I had no idea what to expect when going to the NYSF. Not knowing what I was going to experience in January made the journey so much more exciting and rewarding. Now that I have attended and participated in the NYSF, I’m glad I didn’t have any initial expectations, because the surprise of it all is what makes it so life-changing.

In this report I would like to share with you how life-changing and rewarding my NYSF experience has been. This is going to be a challenge, trying to share with you the best two weeks of my life.

The first people I became close friends with was my interest group, Blackburn, a health and medicine group named after the scientist Elizabeth Blackburn. NYSF’s ability to group you with 12 like minded students with the same interest is incredible. My buddy could not have been better, her and I got along like we had known each other for years and within Blackburn, her and I made some great new friends.

Blackburn visited a number of laboratories that were part of the health and medicine area of Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). Some included DNA profiling, Neuroscience, Pharmacology, Pathology, Health Sport Science and Astromedicine, just to name a few. Prior to going to the NYSF, I had an interest in studying pharmacy in the future, so when I found out that we would spend a day at the University of Canberra focusing on pharmacology, to say I was excited would be an understatement. Throughout the day we did things such as make creams, tested pain relief tablets and visited a pharmacy, which gave us the opportunity to ask real pharmacists question after question. It was my favourite lab visit out of all of them as I returned to Burgermann College that night with a reaffirmation of this being an area I want to study after school. It also gave an insight into what is really involved in pharmacy, where you can specialize in it, and how much I know I will love studying it in the future.
On the NYSF, something I valued highly was the vast variety of inspirational speakers who spoke to us about their areas of interest, how they got to where they are today and some of the historical breakthroughs in science that they themselves have participated in. Some of these wonderful people included Rolf Landua from CERN, Professor Brian Schmidt, Professor Jenny Graves, and a panel of entrepreneurs including the very humorous Rish Ratnam. What made me feel so connected to some of these people was knowing that many of them are past NYSF students, and as I looked up to them on stage, it helped me see that I can achieve my dreams too.

The NYSF balance the lectures and lab visits really well with socialising and networking events. Some of these events included a science themed disco, swing dancing, Rotary dinner, Science dinner, evening activities to the local swimming pool and Black Mountain and a day at Questacon. The Rotary dinner enabled us to connect with Rotarians and meet new people, and the Science dinner gave us the opportunity to personally thank and further meet some of the scientists who had presented at lectures. The guest speaker at the Science dinner was Professor Brian Schmidt, a Noble Prize winner in the area of Astrophysics, and I had been selected to thank him for his inspirational speech. This was a nervous experience for me, and I spent some time working on my thank you and public speaking abilities. One additional person who I feel the need to thank is ‘Staffie’ Jack. He helped me to deal with my nerves and to feel more confident. That’s just one example of how unbelievable and supportive the Staffie’s were. In the end, I thanked him without tripping on stage, dropping his gift, or shaking his hand too aggressively. It all went smoothly and I have returned home with new and valuable public speaking skills.

Staying at Burgermann College at the Australian National University was a new learning curve on its own. It gave all the students and I the opportunity to explore the University lifestyle and immerse ourselves into what our future could look like. The accommodation was fantastic and our rooms had everything we needed. It opened my eyes to many of the options available for studying at University.

Before I conclude this report, there are multiple people I would like to thank. To The Rotary Club of Kalamunda, thank you for your time and kind sponsorship. To the Staffie’s and those who work behind the scenes of the
NYSF, thank you for your contagious enthusiasm, the support you gave us and the smiles your shared which helped in making my experience so memorable. Finally, to all the corporate partners and sponsors of the NYSF, thank you for supporting such an important and beneficial program for students interested in science.

In conclusion, what I primarily felt during the whole trip was being welcomed, accepted, greeted and embraced. I felt welcomed, accepted, greeted and embraced into Rotary District 9455, into my host family’s home, into Burgermann College, into my floor group, into my health and medicine interest group, into the different laboratories and into 200 other students lives. The only other time I can think I’ve felt so welcomed is in my family at home, and that is why everyone says you leave the NYSF with a new family, and with Burgermann college as a second home.

Carolyn Wallace, District 9455

Myself looking through a microscope at some brain cells in the neuroscience centre.

Myself keenly making a cream at the pharmacology centre.

My buddy and I with our pipettes which we used when DNA profiling.