

Rotary exchange great opportunity

Rhys Kelso

rhys@hintonparklander.com

Jolle Bakker arrived in Hinton from Holland in late August and has been busy getting acquainted with the town in which he will spend the next year.

Bakker is in Hinton as part of the Rotary Club's students exchange program and he is excited for all the new experiences coming his way.

"It has been great so far," said Bakker. "I really love it. But it is a big change from Holland."

One of the biggest differences for Bakker is the size of Canada.

"Holland is really crowded," he said.

Bakker added that adjusting to speaking English is also a change, but he doesn't have to learn the language from scratch as he already knows how to speak the language. As far as the weather goes, Bakker said so far it has been similar to back home. However he is preparing for his first long and cold Canadian winter.

This is not the first time that Bakker has been to North America. Two years ago he was in the United States for a month. Bakker is looking forward to all the opportunities this trip will bring him. He also got some great advice from his brother before leaving home.

"My brother went on an exchange and he said there is only three times when you get home sick," said Bakker. "Your birthday, Christmas and Sinterklaas."

It has only been a month since Bakker has arrived, but it didn't take him long to get involved at Harry Collinge High School. He joined the Hinton Wolfpak football team just after arriving in Hinton. Bakker played rugby back home, but never football. It has taken him awhile to learn the game and all the rules, but he is picking it up and enjoying his time on the team.

Bakker said he is also looking forward to trying to play hockey.

"I have never played it before," he said. "In Holland it's all about speed skating."

As part of the Rotary exchange program the students get to make a list of the top ten places they want to go and Canada was at the top of Bakker's list.

"I wanted to go to an English country and Canada was my first choice," he said.

The Rotary Club of Hinton is preparing to host an information session about the exchange program for students interested in studying abroad for a year. The session is scheduled for Sept. 27 at 7 p.m. in the Ranchers conference room. Rotary members will be on hand to talk about the program and answer any questions students or parents may have.

Rotary Club of Hinton member Charlene Stamp said there are some qualifications students must meet to qualify for the program.

"Students must be born on or after Feb. 28, 1995, they must be in the upper half of their class and they must have one or both parents in attendance," she said.

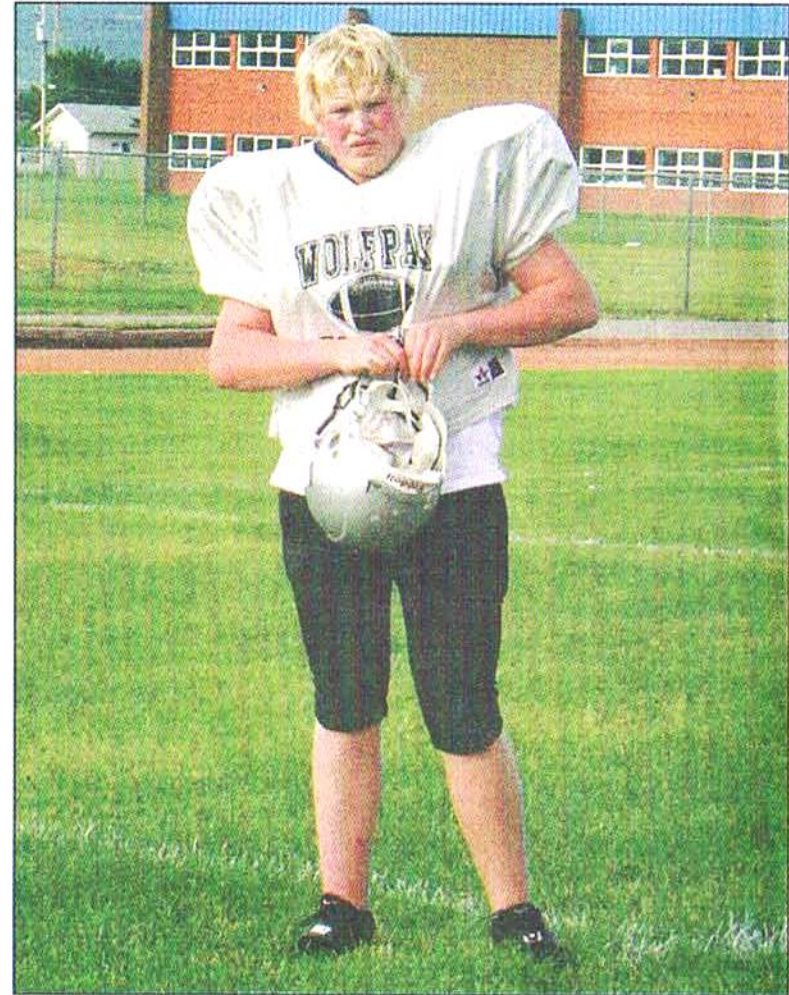
Although the program is a great way for students to see the world, Stamp said students must remember that they are serving as Canadian ambassadors on the trip. The trip is done through Rotary and Stamp said the club's motto is service above self.

"We focus on the six Bs," she said. "Be first, Be a person of action, Be curious, Be on purpose (focus), Be grateful, Be a service and Be in the moment."

All students considering the program should start on their applications as soon as possible. Stamp said it is an extensive application process and applications are available at both high schools.

As far as words of advice go Bakker said it is an amazing chance for students.

"It's the opportunity you get once in your life," he said. "If you go when you're older you don't get to go into high schools and meet people."



Rhys Kelso Photo

Jolle Bakker will spend a year in Hinton on a Rotary exchange program. It didn't take him long to get involved in town as he joined the Hinton Wolfpak football team.

Bakker added he is also looking forward to learning more about himself while he is away from home.

"When you're away from your family you have to learn to solve your own problems," he said. "You get to know yourself."