



Alameda Sister City Association

“Our mission is to promote peace through mutual respect, understanding, and cooperation – one individual, one community at a time.”

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Release Date: 11/16/15

MEDIA ADVISORY

Island-to-Island Diplomacy In Action

(ALAMEDA) On Thursday, Alameda Mayor Trish Herrera Spencer will lead a 17-member delegation to Dumaguete, Philippines to sign the sister city Memorandum of Agreement on November 23rd and to participate in the celebrations of that city's 67th anniversary as a charter city. The Alameda delegation will represent Alameda in the Charter Day Parade, and participate in five days of activities, including fiestas, festivals, a Sister City conference, and a whale shark excursion, as well as tour Silliman University, churches, temples, and a geothermal energy plant.

This trip marks the second cultural exchange between Dumaguete and Alameda. Earlier this year in June, an 8-member delegation from Dumaguete led by Mayor Manuel Teves Sagarbarria came to Alameda to sign the sister city Memorandum of Understanding to facilitate educational, business, humanitarian, and cultural exchanges between the two cities.

The Alameda delegation to Dumaguete was organized by Alamedan Cynthia Bonta, who founded the Philippine Committee of the Alameda Sister City Association (ASCA) in 2013 to establish a sister city relationship with Dumaguete where she spent her most formative years. She approached then Mayor Marie Gilmore who initiated the process by sending a letter of invitation which Ms. Bonta delivered in person to Dumaguete Mayor Sagarbarria who enthusiastically accepted and the process was started.

"My motivation for doing all this is to open up the world for our youth," says Ms. Bonta, who envisions youth exchanges that will result in mutual respect and increased understanding between our two communities. The member of the Alameda delegation will act as peace ambassadors.

Members of the delegation range in age from 17 to 71 and will be focusing on building youth and student exchange programs between the two cities as well as between Silliman University and colleges within the Peralta Community College District, like Alameda College. A faculty exchange program is being explored as well. Other members will be finalizing the details of a medical

mission to the Philippines being planned by the Philippine Medical Society of Northern CA for 2017. Alex Chen, the chair of the other active Alameda sister city -- Jiangyin City (China) -- will also be attending to share their experiences and learn from the newest addition.

While Dumaguete, Philippines is 7,000 miles away, Alameda has a history of strong ties to the Philippines. After WW2, many Filipinos settled in Alameda to raise their families and work at the military bases in Alameda and Oakland. Over 5,000 Filipinos now call Alameda home and they currently comprise close to one-quarter of the overall Asian population in Alameda which numbered 23,000 in 2010 -- or 1/3 of Alameda's total population. The San Francisco Bay Area region is home to the second largest Filipino population in the United States, with 287,879 Filipino Americans.

As the Bay Area and Alameda become more diverse and home to a growing number of cultures, the role of the Sister City association in fostering understanding of cultures around the world is more important than ever. Delegation member and ASCA president Karen Fong is encouraging all Alameda residents to join ASCA and discover what it means to be part of a global community. To sign up, go to the ASCA website: <http://alamedasistercity.weebly.com/>

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Dumaguete sister city delegation members and supporters posing with the gift to be presented to the City of Dumaguete -- an oil painting of a classic Queen Anne Victorian by Ulrich Gleitner, 2010, courtesy of Frank Bette Center for the Arts.

L to R: Serena Chen, Daryl Spencer, Maria Spencer, Erick Sonjin Wonzen, Janet Galera, Michael Robles-Wong, Cynthia Bonta, Mayor Trish Spencer, Karen Fong, Alex Chen, Virginia Savella Harper, Steve Cleaver, Flor Ventanilla, Philippine Consultant Tourism Bureau representatives (Alessa Lopez, Conrad)