

SATURDAY, APRIL 28, 2012



Chaparone Terri DeMerchant, left, and youth ambassadors Abigail Schwengler, Jocelyn Dufresne and Camilla Terry, are gearing up for a trip to Lethbridge's sister city, Culver City, Calif., this summer.

Submitted photo

Students to attend ambassador program

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FOR THE LETHBRIDGE HERALD

Three Lethbridge high school students will be attending the Youth Ambassador Program in Culver City, Calif., this summer.

The students who will be attending the trip are Camilla Terry from Immanuel Christian High School, Jocelyn Dufresne from Catholic Central and Abigail Schwengler from Chinook High. Alexis Leadbeater, from Lethbridge Collegiate Institute, was also selected as an alternate.

The students met at City Hall on Wednesday night for the first time.

The students will be focusing on the topics of the environment and poverty. They will be developing a project based on the discussions with youth in the cities.

Harold Perverseff, the president of the Lethbridge Twinning Society and the country co-ordinator for Sister Cities International, said the event is a great opportunity for students.

"They'll have a better awareness of what's going on in other communities. They'll hopefully come back with ideas for their own communities after seeing what other communities are doing," he said.

"The world is open to them following the event."

The students selected agree with Perverseff.

"I am eager to learn and experience new things while in the program," said Schwengler. I hope that this trip will influence me to become more of a leader in our community."

"I hope to gain new knowledge that will allow me to become a better citizen," said Terry. "I like to see

the world through new different eyes."

Added Dufresne, "Working in the areas of poverty and the environment are issues that are important to me and it was also very appealing that I would be working with youth not only from Canada, but from across North America."

The program this year is being also includes participants from Vancouver and Vernon, B.C. The prerequisites for a city to participate was it had to have a sister city in the U.S. Vernon's sister city is Modesto, Calif., and Vancouver's sister city is Los Angeles. There are also students from Mexico participating.

For students to participate, they must be between the ages of 15 and 17, must be willing to do a project for Sister Cities International, and must go back to school for at least one year after the program.

The U.S. Department of State sets out a grant for the program each year. This grant covers almost all expenses. The program with Canada was slated for two years but Perverseff hinted it may continue in the future.

"There is talk from the State Department about potentially continuing the program in Canada," he said. "They asked if I felt it would work in other Canadian communities and I said 'yes.'"

The students will head to Culver City with a chaperone on July 18 and will be returning to Lethbridge Aug. 7. In addition to California, the students will also head to Washington, D.C., during their last week in the program.

The Lethbridge Twinning Society's sister cities in addition to Culver City are Towada, Japan and Timashevsk, Russia. The City of Lethbridge's sister cities are Anyang, China, Saint-Laurent, Que., and Haebaru, Japan. Lethbridge is also a "friendship" city with Great Falls, Mont., because cities can only have one sister city per country, according to Perverseff.