



Media release

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Sister City trip builds closer connection with Coventry

A recent trip to Coventry in Rhode Island has helped develop closer bonds with Selwyn's newest sister city, with more trips to other sister cities planned next year.

Seven Selwyn residents, including Mayor Kelvin Coe, visited Coventry in New England in the United States of America in October.

Coventry, Rhode Island has a population of around 40,000. It has many old homes, farmhouses, churches and cemeteries. Originally an agricultural town, in the nineteenth century several small textile mills were established in the town, a number of which still survive today. The town is situated 20 minutes from Rhode Island's capital, Providence. Rhode Island has a rich history and the state contains around 20% of the country's historic landmarks. It was the first of the original thirteen colonies to declare independence from Britain in 1776.

The visit was a friendship and cultural exchange and provided an opportunity for local residents to experience another culture. Participants were hosted by locals in Coventry and paid for accommodation and other expenses themselves.

The trip was organised by Selwyn District Council's Sister City Committee. Selwyn Sister City Chairperson, Allison Rosanowski, took part in the trip and says they received a warm welcome from Coventry Council and enjoyed the opportunity to learn more about the area's history and culture.

"We visited Rhode Island's State Parliament and local sites where we learnt about the early interaction between native Americans and the British, Rhode Island's role in the War of Independence and the Civil War."

Tour participants also visited a local high school and middle school.

"We were impressed with the wide range of trade programmes Coventry High School offered to students including building, catering, graphic design and automotive repairs. There is an opportunity for Selwyn schools to develop a relationship with schools in Coventry and for local students to learn more about America through this," says Mrs Rosanowski, who is a former Principal of Darfield High School.

A return visit by Coventry residents is planned for March 2017, where visitors will be hosted in Selwyn homes.

Selwyn also has Sister City relationships with Yubetsu-cho (Hokkaido, Japan), Akitakata-shi (Hiroshima, Japan), Shandan (Gansu Province, China) and North Toraja (Indonesia).

Applications for a sister city trip to Toraja in mid July 2016 will be open early next year. North Toraja has a population of around 215,000 and is a popular tourist destination. Selwyn's sister city agreement (signed in 2014) formalised a relationship which developed over 12 years with local farmers visiting the area to provide support and advice to North Torajan coffee growers on how to produce, market, and sell their coffee.

A trip to Japan is also planned from 19-26 September 2016. This visit will travel to Akitakata-shi and Yubetsu-cho. The group will have the chance to visit local farms, Hiroshima Peace Park, Miyajima Island, Tokyo and experience Japanese life and culture such as traditional plays.

"Sister city trips are a fantastic opportunity to experience life in another culture," says Selwyn Mayor Kelvin Coe.

Anyone interested in finding out more about future sister city trips can contact Bernadette on 347 2830 or email bernadette.ryan@selwyn.govt.nz. Participants need to be over 18 and able to meet their own trip costs.

Ends

Photos attached:

Rhode Island State Capitol was one of a number of buildings Selwyn residents explored on the sister city visit.

Sister city trip participants visiting Coventry Council.

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