

## Natan Gonçalves, our Exchange Student from Brazil

June 13, 2011

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During 2010-11, our Club has had the privilege of hosting Natan Gonçalves, a Rotary International exchange student from Brazil. At most meetings, we would hear about Natan's week in Eau Claire... at school, with his friends and host family, or the various trips he took including to District 6250 functions. And occasionally we might hear about how much Natan appreciated the cold Wisconsin winter. However, today was Natan's opportunity to share the story of his home country of Brazil and his year as an exchange student in Eau Claire.

Natan's home town is Orlandia, Brazil which has a population of about 45,000. The climate is tropical with rainy summers with temperatures in the 90-110 degree range, and winters with temperatures between 60 and 65 degrees. Natan told us about his family and friends, Orlandia's economy, culture, historic sites, leisure activities, tourist attractions, and his sponsoring Rotary Club. He also talked about the beauty of his country and its cities, and even though he is not a fan, Natan did talk about the national soccer team, because for many in his country, soccer is such a passion.

Natan arrived in Eau Claire in August and the first few weeks, including the start of school, were difficult. But as his English improved and he became more comfortable at school, he began to really enjoy the year and gained a greater appreciation of family. Natan talked about some of the year's highlights... attending a Wisconsin Badgers football game, homecoming, his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, trips to Disney World and the Bahamas. He experienced snow for the first time, and took advantage of the snow and ice by trying snowboarding, snowshoeing, ice skating and snowmobiling.

Natan expressed his love and appreciation to the many people that helped and supported him throughout the year, including his host families, our Club, and especially the best Youth Exchange Counselor ever... Robin Shih. Natan concluded his presentation with these thoughts:

*"Being a foreign exchange student is the best experience ever in my whole life. I appreciated what each of you have done for me. I won't forget... never. Being a foreign exchange student is just amazing. I will tell people how it was and everything, but anyone won't feel what I'm feeling now, how happy I am. I'm not going to lie... it's not easy all the time... we have some "problems" sometimes. But everything happens for a reason, so this makes us stronger people and adults. Thank you Rotary Club."*



**Natan Gonçalves**, our Rotary exchange student from Brazil, wearing his Rotary blazer