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**BIRMINGHAM SISTER CITIES COMMISSION WINS SISTER CITIES INTERNATIONAL'S INNOVATION AWARD FOR HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE**

WASHINGTON, DC – Birmingham Sister Cities (BSC) has won the Sister Cities International (SCI) 2017 Innovation Award for Humanitarian Assistance for a city with a population between 100,001 and 500,000. The Sister Cities International Innovation Award for Humanitarian Assistance recognizes the accomplishments of outstanding community and individual sister city programs that promote peace through mutual respect, understanding, and cooperation.

In 2016, BSC sent more than three tons of medical supplies to refugees and volunteers involved in war in the Donbas region of Ukraine. In recent years, separatists supported by Russians have attempted secession from the Donbas region, where one of Birmingham's sister cities, Krasnodon, is located. This attempt has led to a war with tremendous casualties for both fighters and civilians as well as a lack of proper medical assistance. Birmingham's world-renowned Sparkman Center for Global Health has an established history of working with Pirogoc Medical School in sister city, Vinnytsia, Ukraine and saw this connection as an opportunity to help. BSC worked with their contacts in Vinnytsia and to provide basic medical supplies like bandages, IV kits, antibiotics, and pain medication to the Donbas region. Going forward, BSC plans to send at least two shipments of medical supplies to the Donbas region annually.

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 15 during SCI's 61<sup>st</sup> Annual Conference in Virginia Beach, VA.

SCI's 61<sup>st</sup> [Annual Conference](#) events, which include a [Youth Leadership Summit](#) and a [U.S.-Russia Mayors' Summit](#), will take place in Virginia Beach, VA from July 12-16, 2017. The events 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 "Global Communities for World Peace," building on President Eisenhower's initial vision of creating a more peaceful world by building global relationships through communities.

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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 500 member communities with over 2,000 partnerships in 145 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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