

ANNUAL REPORT

TO THE CITY OF OWENSBORO MAYOR and CITY COMMISSION
OWENSBORO SISTER CITIES AND REGIONS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

CALENDAR YEAR ACTIVITIES 2021

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 28th anniversary of this partnership. The City of Nisshin Shi, Japan was formally recognized as our Sister City in October of 2006.

INTRODUCTION

During 2021, 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 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 and eventually in person.

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.

Activity: April 2021 Scout Exchange Meeting (11 participants)

Purpose: Katherine Zboril (OSCAR Vice President) hosted a virtual meeting with Owensboro/Olomouc Scout leaders to continue the discussion and planning for the implementation of future Boy/Girl Scout exchange.

Activity: April, 21 2021 Virtual Meeting with Zdenka Podlipska (10 participants)

Purpose: The OSCAR board of directors hosted a virtual meeting with special guest Zdenka Podlipska (head of the Department of International Cooperation for the City of Olomouc). Ms. Podlipska provided the board with an update on international travels during the pandemic, expressed her willingness to participate in our upcoming 30th Anniversary celebration, a scouting exchange, and future firefighter exchanges.

Activity: June 2021 Firefighter Exchange Meeting (2 participants)

Purpose: Katherine Zboril hosted a virtual meeting with the Olomouc Fire Chief to discuss the potential for a future firefighter exchange between our cities.

Activity: July 16, 2021 SCI Annual Conference (1 participant)

Purpose: OSCAR executive director 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 "Building Stronger Ties for an Interconnected World".

Activity: July 2021 Japanese Rock Garden Meeting (2 participants)

Purpose: Michael Vanover (OSCAR President) met with Lurna Strehl (Western Kentucky Botanical Garden Executive Director) to propose the addition of a Japanese rock garden at the Botanical Garden, to honor our Japanese Sister City. There is a definite interest in partnering with OSCAR to implement this garden.

Activity: July 21, 2021 Virtual Meeting with Naomi Ichihara and Anita Ngosi from Nisshin, Japan (10 participants)

Purpose: The OSCAR board of directors hosted a virtual meeting with special guests Naomi Ichihara (an employee of Nisshin City Hall) and Anita Ngosi (interpreter and friend of Mrs. Ichihara). Mrs. Ichihara was on a work leave while living in Lexington for her husband's job, and hoped to build a relationship with representatives from their Sister City of Owensboro before returning to Nisshin in December. The board discussed the potential for creating a Japanese rock garden in Owensboro and Ms. Ichihara expressed her willingness to help with ideas. She was also in support of a future firefighter exchange and indicated that she could assist with making contacts with Scout groups in the Nisshin area.

Activity: August 21, 2021 Multicultural Festival (5 participants)

Purpose: OSCAR Board members participated in the 23rd annual Multicultural Festival “Building Blocks of Peace”. Since the inception of this festival, Owensboro Sister Cities and Regions has participated. Representing both Olomouc, Czech Republic and Nisshin, Japan, our booth displayed traditional Czech and Japanese handmade goods and volunteers provided visitors with educational information and activities.

Activity: November 2021 Meeting to Discuss Reinitiating the Summer Study Program (3 participants)

Purpose: Elaine Wright (OSCAR Secretary) met with Christine Salmon (Director of KWC’s Center for Teaching and Learning) and Dr. Jeffrey Barnette (Vice President of Academic Affairs for Brescia University) to discuss a future OSCAR-developed study abroad course. Both schools expressed interest in supporting the program and Brescia agreed to be the host university.

Activity: November 12, 2021 Kentucky Sister Cities State Meeting (1 participant)

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 topics included: SCI Global Awareness Team, Young Authors & Artists Showcase, and State updates.