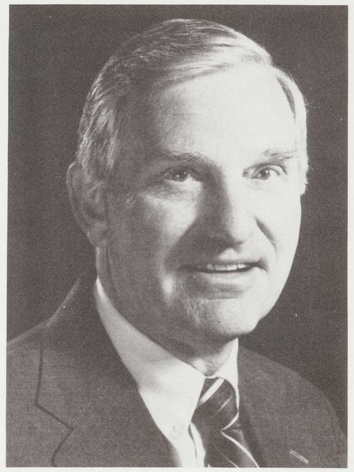
Sister Cities: Changing Places Into People

These sister city profiles are condensations from the entries to the 27th annual Sister City awards competition sponsored by the Reader's Digest Foundation and conducted by Sister Cities International. The awards were presented to the U.S. cities and their sister cities at the 1990 annual Sister Cities International conference held in Albuquerque, New Mexico, July 25-28.



J. Edward Hall, President
The Reader's Digest Foundation

Reader's Digest Foundation identifies with the goals and objectives of the Sister Cities program and thus provides support. The program carried out around the world does make a difference in people's lives—a value that is the theme of Reader's Digest.

The Awards presented by the foundation recognize the quality projects and activities conducted by sister cities throughout the world. They showcase sister cities that are contributing creative, in-depth programs which further the goal of international understanding. In addition, they highlight the significance of volunteerism. Volunteerism, through Sister Cities programs, provides a dynamic interaction in which individual parties and the cause—community, nation and the world—are rewarded.

The challenges of the 90's are formidable but through sustained personal diplomacy international harmony can be attained. Sister Cities International provides a mechanism for fostering world peace through communication and exchange. The Reader's Digest Foundation is pleased to co-sponsor these annual awards with Sister Cities International.

Best Overall Program Awards

The "Best Overall Program Award" is given annually to those U.S. cities and their sister city(ies) in other nations that have demonstrated continuing activity, citizen involvement at all levels and imagination in a wide range of projects and activities

Over 300,000 Population

FORT WORTH, TEXAS—
REGGIO EMILIA, ITALY
TRIER, WEST GERMANY
NAGAOKA, JAPAN

"If there is one thing that has characterized the Fort Worth Sister Cities program, it has been phenomenal growth, not only in the number of cities, the number of volunteers, but also in support from city officials and the community at large," stated Toni Brown, executive director, Fort Worth Sister Cities.

Part-and-parcel of the potential quantum increase in sister cities and attendant program activities, the 35-member Board set a 1989 goal of doubling membership in the Sister Cities International of Fort Worth (SCIFW). The SCIFW membership committee designated six teams of volunteers to engage in a lively membership drive "race" over two months. Besting the goal by 20%, membership increased by 600.

In keeping with its expanding pace, 1989 laid the groundwork for new sister city relationships with Bandung, Indonesia, and Budapest, Hungary—each representing the first U.S. sister city link in their own countries. Both relationships anticipate finalization during 1990, and a Soviet link is now under exploration.

The Fort Worth Program structure synthesizes volunteer participation with professional staffing. There are 40 active volunteer committees, including a highly motivated youth group, which design and implement diverse sister cities projects throughout the year. The program office and staff coordinate volunteers and oversee exchange logistics, serve as a central information clearinghouse, and ensure program continuity as the volunteer leadership changes. The board, committees and staff have clearly defined roles. Leadership training, in-depth program orientation and challenging, fun projects provide the know-how and stimuli for high level participation.

The 1989 program packed in 247 outbound exchanges, including 75 youth/students on a six-week exchange. Fort Worth welcomed 698 inbound exchanges, running the gamut from a 400-member group tour for a five-week stay, to German, Italian and Japanese participants in the Cowtown Marathon, to students in a special literature course designed for international youth. The visit receiving the most acclaim, however, was that of 41 physically disabled persons from Trier and Reggio Emilia.

A combination of substantive information sessions on meeting the needs of the physically disabled, visits to special education schools, horseback riding at a nearby ranch, a wheelchair basketball game and a variety of hosting events rounded out the whirlwind ten-day visit. Preceeding the basketball game, was a feast of local and American holiday fare, prepared by four neighborhood associations, marking the first time that Fort Worth's minority community has become actively involved in hosting sister cities events. "It was the most uplifting experience. Their energy was contagious. Everyone in Fort Worth opened their hearts to them," commented wheelchair-dependent exchange chairman, Scott Hayes.

Trier, Germany Mayor Felix Zimmerman shows off a gift from Fort Worth Mayor Bob Bolen during signing ceremonies at City Hall.

The Fort Worth Youth International (FWYI), launched in 1986, boasts 285 members (grades 6-12), and a year-round schedule of meetings, educational programs, outbound exchanges, inbound hosting activities, community outreach projects, team building events, fundraisers, and just-for-fun socials. FWYI, with its own governing structure and President (who is a member of the SCIFW Board), participates actively with the three sister city links.

In 1989, activities ranged from learning about Japanese customs—including the traditional tea ceremony-hosting Italian and Japanese students, building an exhibit booth for Sister Cities week, stitching a traditional hand-made quilt for the Sister Cities Week raffle, to selecting two FWYI officers to be panelists with the Nakaoka committee chairman and Fort Worth's mayor on a live TV hook-up between Fort Worth and Nakaoka.

Mindful of augmented program activities, FWYI conducted its own membership drive—achieving a 50% increase—and reinforced its leadership structure. Prior to assuming office, FWYI leadership attend extensive training in preparation for the year ahead. FWYI publishes an information resource brochure for current and potential members. Monthly gatherings bring the membership, scattered throughout the city, together to meet, have fun and make new friends. In the words of Marianne Wells, FWYI president, "Our purpose is to cause the youth of the city of Fort Worth to acquire a consciousness of the people of foreign nations, to understand one another as individuals, as members of their community, as citizens of their country, and as part of the family of nations."

The Sister Cities International of Fort Worth centerpiece was the September "Sister Cities Week," during which some 35 events, with 250 visitors from the three sister cities, plus a delegation from Bandung, Indonesia, enveloped the community. The mayor, city officials, dozens of heretofore uninvolved civic and community organizations, all of SCIFW, and hundreds of citizens collaborated on the success of this week-long celebration. The $50,000 cost was underwritten by 85 companies and capped off by a portion of the new members' dues. Twenty-three articles, in two newspapers, and four TV features insured the desired publicity about the program throughout all of Fort Worth.

In every program area, Sister Cities International of Fort Worth achieved or surpassed its 1989 goals. Conservatively, it is agreed that 1989 put the program in the forefront of Fort Worth's citizen and civic consciousness.

100,000 to 300,000

EUGENE, OREGON—
CHINJU, KOREA
IRKUTSK, USSR
KAKEGAWA, JAPAN
KATHMANDU, NEPAL

"Bringing The World Home"

1989 was a banner year for the City of Eugene's Sister Cities Program (ESCP) with augmented exchanges, increased community participation, and a significant and successful effort to breathe new life into the links with Kathmandu, Nepal, while reinforcing the ties between Eugene and Chinju, Kakegawa, and Irkutsk.

The overall program goals for the ESCP in 1989—all of which were achieved—include: increased, active relations with all four sister cities, adoption of a central theme for use in program-wide publicity and community awareness efforts; publi-