

2018 Youth Leadership Summit Testimonials from Attendees

Ashley

During my experience at the Sister Cities Youth Summit I had many memorable moments. This summit let me learn about new culture, meet new people, and understand the struggle many diplomats face every day.

My favorite part of the summit was the (diplomatic) simulation. The simulation created a great challenge many diplomats face every day, not everything you do can go along with your personal morals; it's what is best is what you have to do. Another challenging thing about the simulation was trying to find the solution, now each group had their mind set on a specific solution and what they wanted making it very hard to come to a compromise. Everyone wanted different outcomes, making it easy to find a short-term solution; but finding a long-term solution was the ultimate goal and was unachievable by my specific group.

Another thing I enjoyed from the Summit was the opportunity to do our service learning projects. I was in the group that went to DAVA. DAVA was a visual art center located in downtown Denver where I got to work with young students and learn about their stories. The girl I worked with was nine years old and from her I learned her culture and what she enjoyed about being in America. I also learned what she didn't like about America, which really opened my eyes to how kids can still see what is going on and understand what they want. This service project was not a service project for me, it was something I enjoyed doing it and it didn't feel like service. It was amazing to learn and work with these kids.

One more thing I would like to address is meeting the other students who were participating in the Summit. There were people from all around the country and world. It was great to make new friends and learn everyone else's ideas. I did not stick with once particular group and I liked meeting new people every day. While I did meet a lot of people, I didn't get to meet everyone. The people I did meet are sure to be seen in my future.

What I will mostly take away from the Summit is the experience from the simulation. The simulation taught me, not everything is as simple as one solution. It also made me realize the struggles and importance of diplomacy. I am thankful for this and I am so glad I got to experience it.

Michael Atayi

Sister Cities International is hands down phenomenal experience, the activities we did were non-stop, the new people I met from all around the world was great. When we arrived at University of Denver where we stayed I was hoping to room with people I know from my hometown. Soon after I checked and went to my dorm I found out that I wasn't rooming with a person I knew. Then I met my roommate Kyle from Arizona, he was super chill, easy to talk to and we got along perfectly. After I got settled down in my dorm, Kyle introduced me to everyone on the floor and they were all easy to talk to and chill.

When the majority of people arrived the adults, who organized our activities made everyone jumped into to one right away. It was intense rock, paper, scissors game so we can get to meet new people. Most of the activities we did really got everyone to interact with each other. By the end of the night everyone was exhausted. The highlight of my day was my chaperone, her name was Eunhee Chun she was South Korea she didn't speak English but our group had kids that knew her language and they translate for her, before each night we go through are plans the next day together which help out a lot knowledge us what time we should to wake up and the time to get ready by when breakfast started.

When Thursday came we all knew we had a lot of activities we needed to that was outside, so we were given water bottles to stay hydrated. The first activity we did was the tour of Denver the tour guide told us a lot like Colorado used to be big with gold. After the tour we had lunch at the Union Station, there were numerous of options to get food. After getting done eating we visited the Aurora History Museum, where we saw a trolley from decades ago the thing that trolley was crazy. The trolley and a dozen of ads in and the room it was in had names of the people who help get the trolley in there and repaired it. At the end of the night we all were once again exhausted from the whole day and went back to our dorms.

Once Friday can we were introduced to the diplomacy stimulation group work with wasn't great for me because I was Budan and each other organization didn't want to come to a conclusion for our negotiation, it wasn't something I liked at first, but I bought in and I really ended up enjoying it afterwards. The service I did was Basic pantry Entry which was at the Mango House. The people who ran the placed welcomed us in with open arms, showed us around the place. What Mango House basically does is welcome refugees and help them with medical and basic need like food, clothes and help them get back on their feet after having to flee their country, the people at Mango House really are making a difference.

In conclusion Sister Cities International was just amazing, I didn't even know the refugees was a problem but after this simulation we knew ways we can preventing this from be a problem. This great thing about SCI is meeting new people from around the

world and creating a bond with them. SCI really helped me because I now know that it isn't so hard to make new friends and that it is always good to resolve conflicts no matter what it is. The experience was just unforgettable I will always treasure that moment.

Patricia Lopez

This month I was granted the opportunity to attend the SCI Youth Leadership Summit in Colorado. I was able to experience and explore many different things by allowing myself to be put out of my comfort zone. When we first arrived, we were all separated and put into our assigned dorms where we would meet our roommate. Our roommates were people who we had never met and it allowed me to make friends and learn about the different places they came from. There were people that came from all over like South Korea, Jamaica, and all across the US. It was so amazing to meet people from all of these different back grounds.

Our first time splitting into groups was for our community service projects. My group was able to go to the Asian Pacific Development Center where refugees were able to go to access translators and education to make the transition between their old life to their new life in Colorado. The main thing we focused on was the garden that they had there for their residents. The garden was a form of therapy as an alternative to sitting in a room with a stranger and talking. The residents were able to plant flowers and vegetables that were native to their homeland to make themselves feel more comfortable. While we were there, we tended to the garden and pulled weeds, watered the plants, harvested crops that were ready, and painted on wooden boards to decorate the garden with. It was an amazing feeling being able to help in any way we could and I really hope that they appreciated our work and art because from our view, it didn't feel like work.

The second time we split up, it was for our Summit Simulations. during these simulations, we were able to catch and experience a glimpse of what a summit is like. Throughout the entire meeting, many of us got frustrated, confused, torn and angry. It was hard to negotiate and propose ideas that all of us could agree to and even then, we still weren't paying attention to what was important, the people. The scenario we were given was a tough one and it dealt with a persecuting country, fleeing refugees, and desperate neighboring countries. In the end, our summit was unsuccessful and we never settled on a compromise to help the refugees in this fictitious country. Many of us learned how stressful diplomacy can be and why big decisions can take time. It was very eye opening and I think a lot of us needed that new perspective to really understand today's current situations.

Overall, this trip was amazing and I am so glad I was able to go. I got to explore Denver while also meeting new people and experiencing things outside of my comfort zone. I made a few close friends who I am still in contact with and I am so grateful to have been given this opportunity.

Yaneth

At the start of August, I have had the pleasure in being a part of the Sister Cities International Conference for the youth. This experience has opened my eyes to different cultures and their views in and outside of the United States. It made me think in a way that I didn't think was possible. Most of all the conference led me to an unforgettable college experience. Through this all it allowed me to grow and understand the world around me.

The conference started with the everyone arriving in cars, shuttles, and vans. All different modes of transportations, but with the same intentions to be a part in learning how people in the real-world deal with problems that are bigger than any of us. Everyone settled into their dorms and got to meet different people from around the world. I personally had the honor of having a student from South Korea named Jihnyoo. She was very sweet and gave me a different outlook on how different countries have different opinions on the United States. Many countries seem to think that the United States is very anti-religious. Which is kind of the opposite. I always thought that South Korea would be a bit afraid of North Korea, but it's the exact opposite. Apparently, they don't really care. It was an interesting experience to see what others thought of us, and how we thought of the.

Besides finding cultural differences we were all able to get along. On the first day, we all volunteered somewhere. I happened to volunteer at Project C.U.R.E. A non-profit organization that helps third world countries get the medical supplies that they need. This experience reminded me that it is possible to make a change without any corruption going on. It was truly eye opening to know that even I, as a volunteer, can make a bigger difference in this world.

Other than reminding me of the good that is still out there, I was also reminded of what I want for my future. I want connections with people around the world, and I have made a connection with a teenage boy named Daniel from Jamaica. It was a great experience to get to know him and his values, as well as him asking questions of the United States. I also want to experience traveling to places around the world, but not as a diplomat. I was put out of my comfort zone during the simulation, and it was terrifying acting like the bad guy. I was taught that I can be whatever I want to be, even if it goes against my own morals. Which is something that I don't want to do for the rest of my life.

I want to thank everyone who made this trip possible. From the people that informed me of this trip to the people that raised the money for me to go. I have been truly blessed to get a college and life changing experience. I will keep in contact with the people I've met and the memories I have made.

Yvonna

The leadership summit was such an amazing experience to be a part of and I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity to go. It was held in Aurora, Colorado this year, an absolutely beautiful place.

There were students coming in from all over the U.S. and even from different countries, such as South Korea and Jamaica. Upon arriving, I was super nervous and slightly terrified, simply because I didn't have very much knowledge about what it means to be a citizen diplomat. However, that completely changed by the end of the week.

The first couple of days of the summit was just to get to meet some new people. We participated in group activities and introduced ourselves to many people. I became good friends with students from Colorado, California, Texas, West Virginia, South Korea, Jamaica, Utah, and Arizona. Needless to say, my Instagram followers went up!

It was really great to talk to new people and listen to their stories. I learned about different customs and culture from all over, and it was so cool to be able to gain a better understanding of that from other people.

The last days were the business parts of the summit, the conferences and simulations. The simulation was an amazing and really fun learning experience. It was a scenario of fictional countries involved in a great migration crisis and it was our job to try to negotiate a solution.

I was in the "bad guy" group. It was interesting to play that role because even though it was fictional, I had to go against my own personal morals to argue my stance. I got to see a new perspective on diplomacy and it was just as awesome experience overall.

The summit gave me a better understanding of how diplomacy works and how difficult it can get. I also gained an even better understanding of refugees and immigrants, especially during the service project at Asian Pacific Development Center.

Alex

My experience at this year's youth leadership summit was amazing. At this year's summit I learned how important it is that you listen to what others have to say because in the end it could benefit you greatly.

My favorite thing about the summit was the simulation. I liked this because it showed just how hard it is for everybody to come to an agreement. I also thought that the different speakers were amazing and really inspirational.

I would love to go again and think that it will be even better than this year.