
Sister Cities International 2020 Annual Conference – Reimagining Citizen Diplomacy: New Connections in a Virtual World announces Annual Award Winners

Washington, DC – Sister Cities International (SCI) has hosted their first ever Virtual Annual Conference titled – Reimagining Citizen Diplomacy: New Connections in a Virtual World. This was the first exclusively virtual event in the history of Sister Cities International, designed to involve any and all people who are interested in Sister Cities International and its mission.

The annual conference, which took place on July 8 – 9, 2020, connected sister cities members, United Nations representatives, business leaders, academics, civic leaders, special performers, and others to engage communities worldwide on our online platform. Leaders and attendees discussed issues revolving around the virtual world regarding sister city connections.

“This was a fantastic opportunity to engage our members and partners across the globe, despite the moratorium on in-person gatherings” said Leroy Allala, President and CEO of Sister Cities International. Indeed, the virtual platform, and open registration attracted a wider, and more diverse audience. “Our goal is to remain the premier hub of citizen diplomacy, and what better way to do that than by removing some of the cost-prohibitive barriers, and focusing on programming and best practice sharing in the new normal” stated Carol Robertson Lopez, Sister Cities International’s new Board of Directors Chair.

Much like in previous years, SCI’s Conference served as a platform for highlighting achievements throughout the membership network. Sister city programs and volunteers were nominated for achievements made in 2019-2020 in the following categories: Innovation in Arts and Culture, Innovation in Humanitarian Assistance, Innovation in Youth & Education, Best Overall Sister City Program, Youth Leadership Award, and Volunteer of the Year. The winners are:

Innovation in Arts and Culture

- Population > 100,000
Greater Columbus Sister Cities, OH
- Population > 25,000-100,000
Redlands, CA
- Population < 25,000
Sister Cities of Jasper, IN

Innovation in Humanitarian Assistance

- Tacoma, WA

Innovation in Youth & Education

- Population > 100,000
Indianapolis, IN

- Population 25,000-100,000
Santa Fe, NM
- Population < 25,000
La Canada Flintridge, CA

Best Overall

- Population < 50,000
Hot Springs, AR
- Population 50,000-100,000
South San Francisco, CA
- Population 100,000-300,000
Tacoma, WA
- Population > 300,000
Ft. Worth, TX

Mary Blankenship Pointer of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma was named Volunteer of the Year and **Will Lourcey of Fort Worth, Texas** received this year's Youth Leadership Award.

Winners were honored at Sister Cities International's first virtual Annual Conference, with over 1,700 participants throughout. For more information on the individual winners and interview requests, please email Jina Shim at jshim@sistercities.org. To learn more about the 2020 Annual Conference - Reimagining Citizen Diplomacy: New Connections in a Virtual World, go to <https://sistercities.org/annual-conference/2020-annual-conference-and-meeting/>.

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About Sister Cities International

Founded as a Presidential Initiative by President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1956, Sister Cities International serves as the national membership organization for close to 350 individual sister cities, counties, and states across the United States with relationships in 1,800 communities in 137 countries on six continents. The sister city network unites tens of thousands of citizen diplomats and volunteers who work tirelessly to promote the organizations' mission of promoting world peace and understanding through economic development, youth and education, arts and culture, and humanitarian assistance.

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