

MEDIA ADVISORY

Celebrating Global Communities for World Peace with Sister Cities International

Sister Cities International holds 61st Annual Conference and concurrent events in Virginia Beach, VA July 12 through July 16.

Virginia Beach, VA will be the site of global culture and connections as Sister Cities International hosts their 61st Annual Conference and concurrent events: the U.S.-Russia Mayors' Summit and the Youth Leadership Summit. **The conference will bring together more than 200 elected and municipal officials, business leaders, and engaged citizen diplomats and over 50 high school students from across the U.S. and the globe to learn about citizen diplomacy.**

- Attendees and speakers will include mayors, city officials, diplomats, business and political leaders, including: **Mary Kane**, President and CEO, Sister Cities International; **Karim Wasfi**; Cellist, Founder and CEO of Peace Through Arts Global Foundation; **C.D. Glin**, President and CEO, U.S. African Development Fund; and **Ron Nirenberg**, Mayor of the City of San Antonio, TX.

US-RUSSIA MAYORAL SUMMIT

When: Thursday, July 13, 2017; 8:30am-5:00pm

Where: **Double Tree by Hilton Hotel**, 1900 Pavilion Drive, Virginia Beach, VA 23451

What: Summit to celebrate 40 years of Russian/American sister cities and discuss opportunities for the continued success and growth of U.S.- Russia sister city partnerships.

SISTER CITIES INTERNATIONAL 2017 ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND YOUTH SUMMIT

When: Friday-Saturday, July 14-16, 2017

Where: Conference: **Double Tree by Hilton Hotel**, 1900 Pavilion Drive, Virginia Beach, VA 23451

Youth Summit and simulation led by the U.S. Diplomacy Center: **Virginia Wesleyan College**, 5817 Wesleyan Dr, Virginia Beach, VA 23455

What: Annual gathering and meeting of citizen diplomats and municipal officials who work to build international relationships. Speakers and attendees this year include influential diplomats, Mayors from around the globe, administration officials, and members of Congress. The youth summit will bring together 90 youth from all around the world and the U.S. A full agenda for the conference can be found [here](#), and an agenda for the Youth Summit can be found [here](#).

Who: **Speakers include:**

- Karim Wasfi, Renowned Cellist, Founder & CEO of Peace Through Arts Global Foundation
- Dan Hou, Director of Strategy, HUGE Inc

- Shin Koyamada, Actor, Philanthropist, Martial Artist
- Gennadi Nedvigin, Artistic Director, Atlanta Ballet
- Russell Held, Vice President, Economic Development, Virginia Port Authority
- Suhail Arastu, Director of Development, Musical Bridges
- John McKenna, Director of Playing for Change Foundation – Peace Through Music
- Dr. Sherry Lee Mueller, President Emeritus – Global Ties U.S.
- Alderman Guy Spence, Belfast, United Kingdom
- Jay Mathur, Founder & CEO of ValueIdeas
- Michael O’Dwyer, Founder & CEO of SwiftComply

OPENING CEREMONY AND PARADE OF FLAGS

When: Friday, July 14, 2017, 9:45am-11:30am

Where: **Hilton DoubleTree Virginia Beach**, 1900 Pavilion Drive, Virginia Beach, VA 23451 to the **Virginia Beach Convention Center**, 1000 19th St, Virginia Beach, VA 23451

What: A parade of city flags of SCI member communities. This is a public event and longstanding tradition of the Conference. The parade begin at the Hilton DoubleTree and end at the Virginia Beach Convention Center. Along with speakers, there will be a parade of flags showcase and march led by local volunteer groups and will feature 150 city flags from cities across the globe.

Who: **Speakers include:**

- Russel Held, Vice President, Economic Development, Virginia Port Authority
- Ms. Beverly Anderson, Chair of the Board, Virginia Beach City Public Schools
- Cathy Lewis, President & CEO of the CIVIC Leadership Institute
- Stephen “Tim” Quigley, Chairman of the Board, Sister Cities International
- Mary Kane, President & CEO of Sister Cities International

WELCOME RECEPTION BEACH BASH HOSTED BY THE CITY OF VIRGINIA BEACH

When: Friday, July 14, 2017; 6:30pm-8:30pm

Where: **Atlantic and 31st Street**, Neptune’s Park

What: Evening reception on the beach with diplomats and city officials. The reception, hosted by Mayor Sessoms and the City of Virginia Beach, will feature a Virginia Beach’s sister cities and their culture as well as music by the Original Rhondels.



LOU WOZAR DIPLOMATIC AWARDS DINNER AND CEREMONY

When: Saturday, July 15, 2017, 7:00pm-10:00pm

Where: **DoubleTree Hilton** , 1900 Pavilion Drive, Virginia Beach, VA 23451

What: The Annual awards ceremony will celebrate sister city programs that exemplify the mission of the organization and will celebrate the contributions of cities to the citizen diplomacy movement. The Best Overall international programs, the most innovating international programs in Arts and Culture, Economic Development, Humanitarian Assistance, and Youth and Education will be recognized, as well as the Volunteer of the Year. **Read more about awardees here.**

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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 500 member communities with relationships in over 2,000 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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