

2-2016

Sister Cities International: A Global Citizen Diplomacy Network

Ronald G. Helms Ph.D.

Wright State University - Main Campus, ronald.helms@wright.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/teacher_education



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

Repository Citation

Helms, R. G. (2016). Sister Cities International: A Global Citizen Diplomacy Network. *Global Education Journal*, 1, 43-57.
https://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/teacher_education/28

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Teacher Education at CORE Scholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in Teacher Education by an authorized administrator of CORE Scholar. For more information, please contact library-corescholar@wright.edu.

Sister Cities International:
A Global Citizen Diplomacy Network

Ronald G. Helms, Ph.D., Professor

ronald.helms@wright.edu

College of Education and Human Services

Wright State University

2179 Briggs Road

Centerville, OH 45459

W 937-775-3276 H 937-433-2611 FAX 937-775-4855

ronald.helms@wright.edu

<http://www.cehs.wright.edu/~rhelms/home.html>

Global Education Journal
<http://www.franklinpublishing.net/globaleducation.html>

Biographical statement_7.11.08
ronald.helms@wright.edu

Prefer Home Address

<http://www.cehs.wright.edu/~rhelms/>

Ronald G. Helms	
College of Education and Human Services	2179 Briggs Road
Wright State University	Centerville, OH 45459
321 Allyn Hall	937.433.2611 Home
ronald.helms@wright.edu	937.7753308 FAX
Director of Social Studies Education	Professor with Tenure

EDUCATION

Institution	Concentration	Degree	Date
Ohio State University	Social Studies Education Curriculum & Instruction	• Ph.D.	1972
University of Dayton	Political Science	• M. A.	1968
Fairmont State College	Social Studies Comprehensive	• B. S.	1966

Ronald G. Helms is a full professor, one of two national auditors for NCSS_NCATE Program Reviews, a member of NCATE **Board of Examiners**, **National Board for Professional Teacher Standards** facilitator, the Principal Investigator at Wright State University for a NBPTS institute; Helms has assisted over 500 NBPTS candidates, and has offered several national presentations on the NBPTS process.

Helms is the recipient of 45+ grants including a \$916,000 **Teaching American History** Grant from the U. S. Department of Education. Helms has been active with OCSS and NCSS for the past 40 years and currently is serving on the NCSS Social Education Committee and the Conference Committee.

Helms is the recipient of the following Wright State University college of education awards: Outstanding Faculty Member Award, 2006; Excellence in Scholarship Award, 2004, Excellence in Scholarship Award, 2001; Excellence in Scholarship Award, 1999; Excellence in Service Award, 1997.

Helms has offered over 36 international presentations, over 100 national presentations, over 100 state presentations, over 80 Invited Speaker presentations, and over 159

consulting presentations. Helms is the author/co-author of 17 books and over 110 educational articles.

Helms national service includes; Kappa Delta Pi, *The Educational Forum*, Educational Review Panel, Phi Delta Kappa Foundation, Author Seminar-Lecture Program, National Education Association, Educational Web Page **Consultant**, **The Population Connection Organization**, Education Foundation National Lecturer Program. 1997 - - Present.

Helms international service includes several leadership roles to Germany, Ontario, and China. Helms foreign travel includes the following: Mexico, Canada, Puerto Vallarta, Costa Rica, British Isles, Puerto Rico, China, Hong Kong, Ireland Germany, Eastern Europe, Iberian Peninsula, Scandinavia, and Western Europe.

Sister Cities International: A Global Citizen Diplomacy Network

Introduction

Sister Cities International (SCI) is a nonprofit citizen diplomacy network that creates and strengthens partnerships between U.S. communities and international communities. Sister Cities International was founded by President Eisenhower during a White House Summit on Citizen Diplomacy on September 11-12, 1956. Sister Cities International strives to build global cooperation at the municipal level, promote cultural understanding and stimulate economic and educational development.

Sister Cities International is the international membership association headquartered in Washington, DC. As the official organization which links jurisdictions from the United States with communities worldwide, Sister Cities International recognizes, registers, and coordinates sister city, county, municipalities, oblasts, prefectures, provinces, regions, state, town, and village linkages. Currently, Sister Cities International represents over 2,500 communities in 126 countries around the world.

Sister Cities International creates and strengthens these sister city partnerships in an effort to increase global cooperation, promote cultural understanding, and stimulate economic development. Sister Cities International leads the movement for local community development and volunteer action, by motivating and empowering private citizens, municipal officials, and business leaders to conduct long-term programs of mutual benefit (<http://www.sister-cities.org/about/faqs.cfm>.)

Sister Cities International is a leader for local community development and volunteer action. Sister Cities International motivates and empowers private citizens, municipal officials, educators, and business leaders to conduct long-term sister city programs.

Sister Cities International goals: (<http://www.sister-cities.org/about/mission.cfm>)

Membership with Sister Cities International is the best way a local community to establish meaningful and lasting global connections. Sister Cities International opens numerous doors to the world, enriching the local community through educational exchanges, business development opportunities, and information sharing on issues such as healthcare and the environment. Through Sister Cities International, local citizens gain a sense of pride from being involved in solutions to global challenges and from learning about, and connecting with, people from other cultures.

Sister Cities International is an excellent way for the local community to establish close relations with one or more international communities. These partnerships allow the local community to creatively learn, work and solve problems through cultural, educational, municipal, business, professional and technical exchanges and projects.

As an official member of Sister Cities International, the local community will be entitled to many benefits. Some of these benefits include:

- Official listing in the Sister Cities International Directory, as well as a subscription to all Sister Cities International publications including quarterly

- issues of the Sister Cities International Newsletter, our new e-Newsletter, and instructional guides covering all aspects of local program development.
- Opportunity for the program(s) to receive Sister Cities International-administered grants and participate in programs such as **Wheelchairs for Peace** and the opportunity to apply to the **Sister Cities International Network for Sustainable Development**.
 - Special access to the **Members Only** section of the greatly enhanced Sister Cities International Web site, www.sister-cities.org.
 - Instantaneous translation in 10 different languages for e-mails and documents.
 - The opportunity to network with all members of Sister Cities International in order to share and access other program information through a comprehensive database and search engine.
 - Recognition through Sister City International's competitive Annual Awards Program.
 - The opportunity for youth to be involved at both the local and international level by competing in the Young Artist Competition.
 - Voting rights for your community at the Annual Conference.
 - The opportunity to participate in all Sister Cities International activities and governance processes.
 - Discounted membership rates for our Annual Conference.
 - Personal attention from your State Coordinator.
 - Private consultation services from Professional Staff experts (<http://www.sister-cities.org/about/faqs.cfm#faq0>).

- **Develop** municipal partnerships between U.S. cities, counties, and states and similar jurisdictions in other nations.
- **Provide** opportunities for city officials and citizens to experience and explore other cultures through long-term community partnerships.
- **Create** an atmosphere in which economic and community development can be implemented and strengthened.
- **Stimulate** environments through which communities will creatively learn, work, and solve problems together through reciprocal cultural, educational, municipal, business, professional and technical exchanges and projects.
- **Collaborate** with organizations in the United States and other countries which share similar goals.

Sister Cities International programs are developed around key platforms:

(<http://www.sister-cities.org/about/history.cfm>)

- Global citizen initiative
- Sustainable communities
- Muslim World Partnership initiative
- Strengthen the existing Sister Cities partnerships between the U.S. and Muslim world and form new partnerships.
- Demonstrate through these Sisters Cities partnerships that mutual respect, understanding and cooperation can be built and sustained between the United States and the Muslim world.
- Tell the remarkable stories of these partnerships and programs to help inform and educate the American public about the positive impact of citizen diplomacy.

There are currently 93 U.S. Muslim world members from Afghanistan to Uzbekistan

(<http://www.sister-cities.org/programs/islamic/partnerships.cfm>.)

Welcome to the 2011 Global Sister Cities and Twinning Summit

In September 2011 citizen diplomacy leaders from more than 30 countries convened in Cairo, Egypt for the first-ever Global Sister Cities and Twinning Summit hosted by Sister Cities International. The summit focused on the current and future role of sub-national and grassroots dialogue for building sustainable nations and solving intractable global issues. ([http://www.sister-cities.org/.](http://www.sister-cities.org/))

According to Jim Doumas, the executive vice president and interim CEO of Sisters Cities International, the organization hopes that by the end of the three-day conference participants would have a greater understanding of the organization and know how to collaborate with one another. “Sister Cities International is a grassroots organization decentralized to 600 cities; those are our members and we have 2000 partnerships all over the globe,” Doumas told Daily News Egypt on the sidelines of the conference, “Based on mutual interest it’s not about one country teaching other city, it’s about creating an atmosphere in which economic and community development can be implemented and strengthened.”

“I am expecting to benefit a lot I am sure we have more chances in developing Mombasa and Kenya as a whole so that’s why I felt it is very important to be here to lobby for more issues which are affecting us in Kenya with people from other parts of the world,” said Amena Zuberi, chairperson of Tangana Women Development Group and chairperson for Long Beach Mombasa Sister Cities and the campaign leader for the Mombasa Water Advocacy; a program between the state of California and Momabasa for water sanitation projects in Kenya .

“We are working on a sanitation and health projects with the state of Sonoma based on a friendly partnership, the project was proposed five years ago but was only implemented a year ago,” said engineer Soad Karny, head of environmental affairs in the Aswan governorate.

(<http://thedailynewsegypt.com/development/first-global-sister-cities-and-twinning-summit-kicks-off-in-cairo.html>.)

The Centerville Sister City Committee

The Centerville Sister City Committee was established in 1973 to promote international relations with people in selected foreign nations. The committee sponsors cultural exchange visits between the City of Centerville and our sister cities in Canada and Germany. The program helps build international friendships and cultural understanding. Waterloo is located west of Toronto in the heart of Ontario's agricultural region.

Bad Zwischenahn is located in the northeastern part of country, close to Hamburg, Germany. Bad Zwischenahn is in an industrial area, and is among the richest nursery producers in the world

(http://www.ci.centerville.oh.us/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=658&Itemid=1898.)

I have been associated with the Centerville Sister City Committee since 1978, and was instrumental in selecting Waterloo, Ontario and then Bad Zwischenahn, West Germany. The Canadians were already familiar with Centerville and the greater Dayton, OH area due to the location of I-75 as a north-south corridor to Florida. Many citizens from

Waterloo had taken time to visit in Centerville, and my family had taken several vacations in the Stratford, Waterloo, and Toronto area. Following initial contacts through Sister City International, Centerville formally became a Sister City to Waterloo in 1979.

John Spoor, a native from the Netherlands, and now a U.S. citizen was instrumental in visiting Bad Zwischenahn. Following initial contacts through Sister City International, Centerville formally became a Sister City to Bad Zwischenahn in 1980 (Centerville Times, November 12, 1980.)

It is important to note that the Centerville City Mayor and Council were instrumental in funding the Centerville Sister City Committee's efforts and on-going business expenses. Bad Zwischenahn's and Waterloo's mayors and councils were instrumental in funding the local Sister City Committee's efforts and on-going business expenses.

Funding is always an important consideration, and given two sister cities, the Centerville Sister City Committee developed an annual budget of nearly \$5,000.00 which is approved by the Centerville City Council.

It is important to note that all international visit expenses are the responsible of each member of the international visiting delegation. Initially, and in following years, the Centerville Sister City Committee's delegation, which always is open to the public, would visit Waterloo during even years, and Waterloo would visit Centerville during odd years. The Sister City exchanges with Bad Zwischenahn are scheduled every five years.

The Centerville Sister City Committee has functioned for nearly 40 years; many citizens have had to opportunity to serve as mayor, council, and Centerville Sister City Committee. A few Centerville Sister City Committee members have become either council members or mayor.

Official Sister City exchanges with Waterloo, Ontario always includes the use of local hotel properties for guests and are visits for three-four days. Official Sister City exchanges with Bad Zwischenahn, Germany always includes home hosting for guests and is visits for three-four days. The Bad Zwischenahn visits to Centerville are a launching point for the Germans to tour the U.S. for several weeks, or for the Americans to tour Eastern or Western Europe for several weeks.

The first several visits to Waterloo, Ontario commencing in October 1979 were centered on the ten-day Waterloo-Kitchener Oktoberfest annual celebration. Waterloo and Kitchener have large German heritage population, and the demographics resulted in the world's second largest Oktoberfest celebration. There is also a strong German heritage population in Centerville, and many Centerville citizens have participated in local German clubs and various local Oktoberfest celebrations in the Greater Dayton area.

Since 1969, Kitchener-Waterloo Oktoberfest has developed its own traditions, becoming the largest Bavarian festival in North America with the greatest Thanksgiving Day Parade in Canada. Thousands of visitors celebrate annually in the Festhallen, and by attending one or more of the 40 family and cultural events. Through the celebration of this Spirit of

Gemueticlichkeit, the local economy is stimulated and over 70 charities and not-for-profit organizations raise funds to support the high quality of life enjoyed in Kitchener-Waterloo (http://www.oktoberfest.ca/aboutus_history.php.)

When visiting Bad Zwischenahn, the Centerville delegates are treated to a local feast. Local smoked eels are a delicacy, particularly when served with locally produced schnapps called *Ammerländer Löffeltrunk*. There is a specific local tradition (also called *Ammerländer Löffeltrunk*) to drink it from a tin spoon along with a special drinking cheer. Beside drinking, the *Ammerländer Löffeltrunk* is also used to clean one's hands after eating the smoked eel (http://www.bad-zwischenahn.de/index_1280.html.)

Very typically, the Centerville Sister City Committee will invite the Canadians and Germans to Centerville during the Americana Fourth of July Festival. The Americana Fourth of July Festival started in 1972 as a sidewalk sale promoted by the Centerville downtown merchants. As years passed, the merchants association received permission from the City to close the streets for a 4th of July Festival.

In the fall of 1979, a few members of the Board of Directors of the Centerville-Washington Township Chamber of Commerce proposed the formation of a Corporation under the Chamber to enlarge the festival. Their plans included a [parade](#), [street fair](#), [car show](#), hot air balloon rides, sky divers and [fireworks](#). The proposal was accepted and the Americana Festival Corporation was formed. The corporation's board adopted a \$20,000 budget and work on the new and improved festival began immediately. The festival is

funded by significant contributions from both the city and township governments and by cash and in-kind donations from area businesses and institutions. The festival now includes a mile long, 90-minute parade with more than 100 units, a street fair with more than 300 arts and crafts booths, an antique and classic car and truck show which attracts more than 150 vehicles, a special cost-free area just for children at Benham's Grove, a scholarship program, a 5K family run with more than 1,200 runners of all ages and physical abilities participating, entertainment and fireworks

(<http://www.americanafestival.org/about-us>.)

The Centerville Sister Cities Committee hosts festive meal events at Benham's Grove. Benham's Grove combines the best of two centuries - a spacious, Victorian-era home set on expansive landscape grounds that has been refurbished with the 20th century conveniences essential to today's meetings and special events. The three separate buildings and grounds can be used alone or in various combinations to provide the ideal setting for a wide variety of functions - large or small, formal or casual, indoor or outdoor

(http://www.ci.centerville.oh.us/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=486&Itemid=1866.)

The Centerville Sister Cities Committee also hosts meal events at Yankee Trace. The Golf Club at Yankee Trace is the finest golf facility in the area, possessing a 27-hole, championship golf course. The Clubhouse is designed to make guests feel as if they are visiting a fine private club. Providing this private club atmosphere our friends from

Waterloo and Bad Zwischenahn is a highlight of each international exchange (<http://www.yankeetrace.org/index.php/About-Yankee-Trace.html>.)

The Centerville Sister Cities Committee plans and implements regular international exchanges to Bad Zwischenahn and to Waterloo. These exchanges are open to the public and involve no use of government funds. All international delegates from the mayor and council to citizens fund their own travel expenses. The Centerville Sister Cities Committee plans and implements regular international exchanges to Bad Zwischenahn and to Waterloo for various youth groups and sporting groups. These groups also fund their own expenses.

The Centerville Sister Cities Committee sends an annual delegation to the Sister Cities International Annual Conference. I have represented Centerville as a delegate at several Sister Cities International Annual Conferences. I received Sister Cities International Annual Conference Award for Youth Leadership at the Phoenix ([The Pointe Hilton Resort](#) [largest resort in the southwest]) Sister Cities International Annual Conference in 1983, and I received the Conference Award for Outstanding Multimedia at the Miami (Hotel [Fontainebleau](#)) Sister Cities International Annual Conference in 1998 (http://www.sister-cities.org/conference/prev_conf.cfm.)

Conclusion

For nearly 50 years, Sister Cities International has been one of the most recognized international organizations. In every region of the world, sister city affiliations play a

significant role in supporting long-term community partnerships through reciprocal exchange programs. Sister Cities International strives to ensure that each project undertaken by its members reflects the diversity of its network. Specifically, Sister Cities International promotes the inclusion of ethnic and racial minorities, people with disabilities, youth, women, and people of diverse socio-economic status in all sister city activities.

Sister Cities International promotes and supports new sister city partnerships in all parts of the world, reaching areas traditionally underserved by other community development organizations. As international cooperation gains importance, city-to-city programs become increasingly significant to overall global development (<http://www.sister-cities.org/about/network.cfm>.)

References:

A unique model of community partnership. Retrieved from (<http://www.sister-cities.org/about/network.cfm>)

Americana Festival. Retrieved from (<http://www.americanafestival.org/about-us>.)

Bad Zwischenahn. Retrieved from (http://www.bad-zwischenahn.de/index_1280.html.)

Benefits of membership in Sister Cities International. Retrieved from (<http://www.sister-cities.org/about/faqs.cfm#faq0>.)

Benham's Grove. Retrieved from (http://www.ci.centerville.oh.us/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=486&Itemid=1866.)

Centerville Times, November 12, 1980, 4. Centerville, OH.

- Centerville, OH Sister Cities. Retrieved from (http://www.ci.centerville.oh.us/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=658&Itemid=1898.)
- First Global Sister Cities and Twinning Summit kicks off in Cairo. Retrieved from (<http://thedailynewsegypt.com/development/first-global-sister-cities-and-twinning-summit-kicks-off-in-cairo.html>.)
- International Sister City Conferences. Retrieved from (http://www.sister-cities.org/conference/prev_conf.cfm)
- Kitchener-Waterloo Oktoberfest. Retrieved from (http://www.oktoberfest.ca/aboutus_history.php.)
- Sister Cities International Brings Together International Twinning Organizations. Retrieved from (<http://www.sister-cities.org/summit2011/index.cfm>.)
- Sister Cities International goals. Retrieved from (<http://www.sister-cities.org/about/mission.cfm>.)
- Sister Cities International programs. Retrieved from (<http://www.sister-cities.org/programs/index.cfm>.)
- Sister Cities International programs. Retrieved from (<http://www.sister-cities.org/programs/islamic/partnerships.cfm>.)
- What is Sister Cities International? Retrieved from (<http://www.sister-cities.org/about/faqs.cfm>.)
- Yankee Trace. Retrieved from (<http://www.yankeetrace.org/index.php/About-Yankee-Trace.html>.)