



Media Release
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Selwyn sister city opportunities

Selwyn District Council and the Malvern Community Board are encouraging residents to get involved in sister cities projects over the coming year – including Rewi Alley celebrations in Springfield in December and visits to China, Japan and Indonesia in 2018.

Selwyn has five international sister city relationships with opportunities for Selwyn residents to be involved in China, Japan, Indonesia and the USA.

Sister City Committee Chair Allison Rosanowski says as part of the relationship with Shandan in Gansu Province, China, a celebration is planned at Springfield in December, to mark the 120th anniversary of Rewi Alley's birth.

"We're delighted to be welcoming more than 80 guests from China, including six from our sister city, at the celebration," she says,

"Rewi Alley was born in Springfield but spent most of his life in China and is revered by the Chinese for his work in establishing schools and cooperatives to improve the lives of ordinary people".

The commemorative event will be held at the Rewi Alley Memorial in Springfield on Saturday 2 December at 2pm. The event is open to the public. To register an interest in attending please email rewi.alley.celebration@selwyn.govt.nz by 22 November.

In September 2018 a group of residents from Selwyn, led by Mayor Sam Broughton, will visit Shandan at the time of the opening of the new Shandan Bailie Vocational College. The college will cater for 2000 students from throughout China.

The Selwyn group will travel to other areas of Gansu and China. Past groups have travelled to a geological park and through part of the Silk Road to Duhuang in the desert, to visit the Magao caves which contain huge Buddhist statues carved from sandstone. Xian and the Terracotta Warriors, the Yangtze Gorge and the Great Wall near Beijing are also possibilities.

A second sister city relationship Selwyn has is with the Japanese area of Akitakata, near Hiroshima. Mrs Rosanowski says the relationship was originally with Takamiya, a beautiful rural area, which is now part of the larger Akitakata amalgamated council district.

"In late September and early October, there's a wonderful opportunity for Selwyn residents to join a Darfield High School group travelling to Akitakata," she says. "Highlights include visiting the Peace Park at Hiroshima, the shrines on Miyajima Island, traditional houses and spend time exploring soya bean, rice and nashi pear farms. Part of the time will be spent in homestays."

In conjunction with the Akitakata visit, the group can travel to the Malvern Community Board's sister city, Yebetsu, Japan. Yebetsu is located on the northern shores of Hokkaido, the northernmost island of Japan. The visitors will stay in local homestays and experience scallop farming, dairy farms, the ice museum and beautiful countryside.

From late August next year the Selwyn Sister City Committee is seeking volunteers to travel to Toraja in the highlands of Sulawesi, in Indonesia.

“Selwyn is the first council in New Zealand to have a sister city relationship in Indonesia,” Mrs Rosanowski says. “Toraja is a largely Christian, coffee growing community which has been supported by a group of Canterbury farmers for over ten years.

“The community is now seeking relationships with Rolleston schools, and we’re looking for volunteers to spend time teaching in Toraja schools, working as volunteers alongside teachers and students, to improve English language proficiency.”

The fifth sister city is in Coventry, Rhode Island USA. This is a beautiful historic area of the USA. Currently the Sister City Committee is working towards hosting a group from Coventry and establishing school relationships. Ellesmere College is keen to build this relationship.

All Selwyn sister city groups travel at their own expense and usually host incoming groups. Sister city trips give participants a different experience from tourist travel as there are opportunities to really interact with local people. All trips are limited to adults aged 18 years and older. An information evening will be held in early 2018.

To learn more about sister city opportunities or join the Sister City Committee, email Bernadette Ryan at Bernadette.Ryan@selwyn.govt.nz.

PHOTO: Selwyn District Council Library Customer Service Officer Charlotte Wilson travelled to Shandan, China in 2016, one of Selwyn’s five international sister cities.

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