

**SISTER CITIES ASSOCIATION OF SARASOTA WINS SISTER CITIES INTERNATIONAL'S
INNOVATION AWARD (ARTS AND CULTURE)**

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

The Young Playwrights Festival (YPF) is a program sponsored by Florida Studio Theater and Sarasota Sister Cities (SSC). In 2014, SSC introduced students and teachers from three of its sister cities – Dunfermline, Scotland; Tel Mond, Israel; and Vladimir, Russia – to the program. Florida Student Theater trains teachers in each sister city to properly teach play writing. After sister city teachers educate students in play writing, students in each city write plays and submit them for judging. Winning students and their teachers are then invited to Sarasota to participate in YPF. SSC hosts the students and teachers while they attend YPF and experience Sarasota. Students are introduced to museums, events, local government officials, Sarasota daily life, and other students during their stay. YPF is an opportunity for students to see their plays performed by professional actors at Florida Studio Theater and to meet fellow student playwrights.

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.

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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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