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**SAN DIEGO-JALALABAD SISTER CITIES FOUNDATION WINS SISTER CITIES INTERNATIONAL'S  
INNOVATION AWARD (YOUTH AND EDUCATION)**

WASHINGTON, DC – The San Diego-Jalalabad Sister Cities Foundation (SDJSCF) won Sister Cities International's 2015 Innovation Award (Youth and Education) for a city with a population greater than 500,001. The 2015 Sister Cities International Innovation Award (Youth and Education) recognizes the accomplishments of outstanding community and individual sister city programs that promote peace through mutual respect, understanding, and cooperation.

SDJSCF, working with the La Jolla Golden Triangle Rotary Club Foundation, implemented the Afghan Youth Connect (AYC) program. The goals of this program are to teach IT skills, improve English proficiency, develop a sense of personal social responsibility, learn to use social media to communicate internationally and locally, and help Afghan high school students develop critical thinking in civic responsibilities.

Computer labs have been established at 15 public high schools with a central site serving an additional six public high schools in Jalalabad. During 2014 in Jalalabad, 1,409 male students and 1,033 female students participated directly in the program with another 4,515 students having the opportunity to observe the program.

Participation in the program has improved Afghan students' English and IT skills. Beyond that, through the small grants program, students have developed a sense of civic responsibility. Both Afghan and U.S. students have developed a better understanding and mutual respect of the cultures of their counterparts.

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).

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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.

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