

“With Sister Cities, if you’re volunteering, you’re helping to explain America.”

Please see below for a transcript of the value of Sister Cities International’s work from the perspective of Kate Bentley, a former diplomat and Sister Cities volunteer in Nashville, Tennessee. Click [here](#) to watch full video.

My name is Kate Bentley, I’m a former diplomat- a private citizen now- and I’m here to talk to you about the value of the Sister Cities organization.

While at the U.S. Department of State, I coordinated closely with Sister Cities International as we synchronized our outreach efforts in specific countries. That helped our embassies and our consorts abroad to foster ties between American citizens and citizens in their countries. Well I’m a private citizen now, and I volunteer my time to promote the mission of Sister Cities International and Sister Cities in Nashville, Tennessee, because I think it’s important. And for those of you who are also volunteering with Sister Cities, I’d like to say thank you. The work you do is very important.

Sometimes our neighbors don’t understand what we’re doing or they don’t even know about Sister Cities. That’s why we’re chatting today. My hometown is Nashville, Tennessee, but I live way out in the country, among some solid, salt-of-the-earth folks- most of whom have never travelled outside of the United States. So, their perspective of the outside world is different from those who have travelled abroad.

Sometimes they ask me, “So what is it you do with Sister Cities?” and “What did you do at the State Department?”

I tell them it’s really quite simple. With the State Department, I explained U.S. foreign policy to citizens abroad, but more importantly, I explained America and Americans: who we are, what we think and why we think it, how we act, what’s important to us, and why.

My neighbors sometimes get it and sometimes they go, “Well, that’s (that’s) noble, but what’s the value?” And I tell them, “You know, let’s put it on a local scale. We’re all neighbors here, right? I know you, I understand you and you understand me now, right? And you know that if a problem ever arose between us that you could come to me and we could discuss that problem. Why? Because we’ve already developed a relationship of trust, we’ve laid that foundation. And it’s no different on a country-to-country basis. On a diplomatic level, it’s just those relationships that we rely on, that we depend upon, that are so important.”



So with Sister Cities, if you're volunteering, you're helping to explain America. That's important. I appreciate what you do, and I'd like for you to know that there's also another benefit that you can talk about. And that is the clear economic impact of Sister Cities. Did you know that Sister Cities linkages promote tourism in your city- in cities all across the United States? They attract foreign investment and trade. They promote city-to-city and county-to-county partnerships. That's important work. It leads to jobs.

So if you are thinking about joining Sister Cities, becoming a member and volunteering your time, I hope you'll reach out to your local chapter and there you will find people who are doing fantastic things, interacting with people all around the world. It's exciting and it's fulfilling. We hope you'll join us. Thank you.