Friendship Link- SI Nara, SOLT

What is a Friendship Link?

Friendship links began many years ago to reinforce the nature of our work as a global organization. By creating relationships with clubs in other countries, we can cooperatively serve and work toward our mission. Clubs are encouraged to create these links with one another which can be done informally via meetups at conventions or through visits, or with a formal application matching process through SIA.

SI Chico has a total of four friendship links, SI St Albans, England, SI Macatti in the Phillipines, SI Togo and SI Nara Japan, which is the one I will be talking about today. Of special note is the fact that SI St. Albans and SI Nara are also friendship links with one another. Margaret VanLaanMartin had the pleasure of interacting with both clubs at St. Albans 50th anniversary.

SI Nara

Our friendship link with SI Nara resulted from a match through SIA and the idea may have originated at a Federation meeting in Seattle many years ago. The relationship was furthered at the SIA Biennium that was held in Hawaii during Susan Evers McCauley's Presidency. The attendees from both clubs stuck up conversation and friendship during the event. The bond has remained strong over the years and has included visits and many joint projects.

Joan Stoner has visited SI Nara twice, in 2018 along with myself, Natalie Conrad, Carrie Pavis and Gayle Aylward and also with Kit Hutchinson when SI Nara celebrated their 30th anniversary. Here's what she said about that visit;

"In 4 short days, we attended the conference, a concert, toured the temple, a pottery factory, ink factory and had a tea tasting. Most of the women did not speak English but we managed to communicate anyway. What I remember best however is the tremendous hospitality and graciousness of the Japanese."

Our visit in 2018 during the Biennium convention in Yokohama reflected the same feeling of being honored guests and treated so well. It is a relationship built on mutual respect, working together for the greater good and truly enjoying learning about one another.

Also, when Julie Rankin was President of SI Chico, our members visited Nara and stayed in the homes of their members.

A few joint projects of note;

We have contributed to SI Nara's efforts to assist with an orphanage in Africa

During Carol Braziel's Presidency, SI Nara sent us model cars to distribute to schools in Butte County as part of a project they were working on.

SI Nara has worked jointly with SI Chico on Dress a Girl for the past several years and has sent wonderful handmade dresses for us to include in our packages to girls in need.

In the aftermath of the Camp Fire, SI Nara reached out immediately to us asking how they could assist. They sent an initial donation and then later followed up with another large donation to purchase a Tiny House jointly with SI Chico.

Friendship links are truly valuable and provide club members with a global experience and perspective in addition to allowing us to work hand in hand.