

A YEAR in the LIFE of WXA (2013-14)

We have had an exciting and busy year with a new, small and hard-working committee :

Richard Orzecki (Vice President) Liqin Mi (Secretary) Huang shu (Treasurer) Elena Violin, Robert Franken, Aiko Collins, Ben van Rooy (Xiamen Representative), Janet Andrews (President)

OVERVIEW

As a largely new committee we decided to renew many aspects of the association, and we have made good progress, updating our image with a new website, new brochures, forms, letterhead, and banner. We have been out in the community with our “Xiamen Tea Break “ and made our presence visible at various events, symposia and exhibitions related to China. We had a great Citizens’ Trip to Xiamen in November, with some interesting outcomes and a number of new members. We have made an effort to work more closely with other related organisations, and hosted and entertained 21 young Mandarin Language Assistants from Xiamen in their first week here. We continue to support the Pediatric Project between our 2 hospitals, and have made progress in encouraging corporate co-sponsorship. The artist exchange with Jimei Art College continues, and we have offered support to a young Kiwi blogger studying in China to write up the “Xiamen Experience.” We have plans to work on several institutional relationships and exchanges, and are working on supporting a youth dance project with the AET and Deidre Tarrant.

We have listed here the 5 areas which we have concentrated on – these now form our strategic plan :

- 1) **Awareness** - within the general Wellington public
- 2) **Membership** - offering events, news, improved communication, and enlarging the database of Friends
- 3) **Soft Diplomacy** - being ‘the friendly face of Wellington’, helping to host inbound delegations on behalf of the Council or commercial ventures
- 4) **Exchanges and Tourism** - initiating and/or encouraging exchanges (medical, educational, artistic, cultural, sporting....), and tourism possibilities
- 5) **Links** – strengthening ties to other groups in Wellington, sharing events and news

It is important to note that WXA does not at present have the expertise nor the mandate to carry out specific economic development, but we are more than willing to liaise, encourage and host for any ventures.

YEAR IN DETAIL

October saw the new line-up of committee members and work starting on our new directions.

In November, the Wellington Citizens' Delegation headed to Xiamen. This was a first-time project, taking a group of Wellingtonians from diverse backgrounds to see and explore Xiamen for a week, to act as informal ambassadors for Wellington and NZ.

The project was a great success, with participants paying their own way but with strong support from the Xiamen FAO and from WCC. The results include several proposed projects (a Wn Highschools' Band exchange to start next year, an invitation for an artist and photographic residence at Jimei, suggested short term student and staff exchanges, a professional video and photography of the trip. The project won a runner-up award at the Sister Cities Conference.

In December, at a Special General Meeting, the Constitution was amended to allow the lower minimum of 7 on committee, and the lower quorum of 5 at meetings.

New WXA banners, brochures and forms were developed and were printed in January. In February we once again had a very successful booth in the Asian Fair of the Chinese New Year Festival – serving Fujian tea and giving away books donated by the Chinese Embassy. We helped welcome the 21 Mandarin Language Assistants brought over from Xiamen by the Confucius Institute, and hosted them to a "Kiwic Picnic" on the waterfront one night.

Our Vice President Richard Orzecki had worked hard on the new website, and it went live in March.

Later in March, Te Papa invited us to help them celebrate the opening of two very large exhibitions from the National Museum of China, by setting up our now-famous 'Tea Booth' – we have now bought all the equipment needed to serve tea at such events.

In early April, Richard and Janet from WXA, along with Jeanne McKnight and Aiko Collins from WCC and Rosemary from Wn Sakai Association, all attended a well run and informative Sister Cities Conference in Gore. Of most interest was the emphasis being put in Southland on international educational exchanges, an area in which they lead the country. It was pointed out that the requirements have changed significantly from 15 years ago – no longer is the main thrust to send late secondary students to get final qualifications, it is now much more varied, including short-term (2 week) student trips, teacher exchange and professional development, and even family trips. I think that this is an area that Wellington needs to get back into, and this was certainly borne out by requests I received when last in Xiamen.

Our annual Membership BBQ took place on April 13th – a great opportunity as usual to renew acquaintances and relax together. Mayor Celia Wade Brown

noted that the relationship is now 27 years old, and that she is hoping to visit Xiamen in early 2015.

Throughout the year we helped to host visitors from Xiamen, including a group of Senior doctors from Xiamen First Hospital, one of the partners in the pediatric exchange project we assist with. This year's annual 10 week visit by two pediatric staff from Xiamen was to have taken place in March, but was postponed and is actually underway right now. As is the Art Exchange from Jimei Art College which was postponed from 2011.