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Accounting Manager Ray Chio, at right, and Metro Customer Information Agent Juanita "Maggie" Cook were the friendly face of Metro to a Japanese tourist who lost her wallet.

Accounting Manager Uses Sherlock Holmes' Tactics to Track Pocketbook Owner

By Laura Kloth
Staff Writer

(Jan. 14, 2010) Sherlock Holmes would be proud of Metro Accounting Manager Ray Chio.

On a mission to do the right thing, Chio and a friend recently went the extra mile to track down a young Japanese tourist who had inadvertently left her pocketbook on a downtown bus bench.

Like most mysteries, the story began simply. Waiting for his bus early one evening last week, Chio noticed the pink pocketbook sitting abandoned.

Too late to turn it over to Metro Customer Relations, Chio took the pocketbook home and began examining its contents and found it contained \$533 in U.S. currency, about 7,000 Japanese yen, some photographs and a few receipts.

"When I checked the receipts, there were two IDs, one name in English and one had no name," Chio said.

With Holmesian deduction, Chio concluded the owner was a young female tourist who had just arrived in Los Angeles on Jan. 7 and was probably frantic about having misplaced her pocketbook.

He located a phone number to a residence in Japan and tried calling. "I tried to explain that I found a wallet, but the person who answered just

said, 'no English'."

Undaunted, Chio summoned a Japanese-speaking neighbor, Punky Duero and with dictionary in hand they painstakingly tried to make some sense from the purse's contents.

They were able to decipher a membership card that apparently belonged to a dance school before Duero suggested that maybe the young lady in question had a Facebook account.

The two began searching for the name they found in the wallet, and soon enough, they located three matches, one of which belonged to a young woman who talked about how much she loved to dance and her global travel adventures.

Duero emailed the woman on Facebook, and about a half hour later, a young woman replied.

"She spoke a little English and used a friend to translate. And I told her to come Monday at 8 a.m. and go to Customer Relations and look for me or call my number again," Chio said.

Metro Customer Information Agent Juanita "Maggie" Cook then stepped in to serve as the mediator saying that she was "very proud" of Chio for being so tenacious in his effort to track down the purse's owner.

"When she [the young Japanese woman] first came in there was a language problem," said Cook. "She was very apprehensive. She called, and she was kind of frightened. I was able to calm her down, and reassure her that he (Chio) was coming to see her."

When the woman was able to provide specific descriptions of the items in the wallet, Cook handed it over to her.

Elated, the woman began bowing in gratitude to Chio, and soon afterward returned with a sack of Japanese candies to thank him.

"She was almost floored when she saw that all her money was still in it," Cook said.