remember their host families with a great deal of fondness and gratitude for many, many years.

Special thanks to Novato Rotaract for their involvement in this year's program! Two Novato Rotaractors were host families and their club hosted an afternoon BBQ at Marin Bocce in San Rafael as well as a day trip to the Sonoma Wine Country. It was very successful to have

Rotaract involved with the GSE program and hopefully they will continue to be involved.

Group Study Exchange is a long-time favorite program of our district and many District 5150 Rotarians are involved to create a dynamic, personalized and interesting program year after year. The program is four weeks long and the team spends time in all counties of our district. The dedicated participation in Group Study Exchange is never-ending and we



**Above: Both teams pose on the deck of the San Francisco Belle during the District Conference. Below: Italian team exchanges flags with Burlingame President Joe La Mariana, 2nd from right.**



# GROUP STUDY EXCHANGE (GSE) CONT'D



are lucky to have such strong support throughout our district!

Just a few days ago, our District 5150 team arrived in District 2060 and began the second half of this exchange program. Dave Bertini (RC of Pacifica) is leading four team members to Venice for the experience of a lifetime. The team includes; Jessica Bourdet, sponsored by RC of Marin Sunrise, Tim Howard, sponsored by RC of Novato, Kimberlee Sakamoto, sponsored by RC of Fisherman's Wharf and Wendy Vived, sponsored by RC of Burlingame. Please follow the adventures of our team while they are in District 2060, Venice! Our team has started a blog at the following website address:  
[www.gseitaly2010.blogspot.com](http://www.gseitaly2010.blogspot.com).

The world feels smaller and friendlier because of these types of Rotary exchange programs. A deeper sense of cultural awareness and international understanding has been felt by each of us who connected with our GSE Teams, our two beautiful countries and Rotary Districts 5150 and 2060. As the curtain falls on this year's GSE, think about Louis Armstrong singing these words: "...I watch them grow...they'll learn much more than I'll ever know...and I think to myself...what a wonderful world." ■



## GSE IN ACTION

□ Clockwise from top: Monica addresses NASA; working out with the fencing team at Stanford; Francesca googles Google; visiting Ano Nuevo with Rotary Club of Half Moon Bay; we have a lagoon, too!..cruising at Foster City; Novato Rotaractors with both GSE teams at Marin Bocce in San Rafael. ■

