

REPORT

TO THE CITY OF OWENSBORO MAYOR and CITY COMMISSION
TO THE JUDGE EXECUTIVE and DAVIESS COUNTY FISCAL COURT
TO THE JUDGE EXECUTIVE and OHIO COUNTY FISCAL COURT
TO THE CHAIR AND GRADD BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND
OWENSBORO SISTER CITIES AND REGIONS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

CALENDAR YEAR ACTIVITIES 2016

FOUNDING STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Owensboro Sister Cities and Regions encourages global understanding between our community and other world communities. The Owensboro Sister Cities and Regions organizations will assist government entities with the proper reception of foreign visitors and dignitaries by serving as the community's Office of Protocol; pursue an ongoing mission to inform and educate our community concerning our area's international cultural and business ties and their effects on our community; initiate exchange programs in education, business, professional groups, and the arts; assist government and its agencies in promoting our community's cultural heritage through our Sister City(ies) and Region's relationships; encourage development and expansion of international trade relationships and assist with foreign trade missions; assist community organizations in direct relationships with similar organizations in our Sister City(ies) and Regions and elsewhere in the world, where possible.

SISTER CITIES INTERNATIONAL HISTORY AND MISSION

Sister Cities International was created at President Eisenhower's 1956 White House conference on citizen diplomacy. Eisenhower envisioned an organization that could be the hub of peace and prosperity by creating bonds between people from different cities around the world. By forming these relationships, President Eisenhower reasoned that people of different cultures could celebrate and appreciate their differences and build partnerships that would lessen the chance of new conflicts.

Sister Cities International creates relationships based on cultural, educational, information and trade exchanges, creating lifelong friendships that provide prosperity and peace through person-to-person "citizen diplomacy." Since then, Presidents Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Ford, Carter, Reagan, Bush, Clinton, Bush, and now President Barack Obama have served as the Honorary Chairman of Sister Cities International.

Since its inception, Sister Cities International has played a key role in renewing and strengthening important global relationships. Early partnerships included a trading relationship between Seattle, Washington and Tokyo, Japan, repairing post-WWII tensions by creating cultural and educational exchanges and, subsequently, lasting friendships. A 1974 study found that many early sister city relationships formed out of the post WWII aid programs to Western Europe. The relationships that endured, however, were based on cultural or educational reasons that developed lasting friendships. Sister Cities International improved diplomatic relationships at watershed moments over the past 50 years, including partnerships with China in the 1970s.

In the new millennium, Sister Cities International continues to expand its reach to new and emerging regions of the world. Today, it dedicates a special focus on areas with significant opportunities for cultural and educational exchanges, economic partnerships, and humanitarian assistance. (SCI, 2016)

In July of 1994 there was a joint resolution signed by the officials of Owensboro, Kentucky and Olomouc Czech Republic to formally recognize our two cities as Sister Cities in accordance with the accepted protocols of Sister Cities International. The City of Nisshin Shi, Japan was formally recognized as our Sister City in October of 2006.

INTRODUCTION

During 2016, Owensboro Sister Cities and Regions participated in a total of 5 exchanges, subject components encompassing the involvement of 60 people. Of these, 11 persons were incoming visitors to Owensboro and 25 were outgoing visitors.

As community leaders we must continue to promote both the understanding of our citizens and our connection to the larger global community. We will need continued financial, logistical, and volunteer support for the program to be maintained and grow even further.

Please review this report and reflect on our ability to project the City of Owensboro and our region positively in the international community. We believe that we have the most active program of the official fourteen U.S. – Czech Republic Sister City relationships and that the breadth of our program will reflect well on the Owensboro region with any additional international contacts that the city or region may make. Our program has come to the positive attention of the past Presidents and dignitaries of the Czech Republic and United States. We continue to apprise the U.S. Ambassadors to the Czech Republic and Japan of our activity through this annual report.

The Owensboro Sister Cities and Regions program touches the lives of several hundred people involved in our annual exchange activities on both sides of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. The program does an exceptional job of carrying out its charged mission with the help of passionate members. In the past, this program has been very dependent on support from government entities, as an official international link with the Sister Cities, currently the overwhelming financial support for the program comes from individuals and donations from the businesses and institutions participating in the programs. We can demonstrate at least \$20.00 of community support for each city and county budget dollar allocated.

We are very appreciative of the City of Owensboro, Daviess County Fiscal Court, Owensboro Community and Technical College, Western Kentucky University, and Brescia University for their financial and logistical support efforts. The program represents a wonderful community partnership combining the efforts of many community institutions, agencies, businesses and individuals. There can be little doubt for the need to educate our Kentucky citizens concerning our place in the global community. Whether for citizenship education, student growth or workforce development, there is an ever growing demand for providing an international education, cultural experience and economic development component for the regional community we serve.

Our thanks also goes to our area SACS accredited colleges: Kentucky Wesleyan, Brescia University, Western Kentucky University (Owensboro and main campus) for

encouraging the annual Summer Study Program participation, and Owensboro Community Technical College for granting reassigned faculty time, which allows direction of the 'community partnership' program. We also thank the families who open their homes (and kitchens), to the hotels in lodging assistance, and to the three area school systems for support of our exchanges of students, teachers, and professors. There are just too many people and entities to mention individually. We also strive to make visitors feel welcomed.

After operating without an Executive Director upon Pam Wilson's resignation, Mayor Ron Payne and the city commission approved Municipal Order 22-2016 which updated the Owensboro Sister Cities and Regions by-laws to say that the Executive Assistant to the Mayor will serve as the Executive Director of Owensboro Sister Cities and Regions. This change will allow for headquarters and decision making to be based out of City Hall.

Leslie Neeley assumed the role as Executive Director in June 2016. Leslie was able to attend the Sister Cities International conference in Washington D.C., the Kentucky Sister Cities annual meeting in Lexington, KY, and meet counterparts and dignitaries on a trip to Olomouc Czech Republic. Leslie coordinated with the city's IT department to revamp the Owensboro Sister Cities and Regions website and social media pages.

Recently, communication has been made with our Sister City of Nisshin, Japan. It is the wishes of the board to reinvigorate this partnership and work with the Economic Development Cooperation to grow and strengthen the relationship.

As representatives of the citizens of Owensboro and Daviess County, we request your continued encouragement and financial support for Owensboro Sister Cities and Regions and our international efforts to promote our community.

❖ **Incoming Exchange:** **Post-Secondary Internship**
Lucie Buckova
(1 in)

Purpose: Lucie volunteered her time with OASIS as part of her internship with Caritas. During her free time, she also volunteered at Wendell Foster. She was a guest of Rob and Carrie Blackham.

❖ **Incoming Exchange:** **October 15 - November 1, 2016 Secondary Exchange**
Kelia West, Coordinator
(9 in)

Purpose: This is a long-standing relationship between Owensboro high schools and Hejcin Gymnasium in Olomouc, Czech Republic. Teachers and students alternate visits. This year, it was Owensboro's turn to host Hejcin Gymnasium. Hejcin students were assigned home stays and were partnered with an Owensboro high schooler in order to participate in classroom instruction, explore various cities in Kentucky, and to learn about the United States culture. Lifelong friendships were established through this program and the students' worlds become a little smaller and enriched.

❖ **Outgoing Exchange – November 9-21, 2016**
Leslie Neeley and Beck Glenn, Coordinators
(4 out)

Purpose: To introduce new Executive Director Leslie Neeley to the City of Olomouc and its connections at City Hall, Hejcin Gymnasium, and Palacky University. Participants were guided by Department of Foreign Affairs Head Sona Horka and Sister Cities Representative Zdenka Podlipska. This trip also allowed the opportunity to make deposits and secure logistics for upcoming 2017 exchanges.

❖ **Activity:** **October, 2016 Kentucky Sister Cities State Meeting**
Leslie Neeley, Executive Director (OSCAR)
Beck Glenn, President (OSCAR)
(2 participants)

Purpose: The Kentucky cities chartered under Sister Cities International are invited to gather annually to give reports on their individual international activities during the past year and to exchange ideas for their organizations. The City of Lexington hosted this year's meeting. Best practices and social media usage was discussed.

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