

**SEBASTOPOL WORLD FRIENDS WINS SISTER CITIES INTERNATIONAL'S
BEST OVERALL PROGRAM AWARD**

WASHINGTON, DC – Sebastopol World Friends has won Sister Cities International's 2014 Best Overall Program Award for a city with a population less than 25,000. The 2014 Sister Cities International Best Overall Program Award recognizes sister city programs that demonstrated outstanding accomplishments in 2013 in advancing the goals and mission of the sister cities movement.

In 2013, Sebastopol World Friends (SWF) successfully organized youth and adult exchanges with sister cities Takeo City, Japan and Chyhyryn, Ukraine. From March to April last year, eighteen middle school students and three chaperones from Takeo stayed with the Sebastopol students who are now set to travel to Takeo in 2014. SWF also hosted an Open World delegation from Chyhyry in September on the theme of "Accountable Governance – Non-governmental Organization Development". These and several other exchanges last year have helped increase cultural understanding for all those who participated.

SWF also hosted its first annual Sister City Friendship Dinner and Celebration. It combined their annual general meeting and a fundraiser to create a more vibrant event. The dinner also raised \$4,000 for youth scholarships.

Sister Cities International's Annual Awards are awarded in several categories including Best Overall, Innovation (Arts & Culture, Economic Development, Energy/Sustainable Development, Humanitarian Assistance, and Youth & Education), Volunteer of the Year, and Youth Leadership. Award winners will be honored at a special ceremony on Saturday, August 2, during Sister Cities International's 58th Annual Conference in San Jose, California.

The Sister Cities International 58th Annual Conference will bring together elected and municipal officials, engaged citizens, diplomats, and business leaders in the exciting capital of Silicon Valley to discuss, "The Power of Digital Diplomacy". 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 2014 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 500 individual sister cities, counties, and states across the United States with relationships in 2,000 communities in 140 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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