

# **ANNUAL REPORT**

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

CALENDAR YEAR ACTIVITIES 2020

## **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(s) 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(s) 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, Obama, Trump and now President Joe Biden have served as 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 63 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, thus making this the 27<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this partnership. The City of Nisshin Shi, Japan was formally recognized as our Sister City in October of 2006.

## **INTRODUCTION**

During 2020, Owensboro Sister Cities and Regions was unable to participate in many of our annual events. International travel was halted and many events were cancelled. Despite the cancellations, our board was able to continue moving forward with our plans for the future. We designed a new OSCAR logo, as well as t-shirts, lapel pins, and decals to sell to raise additional funds for future exchanges and events. We will soon launch our new Ambassador Program, which will support our board with exchanges and public relations. We also participated in virtual conferences and exchanges and were able to continue our monthly board meetings, via Zoom.

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 \$25.00 of community support for each city budget dollar allocated.

We are very appreciative of the City of Owensboro 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.

We would also like to thank the families who open their homes (and kitchens), to the hotels in lodging assistance, and to the four area school systems and four institutions of higher learning 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.

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.**

### **OWENSBORO SISTER CITIES AND REGIONS – EXCHANGES/ACTIVITIES 2020**

As it was for many organizations, 2020 was a challenging year for Owensboro Sister Cities and Regions. As a result of COVID-19, many of our planned activities and exchanges were cancelled. We were able to maintain our relationship with our Sister Cities (and build new ones) during these unprecedented times. Reflected in this report are participation in various activities by Owensboro Sister Cities and Regions. The following components were addressed by these exchanges and activities:

**Incoming Exchange: November 2019 – March 2020 Educational Exchange**  
**Ross Leigh, Co-Executive Director (1 in)**

**Purpose:** Honza, a high school student from Beroun, Czech Republic stayed with the family of OSCAR Co-Executive Director, Ross Leigh, while participating in a traditional academic student exchange. While Honza is not from Olomouc, his stay with the Leigh family was a direct result of the OSCAR exchange that took place in 2019.

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**Virtual Exchange: February 22, 2020 Scout Skype Meeting**  
**Katherine Zboril, Coordinator (65 participants)**

**Purpose:** Board Vice-President Katherine Zboril coordinated a Skype call between Owensboro and Olomouc scouts to celebrate World Thinking Day. This event included presentations from both the United States and Czech scout groups, songs, and virtual friendship bracelet activities. There were 48 scout participants – 18 from the US and 30 from the Czech Republic. 17 adults also attended the event.

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**Activity: July 8 – July 9, 2020 Sister Cities International Annual Conference**  
**(3 participants)**

**Purpose:** OSCAR board members participated in the annual Sister Cities International Conference. Due to COVID-19, this year's conference was held virtually. The theme of the conference was "Reimagining Citizen Diplomacy – New Connections in a Virtual World". One board member also participated in a Member Roundtable that focused on fundraising in a COVID-19 Virtual World Partnering with your City Officials Engaging NEXTGENS and Millennials.

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**Activity: November 19, 2020 Kentucky Sister Cities State Meeting**  
**Michael Vanover, Elaine Wright, and Adrienne Carrico**  
**(3 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. Due to COVID-19, this year's meeting was virtual. Discussion topic was: Managing your Sister Cities Program during a Pandemic (Virtual Methods, Utilizing Virtual Programs, and Modifying Existing Programs).