
STUDENTS VISIT SISTER-CITY OF SEATTLE

Three local secondary school students recently returned from a two-week exchange to Seattle, one of Christchurch's six sister-cities.

The Year 13 students chosen as the 2002 Seattle Scholars were Gina Harris of Rangī Ruru Girls School, Hadleigh Milligan of Christchurch Boys High School and Suzy Garnett of Christchurch Girls High School.

Christchurch-Seattle Sister City Committee chairman Brian Palliser says that while the committee was disappointed by the small number of applications, only 12 were received for the scholar exchange programme, the quality of the applicants was superb.

The exchange is an annual event with three senior secondary school students from Christchurch, and further a-field, visiting Seattle for a two-week exchange around Easter. The exchange is reciprocated with senior students visiting from Seattle in September.

The students departed Christchurch on 20 March and returned on 6 April. They were home-hosted by students from University Prep School, getting to experience first hand typical family life in America.

“The attitudes towards learning at University Prep are very different to the attitudes found at most high schools in New Zealand,” says Hadleigh.

“Most of the class time is spent discussing or debating the homework set for the previous night. This is when new ideas are introduced. It's up to the students learn and revise what they covered in class at home, so they are able to discuss it the next day. School seems fairly relaxed but the students do work extremely hard when they get home.”

He says another difference was how all the students got on with each other. “While we were there, we saw no problems with the different age groups and their attitudes towards each other.”

Hadleigh says the sense of national pride was another stand out feature. “After September 11, the sense of national pride was a lot more obvious than usual. Typical American pick-up trucks had huge stickers on their sides, shaped like the United States and coloured like the flag. Most cars had some form of bumper sticker showing national pride and houses had a United States flag flying at the front of their house,” says Hadleigh.

Exchange participant Gina Harris says highlights of the trip included visiting the Seattle Aquarium, “where we saw an electric eel stunning its food as it was fed, otters at play in the water and the complete life cycle of salmon.”

The 'Ye Old Curiosity Shop' on the waterfront was also a stand-out experience "it was interesting and different with all sorts of collectibles, souvenirs, Indian art work, money collected from all around the world and a preserved body, many were specific to Washington State," says Gina.

The students also enjoyed their day spent at an elementary school, just up the road from University Prep.

"We spent most of the day in the gym, at different classes. Although it was a public school we were all amazed at the variety and quantity of equipment the children had available to them such as a climbing wall, unicycles, basketball equipment, little pedal cars and tug-of-war ropes. Their coach was happy to teach us how to use the unicycles, which kept Suzy amused for most of the day.

"Another highlight was the Woodland Park Zoo where we all did community service in the morning in the form of preparing reptile and amphibian education packs for school teachers. Our favourites included the American bald eagle and its nest, the bears, wolves and the tropical Asian garden," says Gina.

She says that aside from the activities arranged during the week, they also enjoyed going out for coffee with their hosts and their school friends in the afternoons and going to friends' houses in the weekends.

"One Saturday, a group of us went to Hadleigh's host brother's house to make New Zealand food such as Pavlova and our version of truffles. We also enjoyed a Carnival Dance put on by the school one Saturday night."

The Christchurch-Seattle Sister-City Committee contributed \$1000 towards each student's airfare.

Mr Palliser says educational exchanges are a great way to forge international relationships.

"Formal sister-city relationships are about promoting cultural understanding through a wide range of 'connections' including the arts, education and sport and the establishment of economic and commercial linkages."

The Seattle sister-city link was established in 1981. Seattle is located in Washington State, on the Pacific North West Coast of the United States of America. The city is surrounded by water with Lake Washington on one side and Puget Sound, an inlet of the Pacific Ocean on the other.

Further information: Christchurch City Council International Relations Co-ordinator Sue McFarlane ph: 371 1959.