Superior, WI – Ami-Machi, Japan

Mayor Koji Kowata        Mayor Dave Ross

Sister City Relationship with Ami-Machi, Japan.

Superior heard that two cities in Japan were seeking a sister city. In the Spring and Summer of 1996, the two cities were reviewed and Ami was chosen as a prospective Sister City. A statement of interest was sent by former Mayor Margaret Ciccone to Ami. The choice was made due to similar populations and location near to a large fresh water lake.

The town of Ami is located in the southern part of Ibaraki Prefecture on the shores of Lake Kasumiguara, the second largest lake in Japan. It is 6 miles from Tsukuba City and 18 miles from Narita International Airport. Due to its pleasant surrounding and convenient location, its population is expected to reach 50,000 soon and may become eligible for designation as an official city.

The climate is warm throughout the year, with about 48 inches of rainfall per year.

As the town becomes linked to the Tokyo area, it should undergo a vibrant, but balanced development in employment, housing, education and recreation.

Ami is 25 square miles in area (16,250 acres) and has 8 Elementary Schools, 3 Junior High Schools, 1 private Senior High School, 1 national University and 1 Prefectural University.

SISTER CITY AGREEMENT

Superior and Ami entered into a Protocol Agreement, promising to complete various items between the two cities, as well as participate in student and adult delegation visits, every other year.

Sister City participation opens dialogues between cities to address common concerns, for example, faculty from Ibaraki Prefectural University in Kobe, Japan and the UW-Superior have begun discussing exchanges and joint research related to protecting fresh water lakes.
Sister City participation also has increased tourism in Superior. Since September, 1998 over 300 individuals from Japan have visited Superior.

**HOW TO GET INVOLVED**

Contact the Mayor’s Office or any member of the Sister City Commission to express interest in participating. There are so many ways to get involved ranging from coming to Sister City events, hosting a visiting Japanese guest, or joining a delegation that is visiting Japan.

**WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN HOSTING**

Prior to hosting an adult or student from Ami, there will be orientation meetings to help you learn what to expect. It is important to keep in mind that they are here to experience how you live. Do not be too worried about “entertaining” them. Let them see how you live and work. To be honest, most host families always wish they had more time to spend with their guest. Language is only as much of a barrier as you make it. You certainly will not be discussing Plato over the dinner table with most of our visitors (although you may be able to speak Japanese), but the language of friendship can surpass even the toughest of situations. Speak with a family that has hosted in the past. They will probably be more than happy to help with suggestions. If you know of another family that would be interested and open to hosting, let them know as well.

**BENEFITS OF SISTER CITY PARTICIPATION**

- Open dialogue between cities to address common concerns.
- Both cities benefit by bringing new ideas to address common problems.
- A greater understanding among nations is developed.
- Sister City participation increases tourism. Since September 1998, over 150 individuals have visited Superior.
- Cooperation between the two cities to develop a program of language teacher exchanges.

**History of Exchanges:**

- In July 1997, Superior received its first visit from Ami, 12 Junior High School students accompanied by 6 chaperones. The students stayed with host families for 5 days and many friendships were developed.
In August 1998, a delegation of 4 students and 2 chaperones went to Ami to participate in their annual festival called “My Ami Festival”. During this visit, the students learned about the Japanese culture and went camping in the mountains near Nikko.

The Fall of 1998 brought a delegation of 20 adults and 12 students from Ami to participate in the Fallfest Parade and help celebrate Wisconsin’s Sesquicentennial. Ami students visited Superior schools and the School Forest, while the adults played golf and made presentations on the Japanese culture. A picnic and concert at Lucius Woods was one of the highlights of the visit. During these activities, a second signing of the Sister City Agreement was completed in Superior.

The Superior Sister Cities Commission encouraged several natives from Superior to apply for the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program which supplies English language teachers for Japanese schools. As a result 2 applicants were selected to teach English in Ami from 1998-1999.

July 1999, Superior received a 12 student delegation and 4 chaperones from Ami.

July 2000, Superior sent 11 students, 4 chaperones and an adult delegation which included Senator Robert Jauch.

Year 2000, Superior received 12 students and 4 chaperones at the same time.

In year 2001, we received 12 students, as well as an adult delegation, consisting of Mayor Kowata and other members of the International Exchange Council.

August 2002, Superior sent 11 students, 3 chaperones and an adult delegation, which included former Mayor Sharon Kotter.

August 2002, we received 12 students and 4 chaperones.

In 2003, we received an adult delegation. No students due the Sars pandemic.

In 2004, we received 12 students and 4 chaperones.

In October 2005, we received an adult delegation.

In August 2006, we sent 10 students, 2 chaperones and an adult delegation.

In August 2006, we received 12 students and 4 chaperones. The students participated in the Dragon Boat Race.
Sister City Commission Members

**Board Officers**
Linda Emmert, Chair  
Nancy Carriar, Secretary  
Bill Gobin, Chair-Elect  
Rani Gill, Treasurer

**Other Members:**

Kevin Norbie  
James Brew  
Jenna Whitney  
Charlene Peterson  
Mary Morgan  
Mary Johnson  
Kim Habig  
Josef Braeu  
Julie Halom  
Jan Provost  
Reed Whitney  
Jackie Stenberg  
Mike Johnson  
Colleen Anderson  
Mary Robek  
Sara Haugen

---

**Friendship Garden**

As part of the Sister City relationship, a Protocol Agreement was signed in 2001, between the two cities to work on international friendship gardens in both countries. In April, 2004, a delegation from Superior visited Ami-Machi and helped dedicate a garden which was planted in honor of Superior. The garden features sugar maple trees, a tree common to Superior and one that could withstand Japan’s climate.

On April 14, 2004 - Mayor Koji Kowata of Ami-Machi and Kevin Norbie, Sister City Commission Chair and City Councilor, plant a tree for the SUPERIOR FOREST in Ami. This friendship garden commemorated the 7th year of the Sister City Agreement between the two cities.

The SUPERIOR FOREST represents the friendship between the two cities by the planting of a variety of trees grown in the northern part of America.

On July, 2004, the City of Superior’s Parks & Recreation Commission recommended a piece of land in Billings Park to the City Council, as the site of Ami Friendship Garden. The garden is designed to honor Superior’s on-going relationship with its Sister City, Ami-Machi, Japan since 1997. The grassy, flat piece of land lies at the southern end of Billings Park, the City’s largest park at 27 acres. The garden is approximately one (1) acre.

The design features stepping stones, limestone walking paths, a dry river bed and footbridge and etched stones made from some of Superior’s historic granite curbs. Granite benches will
provide places for rest and meditation. At the heart of the design is a circle of trees surrounding a cherry tree, meant to commemorate the friendship with the people of Ami-Machi, Japan.

The estimated cost to create the garden is $92,000. No tax dollars are being used for this project. Below is a drawing of the layout of the Garden that will be created in Billings Park, Superior, Wisconsin.

The Commission members are in the process of fundraising and requesting donations from various local businesses. The Commission will also be applying for various grants. If you would like to make a donation or help out in any way, please see the contact information below.

The following are the different categories you can donate to:

- $25,000
- $10,000
- Gold Leaf $1,000
- Silver Leaf $500
- Bronze Leaf $250

Other:
In kind donations: description and value

Your contribution is welcome and appreciated and it is tax deductible.
What’s happening in 2007?

**August, 2007:** The Commission will be hosting an adult and student delegation this August. We are looking for host families for the students.

**2008:** The Commission will be recruiting for students and an adult delegation to visit Ami in the very near future.

If you would like to host a student and/or help out in any way, or would like to visit Ami-machi, Japan next year, please contact:

Rani Gill, Executive Assistant and Sister City Coordinator  
Office of the Mayor  
1316 North 14th Street  
Superior, WI 54880  
715-395-7212  
E-mail: Mayor@ci.superior.wi.us