Best Single Project Awards

A "Best Single Project Award" is presented to U.S. communities for the development and implementation of a significant project that has real meaning and shows imagination for the furtherance of the local program and the community and contributes to the growth and expansion of the sister cities program.

Over 300,000 Population

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MARYLAND— ZIGUINCHOR REGION, SENEGAL

The Prince George's County sister-county affiliation with the Region of Ziguinchor centered on bringing into a single focus—that of bridging physical distance and different histories to discover hope and ambitions—their partnership activities in 1989. Five major program events, involving hundreds of volunteers and reaching tens-of-thousands of citizens in each country, made this goal a reality.

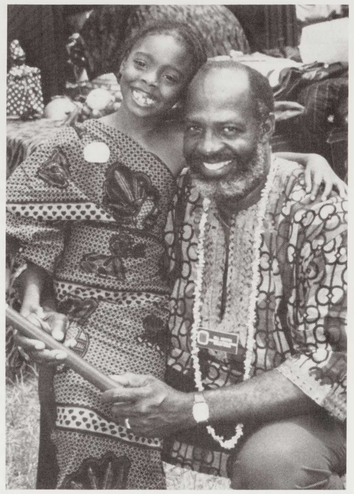
Program activities nurtured the strong commitment to reaching out, both at home and abroad. On the homefront, the Prince George's Friendship Committee succeeded in sweeping public education with its Arts and Crafts Booth during the "Worldfest '89"—the annual celebration of the cultural diversity and fascinating heritage of Prince George's County. Constructed by committee members, the booth featured photographic displays, arts and crafts, music, and entertainment indigenous to Ziguinchor. Committee volunteers, in authentic Senegalese dress, greeted visitors with pertinent printed materials about the sister-county link. An estimated 10,000 festival-goers roamed the Prince George's Community College grounds enjoying ethnic food, arts, crafts, entertainment, a concert and fireworks-filled evening finale.

In 1989, 300 people partook of a gala dinner at Rosecroft Racetrack. At the podium were the ambassador of Senegal, the Prince George's county executive, county council members and keynoter, the executive director of AFRICARE. This event, recognizing outstanding individuals and business contributors to the partnership, netted $5,000.00. These funds, together with essential technical assistance from AFRICARE, provided materials for construction of a vitally needed new well-housing in Ziguinchor. Reconstruction was accomplished by local workers, thereby ensuring an ample water supply for both domestic and agricultural use.

Bridging the continents mandates people-to-people exchanges. In 1989, 18 Marylanders (from age 15-83) made an 11-day goodwill visit to Ziguinchor. The group enjoyed myriad sightseeing opportunities; welcoming events; a visit to the well; and joint committee meetings to review past achievements, refine partnership activities, and set future goals. Some Marylanders found their heritage roots in Ziguinchor, adding a special lustre to the trip. Participants immersed themselves in Ziguinchor community life—including modes of travel, daily life, dress and entertainment.

"Human Relationships count in life . . . close family . . . close community . . . this gives meaning to life," captured the trip for one participant.

The 10-day visit of 22 Senegalese, (which included key national and regional officials, educators, health professionals and entrepreneurs) provided a premier opportunity for the Friendship Committee to reciprocate in hospitality as homestays introduced the American family life; the schedule offered a first-hand view of our systems of government, education and health care, including informative exchanges with county, private sector, and public interest agencies and organizations. The Friendship Committee orchestrated a round of home-hospitality evenings, the Senegalese participation in the annual Greenbelt Parade, receptions hosted by the county executive and council and Andrews Air Force Base, culminating in a farewell gala evening given by the Friendship Committee. Among the tangible souvenirs of the visit were sports shirts for the Ziguinchor soccer team, sister-county emblazoned towels and a work of art presented from the county council. Parris Glendening, county executive, summed up the value of the link with Ziguinchor, "The County's relationship with Ziguinchor provides us with exciting opportunities to share our diverse backgrounds and cultural interests. We welcome our friends with open arms."



Celebrating the sister county relation between Zinquinchor region and Prince George's County.

This focused effort to channel all the program activities into a single endeavor to bridge two histories, two cultures and legions of citizens across thousands of miles hallmarked the Prince George's County-Ziguinchor Region sister-county relationship in 1989.

100,000-300,000

WICHITA, KANSAS— ORLEANS, FRANCE

Pour La Première Fois . . . A Dream Come True

The Oeuvre Jeanne d'Arc is a home in Orleans, France for youth who have walked failure's path—familial, academic and social—to its doors. When an official Wichita delegation visited the home, met the young boys and staff, they agreed—in spite of the intricate logistics—to an adventure: to bring 33 youth residents and 13 home staff to Wichita to meet their counterparts in the Maude Carpenter Children's Home and, for two weeks, to be participants in all facets of Wichita life, including assisting the Mennonite Housing Rehabilitation services to remodel and recondition homes for needy persons.

During the five final days of the exchange, six French journalists (2 TV, 1 radio and 3 print) arrived in Wichita to cover this new chapter in the longstanding Wichita-Orleans link and to learn more about the Wichita community and the Sister Cities program.

A host of unusual pre-excursion arrangements were required. The two homes established a formal "sister home" agreement. The administrators of Oeuvre Jeanne d'Arc (OJA) and Maude Carpenter Children's Home (MCCH) secured all the authorizations and met specific legal requirements of the visit. OJA conducted a successful fundraising campaign to pay for the trip and began intensive language training and orientation classes for the boys. Concurrently, at MCCH, residents studied French culture and the history of Orleans. An "American Christmas Party" at OJA saluted French government and American embassy staff and an extensive roster of project "godparents" who supported, encouraged and launched the exchange.

In January the OJA Director, M. Fay, and the exchange publicity coordinator visited Wichita, followed by the February visit of two of Wichita's organizing Committee ironed out logistical details and finalized the program. Send-off receptions were hosted by the City of Orleans and the French Minister of Foreign Affairs in Paris.

In Wichita, the boys and OJA staff were lodged in the MCCH gym which had been converted into a dormitory, with cots loaned from the local Red Cross and sleeping bags presented by Wichita's Coleman Company. The OJA cook served up breakfasts and one Wichita community group each day sponsored another meal. Each participant enjoyed a home hospitality evening with a Wichita family.

New friends from Orleans and Wichita say "au revoir."

From transportation to soft drinks, translators to French-speaking Police (in case of emergencies); Senator Kassebaum to city council members; the chamber of commerce to a local semi trailer truck repair company, and from museums, civic organizations, amusement facilities, and school systems to the hundreds of individual Wichitans—including the owner of a spiffy Corvette who spent Easter Sunday afternoon giving each French lad a spin—goodwill support poured in. The roster forms an enviable compendium of the Wichita community rallying to insure the unqualified success of the heartwarming exchange.

Program activities included sightseeing, school visits, sporting events, city receptions, low-key socials and weekend outings. Each was tailored to the specific interests of a group of young people.

With all the fun came real learning and pitching in to help with the Mennonite project of rehabilitating housing for the needy.

The project required no budget. Travel and personal expenses were underwritten by more than 40 French corporate and individual sponsors. In Wichita, MCCH and the Wichita Sister Cities program enlisted organizations for charitable and in-kind support for each day's activities. All admission fees were waived; meals were donated and transportation provided.

The results of this project range from the enhanced self-images in the French youth to vastly expanded publicity and community awareness and participation in both communities, giving across-the-board recognition to the effectiveness of the Sister Cities program in bringing the peoples of disparate backgrounds and cultures together as friends.

It was so warm and genuine, it just gave you goose bumps. It was all unspoken. You could just feel it. We convince those kids without words they're special.

Wichita Police Detective, Pamela Horn
***Wichita Eagle-Beacon*, April 30, 1989**

50,000 to 100,000

GREENVILLE, SOUTH CAROLINA— BERGAMO, ITALY

Piazza PAZAZZ

Representatives of Greenville, enjoying their first official visit to Bergamo, Italy, were struck with the beauty and vibrancy of the city's piazzas—filled with people, lovely to look at and economically viable. How different, they mused, from the somewhat down-at-the-heels, little used Coffee Street Mall at home. But what if it could change—a Bergamo-flavored piazza in the heart of Greenville, South Carolina.

Like tales which open, "once upon a time . . ." this almost seemed too good to be true. Nearly unilateral enthusiasm and, with an architect and two businessmen in the Greenville party, it was only natural to meet professional counterparts within the Bergamo community, and to comment on the Bergamo piazzas, wistfully noting that Greenville could well use a people magnet in its downtown area. Laura Sonzogni, carrying on the family tradition in architecture, volunteered her professional services during her August vacation in return for a place to live and work in Greenville.

At home in Greenville, the notion took hold. It meshed the city-leaders' vision of urban revitalization with the sister cities desire to celebrate the burgeoning relationship with Bergamo in a clear invitation to all of Greenville to participate in the Sister Cities Program. Greenville's leaders were intrigued with the idea of dedicating the mall to its urban partners.

Greenville engaged Ron Morgan of Urban Ventures Design Group to work closely with Laura Sonzogni to transform the Coffee Street Mall into an Italian Piazza. Morgan's commitment to broad-based community input and participation in the venture was an unqualified hit. For six months, public meetings and design workshops featured Laura Sonzogni's designs, which were then refined to reflect some of the specific needs of the Greenville community. Public opinion supported the design, media featured in-depth coverage of all project phases—from earliest drawings to the race against the clock to have it ready for the October 12, 1989, Dedication Ceremonies.