

---

**HOT SPRINGS SISTER CITY PROGRAM WINS SISTER CITIES INTERNATIONAL'S  
INNOVATION AWARD (ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT)**

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

The economic development innovation project in Hot Springs, Arkansas highlights the introduction of an entirely new industry – Sake. The Sake Industry in the U.S. has experienced growth over the past several years, but due improper and inadequate education, many people in the U.S. are intimidated by this traditional Japanese beverage.

As the number one tourist destination in Arkansas, Hot Springs attracts almost six million visitors annually. Having a unique product like Sake produced locally would help enhance the city's allure. Along with offering locally-made Sake, Hot Springs hopes to offer production facility tours and education programs to help promote the beverage over a much larger area.

In September of 2012, a four-member business delegation traveled to Hanamaki, Japan to tour a Sake brewery. While there, the business leaders met with owners and discussed the possibility of Sake production in the U.S. Fumiaki Sasaki, president of the Hanamaki International Exchange Association, located Nanbu Bijin Brewery, a well-known global producer of top Sake. In 2015, an agreement was made that intern Ben Bell, a young man with ties to Hot Springs, would stay for two brewing seasons and work on continuing a business plan to bring production to Arkansas. The expenses of building a brewery will come from both private and public funding.

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 59<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

The Sister Cities International 59<sup>th</sup> 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](http://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](http://www.sistercities.org)