

SISTER CITIES INTERNATIONAL BACKGROUND-IN-BRIEF

The Sister Cities concept was launched by President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1956 and is now in its fourth decade of contributing to modern diplomacy and worldwide cooperation. The program is firmly rooted in the ideal that we are all members of a single community that is global in scope; that no nation alone can hope to solve our most pressing problems. Time and time again, Sister Cities International has proven that when cities and individuals come together to share their ideas, cultures, and common problems, old misunderstandings and prejudices are replaced by a spirit of cooperation.

Each city determines its own local initiatives and develops programs to meet their needs. These programs vary from medical assistance to art exhibits, from economic development and trade to humanitarian relief, from reforestation projects to wheelchair athletics. For example, Sister Cities International has recently been intimately involved with drafting constitutions for a number of newly democratized Eastern European countries.

As feelings of mutual trust develop over the years, city relationships that often start off with cultural and student exchanges naturally expand into other areas of interest. In fact, we are now seeing professional exchanges, economic development initiatives, and technical projects playing a more significant role in many Sister Cities programs. Here are a few facts and figures about Sister Cities International and its growing impact in the world:

- President Clinton is the Honorary Chairman -- a distinction afforded only to a few national associations.
- Spearheaded by the Mayors of each city, over 1,040 U.S. communities, representing 125 million Americans, are now paired with more than 1,800 partners in 113 nations around the globe.
- Sister Cities International is one of the largest volunteer organizations in the world, attracting a pool of people who are extensive travelers, high level government officials, and community leaders in their cities.
- Over 250,000 people a year travel from one city to another under the umbrella of Sister Cities relationships, spending close to \$60 million annually on travel and related expenses -- greatly spurring the economy wherever it is active. For example, The Sister City's organization of Fort Worth is estimated to bring \$2 million in trade and tourism to their city in any given year.