

CATEGORY 6 – SPECIAL PROGRAM

Belmont, WA, and Adachi-ku, Japan

As the global COVID-19 pandemic continued throughout 2020-2021, together with the uncertainty surrounding worldwide travel, it was decided that our bi-annual Sister City student exchange with the Special Ward of Adachi-Ku, Japan would not proceed until further notice. A great deal of dialogue between the two Sister Cities occurred in the lead up to this decision.

In view of this, and the need to stay connected and for the program to remain relevant during a climate that required Sister City relationships to become flexible and evolve, it was decided to produce a children's story and picture book and video as a sign that the long-standing Sister City agreement was still important to both parties (Adachi-Ku and Belmont).

A bi-lingual (English/Japanese) children's book, "The Adventures of a Belmonster in Adachi-Ku" was produced as a reminder of the strong relationship forged over 38 years. This third picture book in the Belmonster series, sees a Belmonster go on an adventure to Adachi-Ku, Japan and shows images of locations in Belmont and Adachi-Ku, that are typically visited and celebrated when one Sister City visits another during annual exchanges.

The children's book was targeted at a young audience, to encourage reading and an understanding of the value of international friendships. Three copies of the book were sent to each of the 69 Elementary Schools in Adachi-Ku, together with a Belmonster plushie and Bel monster pin. (Photographs attached).

The City of Belmont launched the book with a live reading to local primary school students. A video was produced which captures the launch of the book, and includes interviews with representatives from the Belmont Sister City Association and other contributors to the Sister City exchange program.

The launch was also attended by representatives from the Belmont Sister City Association, a local parliamentarian and the Consul General for Japan, WA, Mr Ya sushi Naito.