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**Rice Lake International Friendship Association receives funding to send four-member delegation to Miharu, Japan**

WASHINGTON, DC – Rice Lake, Wisconsin is one of seven U.S. cities selected by *Sister Cities International* to receive the *Leading Asia: Renewing the U.S. and Japan Sister Cities Network* exchange funding. The funding will enable a 10-day Rice Lake delegation visit to their Japanese sister city, Miharu.

Rice Lake will be celebrating the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its sister city relationship with Miharu. Over the past years, they've successfully conducted several student exchange programs. Their other projects include the building of the International House, an American-style bed and breakfast in Miharu, and the Japanese Friendship Garden at the local university campus.

Through the *Leading Asia* exchange funding, Rice Lake plans to foster and further educational exchange by cultivating new venues for professional development, business and economic growth. This includes creating viable exchange programs for Rice Lake students to travel to Miharu for longer school-year stays.

The purpose of the *Leading Asia* exchange funding is to launch programming in the following areas: business development, sustainability, creative economies, and young professional development. In 2011, five cities were awarded funding during the first round.

The *Leading Asia: Renewing the U.S. and Japan Sister Cities Network* is funded by a grant from the Japan Foundation Center for Global Partnerships. The objective of this grant award is to improve and expand existing relationships between the U.S. and Japan. To see the entire list of exchange funding awardees and to learn more about *Leading Asia*, please visit [http://www.sister-cities.org/programs/leading\\_asia.cfm](http://www.sister-cities.org/programs/leading_asia.cfm)

**About *Sister Cities International***

*Sister Cities International* facilitates nearly 2,000 partnerships in 136 countries on six continents between 600 communities in the United States with similar municipalities abroad. *Sister Cities International* represents citizen diplomats who work tirelessly to promote the organizations' mission of creating world peace and cultural understanding through economic and sustainable development programs, youth and education projects, arts and culture, and humanitarian assistance.

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