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**BELLEVUE SISTER CITIES ASSOCIATION WINS SISTER CITIES INTERNATIONAL'S INNOVATION AWARD FOR YOUTH AND EDUCATION**

WASHINGTON, DC – Bellevue Sister Cities Association (BSCA) has won Sister Cities International's (SCI) 2016 Innovation Award for Youth and Education for a city with a population between 100,001 and 500,000. The 2016 Sister Cities International Innovation Award for Youth and Education recognizes the accomplishments of outstanding community and individual sister city programs that promote peace through mutual respect, understanding, and cooperation.

In 1998, Bellevue and Liepaja, Latvia began a teacher exchange program in order to provide opportunities for their educators involved with special needs students to visit a cross-section of programs available in Bellevue. In 2015, BSCA began to help provide the school with a handicapped playground available not only to the students at the school but for the surrounding population as well. The main structure and landscaping has now been completed and is enjoyed by many special needs youth in the school and surrounding area.

SCI's Annual Awards are awarded in several categories including Best Overall, Innovation (Arts and Culture, Economic Development, Humanitarian Assistance, and Youth and Education), and Volunteer of the Year. Award winners will be honored at the Lou Wozar Diplomatic Awards Dinner on Saturday, July 16 during SCI's 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration in Washington, DC.

SCI's 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration will include an [Annual Conference](#) and [Youth Leadership Summit](#) in Washington, DC July 13-16, 2016. The celebration will bring together hundreds of the most influential global leaders in diplomacy, foreign affairs, policy, business, and innovation. Elected and municipal officials, business leaders, youth delegates, and citizen diplomats will discuss this year's theme "Peace through People," building on President Eisenhower's initial vision of creating a more peaceful world by building global relationships.

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**About Sister Cities International**

Founded as a Presidential Initiative by Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1956, Sister Cities International serves as the national membership organization for 570 member communities with 2,300 partnerships in 150 countries on six continents. The sister city network unites tens of thousands of citizen diplomats and volunteers who work tirelessly to promote the organizations' mission of creating world peace and understanding through economic development, youth and education, arts and culture, and humanitarian assistance.

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