

"Dear Rotarians and friends,

Happy new year and my warmest regards to you all. Just a brief report from your ambassadorial scholar and a reminder to you that I am not taking this wonderful experience for granted. I am enjoying Bologna enormously - the whole process of living and studying abroad has already been eye-opening. Learning Persian, Arabic and Chinese is a challenge but the studies are going well. Nevertheless, I am not indulging myself purely in a life of pasta and scholarship - I have also been trying to give something back to Rotary, and the community, in return for this extraordinary opportunity. I have given speeches at Rotary clubs not only in Bologna but also in the region, and I have been volunteering at a food bank for the very poor every week. Although I'm only about a third of the way through, I feel I've been managing to fit quite a lot in. Let's just say it's no coincidence that Berlusconi finally resigns just weeks after I arrived in the country. I hope to tell you more about the experience in person when I am next back, but in the meantime, there will hopefully be a weekly column in the KWN about my observations on 'la dolce vita' at what is such a difficult time for both Italy and Europe. I know I've said it before, but I can never say it too often - my profoundest thanks go to you all for sponsoring me and being such a support. Over and out until next time.

Much love,

Your (wo)man in Italy

Justine"