

**Rotary Adventures in Citizenship 2006**  
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My family has been hosting students for Rotary's Adventures in Citizenship program for the past fourteen years. In other words, I have grown up with the program for nearly my entire life, watching students enter and leave my house year after year. Since I had grown up with the program, when I sent in my application I was sure that I knew and fully understood everything that the program represented and embodied.

However, upon entering the program I realized that I could not have been more wrong. After having lived in Ottawa throughout my life, I had never really discovered Ottawa or the history that it had left behind for us to uncover. Through the Rotary Adventures in Citizenship program, I was given the opportunity to discover Ottawa for myself, and discover Ottawa as it was seen by other Canadians. I wasn't singled out as "the local"; instead I got to discover Ottawa just as the students from across the country were discovering Ottawa.

Through discovering Ottawa, we began to discover Canada as well. By meeting people from across Canada, I witnessed the different cultures and varying beliefs within our one country. However, though there were varying cultures and beliefs present, there remained similarities between the Canadian students that were present at the Adventures in Citizenship program. Each person present seemed to be linked to the others not only by their nationality, but by their underlying support in the strength of our nation. And though there were several different cultures present and beliefs vocalized, everyone respected the cultures and opinions of others, even if they did not necessarily agree with them. This seemed to be a small representation of Canada's acceptance of cultural diversity in our nation. And the Adventures in Citizenship program proves to remind Canada's youth of how fortunate they are to live in a country that respects all cultures and guarantees equality for each citizen instead of racial discrimination between citizens.

Rotary's Adventures in Citizenship program is an extremely rewarding program though you do have to be prepared for a jam packed schedule that lasts from around eight in the morning until about nine at night upon entering the program. However, each bit of the program will remain as a lasting memory and will impact your future beliefs and thoughts of our nation and the amazing people that live within it. There will, however, be parts of the program that will stand out in your mind above all other experiences within the Adventures in Citizenship program. For me, my favourite experience within the program was witnessing the swearing in of new Canadian Citizens. It was absolutely amazing to see people coming from different places and experiences, having overtaken several obstacles just to be at that ceremony and to be able to be there to support them when they finally received their Canadian citizenship. The children, upon being sworn in as Canadian citizens, grabbed their tiny Canadian flag and began running around the stage, waving it proudly with a sparkle in their eyes. Smiles and hints of laughter by the parents who seemed equally as excited as their children to become Canadian citizens. Then there was the grand old African lady who seemed worn from the trials of life. She walked slowly but strongly and with so much dignity and proudly accepted her citizenship. That was my favourite part of the program, though everything else was equally amazing and eye opening.

The Rotary Adventures in Citizenship program is truly an incredible experience. This program truly cannot be improved upon; it can only be embraced and experienced by the youth of our country. This program arms us, the youth of the nation, with the tools to be prepared to take this country into our own hands. It teaches us that we have the power to shape our country as we see fit and we do not have to leave our country to whomever may be in power at the time. We can do something. This program arms you with new views, lifelong friends and is an absolutely amazing experience. It is hard even to express the power and meaning that this program provides, though I am sure that it represents different things to the different people who attended. The youth are the future of our country, so embrace the program and see what it can mean for you.