

# WEEKLY

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## Sister Cities: Seeing A New Vision For The Future

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by Tim Honey

As the new executive director of Sister Cities International (SCI), I am pleased to announce a series of major reforms and initiatives designed to significantly enhance services to local governments in the development and support of sister city programs. These new initiatives are part of an overall campaign designed to promote Partnership, Innovation and Excellence in every aspect of the important work of Sister Cities International.

The mission of Sister Cities International has never been more important. In this emerging era of globalization, SCI provides an avenue through which communities can forge new and creative international links. As a former city manager, I have witnessed first hand the dedication of civic and volunteer leaders to continually strengthen this historic sister city movement that began during the Cold War in 1956.

Sister cities are alive and well at the grass roots level. SCI members, working in their communities to promote the ideals and principles of international cooperation, are conducting outstanding programs that make Sister Cities International an incredible network of more than 3,500 communities in 137 countries.

### *A New Commitment, Expanded Services*

Our new emphasis on Partnership, Innovation and Excellence will promote our mission and enhance our services. Sister Cities International is first and foremost a national membership organization, and we are determined to provide outstanding services to all our members. These improved services include:

- A monthly publication - starting immediately, we will alternate every other month between a Report to the Membership and our Sister Cities News. These two publications will provide members with current and relevant information. We will be looking for your advice and input so we may best address your most pressing information needs.
- A greatly enhanced website - [www.sister-cities.org](http://www.sister-cities.org) - will serve as a substantive SCI online resource library, available to you 24 hours a day.
- A newly designed database - communities will be able to update their own information online, and we will be able to provide timely reports to the members on program innovations occurring in SCI's worldwide network.
- Timely responses to our member questions, including a complete revamping of our assistance to communities that are seeking new sister city relationships.

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## *Our Core Mission and Values*

As globalization sweeps our planet, we must find new ways within our communities to engage internationally in an effort to understand and create "globally competitive communities," build bridges to foster world peace and human rights, and take tangible steps toward lessening the growing economic divide between the developed and the developing world.

In the 21st century, local communities must foster a new international perspective and create innovative avenues for international engagement. This will occur through partnerships with civic and educational institutions, with the business and technology sectors, and through citizens and their non-profit organizations.

This new international engagement imperative is about the ability of our communities to adapt and change within our rapidly globalizing planet. It is also about:

- Enabling our communities and their citizens to be globally competitive - not only economically, but also in every other aspect of life. While economics is critically important, communities also must be competitive in terms of education, the environment, health, and other quality of life issues that form the very fabric of our communities.
- Providing a platform for our citizens to be engaged as "global citizens" in whatever aspect of life they may choose - business, government, education, the arts, the environment. Perhaps most important, it is about engaging in efforts to end international conflicts, wars, and human deprivation through building international bridges of friendship, mutual respect, and support.
- Establishing partnerships, linkages, and coalitions, and unleashing the incredible interests, passions, and talents our citizens have for making a difference by "thinking globally and acting locally." The old bumper sticker of the 1960's has taken on a new legitimacy and a new urgency in the year 2000.

## *A Powerful Network Working for You*

Sister Cities International, through its network of local chapters, its proud forty-four year history, and its exclusive focus on international cooperation, is in an excellent position to assist communities throughout the United States and throughout the world to act with commitment on this global imperative.

We embrace this opportunity in the new millennium to use our worldwide network to empower communities as they develop successful and rewarding sister city connections.

I am honored to work closely with our new President, Charles Stokke. Mr. Stokke is the former mayor of Menomonie, Wisconsin, and has been very active with the League of Wisconsin Municipalities. President Stokke, along with our Board of Directors, is providing outstanding policy leadership for Sister Cities International.

Now, we would like your active involvement. If you are not a member of Sister Cities International, please consider joining. Membership information can be found on our website: [www.sister-cities.org](http://www.sister-cities.org). You also can contact Sister Cities International, 1424 K Street, NW #600, Washington, D.C. 20005; (202)347-8631; (202) 393-6524 (fax).

*Tim Honey is a former city manager of Boulder, Colorado, and Portland, Maine. He chaired the ICMA International Committee and worked for ICMA as the director of their local government project in Budapest, Hungary. Tim began his career in the 1970's working for National League of Cities as a legislative lobbyist.*