

Rotary Leadership Award (RYLA)

By Aaron Stewart

What difference has the course made to you?

The grant helped towards the cost of the Rotary Young Leaders Award (RYLA). The course, held at Grafham Water from 1st-8th September 2018, is designed to enable young people between the ages of 18-25 to participate in a range of activities and develop the skills needed in leadership situations. My sponsoring club was the Rotary Club of Diss Waveney.

During the course I participated in sporting activities I had not experienced before. I did kayaking and sailing and enjoyed them both.

At the beginning of the course I was allocated to a team which was then sent on an overnight expedition. We set off at 1pm and had until 10.30am the following day to find our way back to the centre. During this activity I became very aware of the need to work as part of a team and not to just focus on my own needs. We needed to learn to rely on each other as some of the other candidates were not physically fit and needed support. I became the team 'motivator' even when I was tired. Our team won the challenge.

I had not done any public speaking before this course. We gradually learned how to present our ideas and became more confident in our abilities. I found public speaking a bit daunting at first but did not want to let the team down so persevered with it and it became easier.

We did an activity called The Prospect Game which was about creating and building a business. We had to learn about sales and finance (which are not part of my daily employment) in order to convince a panel of professionals that we had a good product. I had to use a different set of skills to my normal work skills to do this and we learned from others in the team who had experience.

The team also had to build a raft which would float.

What I have learned about myself?

I have learned to listen to other people more carefully and on occasion take a step back and let others have their say. I have learned to respect the views of others even when I don't agree with them. I understand that using other people's ideas as well as my own is beneficial. I have learned the importance of planning, organisations and appreciated of the 'bigger picture' rather than concentrating on my own specific part in the organisation. Learning to fit in with others and include everyone in the team is essential.

We built in reflection time and a review period at the end of each challenge to assess how the task/day had gone. I enjoyed this and found it very helpful in evaluating what I had done/learned. I learned how to manage minor conflicts and resolve them. I understand the value of celebrating success as well as coping with setbacks. I have gained a deeper understanding of myself as a person and what 'type' of personality I have. I know that I am competitive and want to get on with things but now appreciate that others may have valuable alternatives to contribute. I appreciate the importance of mental as well as physical stamina. I have learned to work with people from different backgrounds/work places who have a range of opinions and skills.

Being able to step out of my comfort zone for a week enabled me to develop the skills I have and acquire new ones. I have made new friends with people from different backgrounds and workplaces and will keep in touch with them.

I am finding ways of putting into practice what I have learned in social and work environments. I really enjoyed the course and would recommend it to others.

Thank you very much for your support.

Aaron Stewart

