

**17 October 2018**

## **A French Delegation**

This year marks the 30th anniversary of Esperance's twin town relationship with Île de Ré, an island located just off the west coast of France, near La Rochelle.

To mark the occasion representatives from Esperance's Twin Town Committee were invited by the Association Île de Ré – Esperance, to visit France to officially re-sign an "Agreement of Privileged Relations and Friendship" at a formal civic reception. While in France, delegates also celebrated the relationship at the island's annual seafood festival, which takes place in Saint Martin, one of the ten villages on the island of Ré, and the original village which Esperance had initially signed a twin town agreement with back in 1988.

This is the third delegation to visit Saint Martin de Ré to celebrate the ongoing relationship with the region, with a view to support the twin town ethos of increasing the friendship between St Martin and Esperance. The Shire of Esperance and Esperance Lions Club have supported over 27 student exchanges to Saint-Martin de Ré and this year hosted Esperance's 30th student.

Esperance's Twin Town Committee comprises of representatives from the Esperance Lions Club, Esperance Senior High School, community members and the Shire of Esperance. The committee administers a student exchange program, annual French Week celebrations, and supports the twin town ethos of promoting intercultural connectivity as well as international understanding and respect between our two nations. Each of the six Twin Town Committee members funded their own trip to France, with the Council resolving to contribute \$1000 per delegate.

Shire President Victoria Brown said, "It was a hugely successful trip and a great opportunity to strengthen the relationship between Île de Ré and Esperance.

"The Mayor of St Martin de Re, Patrice Dechellette, was particularly generous with his hospitality which included all accommodation, an official reception, the Seafood Festival and tours of St Martin, La Rochelle and the island.

"There are many similarities between our towns, including challenges, which for the island include waste disposal when the island population swells from 18 thousand to 180 thousand during the summer season, to trying to solve some structural issues on the thirty-year-old bridge that links the town to the mainland.

“Our Twin Town committee, largely made up of community volunteers, works hard each year with a Lions Club member, to organise French Week and ensure the annual student exchange program runs smoothly.

“By offering some financial assistance for travel to delegates, Council acknowledges their work in strengthening our French connection, and the opportunities the exchange program offers young people in our town.”

**Ends**

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CC: Image of Shire President Victoria Brown and Mayor and President of Saint Martin de Ré Patrice Dechelette

