

City links with China's Taizhou for economic prosperity

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POSTED: October 27, 2009 Williamsport Sun-Gazette

Article Photos



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Dr. Grace Shu, left, commissioner for the Governor's Advisory Commission on Asian American Affairs, signs an agreement between Taizhou City, China, and Williamsport, as, from left, translator Victor Huang; and Taizhou representatives Li Zhigao; Li Guohua, head of delegation; and Xu Baogu, director of Taizhou Foreign Affairs.

A new relationship between Williamsport and Taizhou, a city in China, could mean an opportunity for growth in city politics, economy, education and culture, according to Mayor Gabriel J. Campana. The sister-cities agreement began with a phone call from Dr. Grace Shu, who informed the mayor of the opportunity with Chinese diplomats who were interested in exploring a friendly exchange agreement, Campana said.

"It took me about half a year to do this. I contacted them and welcomed them once before in New York City. Then this time, they came back again. I was able to invite them to Williamsport," Shu said. She volunteers with the mayor's administration and advises him on economic development matters concerning foreign groups and organizations who may be interested in investing in the city.

"I think we are all aware that the Chinese economy is growing in leaps and bounds. It is my thought as mayor that we could reach out to a foreign country, such as China, to develop a positive relationship with them, to understand each other's cultures and at the same time see if there are some business interests here in the United States," Campana said.

"USA needs China and China needs USA. Both countries need each other. We can promote more economy, more business," Shu said. The next foreign group that is predicted to invest in the country is Chinese, the mayor said.

"By developing a relationship with the Chinese, it is our hope that Williamsport and Lycoming County could be a destination for manufacturing," Campana said.

Taizhou is a leader in pharmaceuticals and bio-chemicals. It also is the base of a company named Chulan, which is a strong manufacturer of refrigerators, air conditioners and dehumidifiers, according to Campana.

"They are looking for cities to develop manufacturing plants in the automobile industry. If we have an opportunity to create jobs here in Williamsport and Lycoming County and be one of the first cities in Pennsylvania, we want to be a part of that possible economic prosperity," Campana said.

Chinese companies are interested in manufacturing in this country because it is cheaper than exporting products. Cities such as Williamsport that are mere hours away from large market places traditionally benefit from their location, according to economic advisers.

"I am looking to extend myself in any way possible to give people an opportunity to work in this city. There are a lot of people that are struggling to get by," Campana said.

Campana hopes to travel to Taizhou within a year to further the agreement and the hopes of economic development possibilities in the area. If the trip takes place, county commissioners will be invited to attend as well.

"They gave us an open invitation to travel to China. I have a meeting with various stakeholders in the community. I will continue the conversations with Taizhou," Campana said.