
**DULUTH SISTER CITIES INTERNATIONAL WINS SISTER CITIES INTERNATIONAL'S
INNOVATION AWARD (HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE)**

WASHINGTON, DC – Duluth Sister Cities International won Sister Cities International's 2015 Innovation Award (Humanitarian Assistance) for a city with a population less than 100,000. The 2015 Sister Cities International Innovation Award (Humanitarian Assistance) recognizes the accomplishments of outstanding community and individual sister city programs that promote peace through mutual respect, understanding, and cooperation.

Duluth, Minnesota and Petrozavodsk, Russia have enjoyed a rich, intimate connection since they established a sister city relationship in 1987. Through the years, their partnership has included a variety of activities: performing arts, sports, student and faculty exchanges, and assistance to orphanages. However, both cities agreed that several issues, namely abuse and sex trafficking, affect both communities. New Steps International provides a means to discuss these issues and develop solutions for them while contributing to the long-term well-being of both communities. "New Steps for At-Risk Children and Families: A U.S.-Russia Peer-to-Peer Dialogue Project" is a natural outgrowth of their earlier efforts that span a period of over 20 years and emphasize the mutual exchange of best practices to create communities that protect their most vulnerable citizens.

To achieve these objectives, the project was organized into three parts. Part one featured six video conferences in which both cities continue to engage during the 2014-2015 project year. The diverse topics of the video-conferences to date have included conversations between social work professors in both cities to plan the student exchanges, restorative justice, recovery coaches for women suffering from addiction, and a conversation on sex trafficking. Part two of the project sent a group of Minnesota social service professionals to Petrozavodsk in October 2014 and brought a group of Russian social workers and physicians to Duluth in November 2014. Part three will involve a bilateral exchange of social work, Russian studies, and law students from four partner universities.

Sister Cities International's Annual Awards are awarded in several categories including Best Overall, Innovation (Arts & Culture, Economic Development, Humanitarian Assistance, and Youth & Education), Volunteer of the Year, and Youth Leadership. Award winners will be honored at a special ceremony on Saturday, July 18 during Sister Cities International's 59th Annual Conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

The Sister Cities International 59th Annual Conference will bring together elected and municipal officials, engaged citizens, diplomats, and business leaders in Minneapolis, Minnesota to discuss, "Building Generations for Peace." Conference sessions will provide attendees with opportunities to learn about strengthening their sister city programs through informative sessions led by experts and industry leaders. For more information on the 2015 Sister Cities International Annual Conference, please visit: www.SisterCitiesConference.org.

#

About Sister Cities International

Founded by President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1956, Sister Cities International serves as the national membership organization for over 545 individual sister cities, counties, and states across the United States with relationships in over 2,100 communities in 145 countries. This sister city network unites tens of thousands of citizen diplomats and volunteers who work tirelessly to promote peace and understanding through programs and projects focusing on arts and culture, youth and education, economic and sustainable development, and humanitarian assistance.

Facebook: [Sister Cities International](https://www.facebook.com/SisterCitiesInternational); Twitter: [@SisterCitiesInt](https://twitter.com/SisterCitiesInt); Website: www.sistercities.org