

Photo



Caption: Stillwater Sister Cities Council is presented the Sister Cities International Award from Mae Ferguson, SCI President. Accepting the award is Chairman Larry Jones, Kayo Jones, Councilman Tom Dugger, and Dr. James G. Hromas. Officials honoring the award are Laverne Johnson, US Department of State, and Patrick Madden, Executive Director for SCI.

WASHINGTON - Sister Cities International honored ten communities for their outstanding sister city programs during its annual conference in Fort Lauderdale, Florida in July. The Best Overall Program Award (population 25,000-50,000) honored **Stillwater, Oklahoma** for its "Year of Celebration" of the 20-year relationship with sister city, Kameoka, Japan. A reaffirmation agreement was signed by Stillwater Mayor, Roger McMillian and Kameoka Mayor, Masataka Kuriyama, and educational delegations traveled to both cities. Among the year of activities, the Kameoka Tomodachi organization was formed with an annual scholarship for a Kameoka student to attend Oklahoma State University, and the community continued its long-standing support for the Showcase of Young Artists, which it has participated in since the competition began in 1988. A September Concert by the Stillwater Community Singers gave the gift of music to the community and marked the anniversary of 9-11 as a day for peace and understanding.

"These programs are the best of the best for advancing cultural understanding. SCI is a citizen diplomacy network more than a half century old and our local programs continue to blaze trails for world peace," said Patrick Madden, executive director of Sister Cities International. "The diversity and innovation of programs are the hallmarks of our network and these awardees," said Madden.

On hand from Stillwater to receive the award were Larry and Kayo Jones, Tom Dugger, and James G. Hromas. Dr. Jones serves as chair of the council and originated the idea for a year of celebration which had been the theme for previous anniversary celebrations. He is a founding member of the council and has a long history of innovative ideas and service to the council. Jones continues to deserve the award he received as the SCI "Volunteer of the Year" for the whole nation in 2001. Mrs. Jones is a long-time contributor and received the "Circle of Distinguished Volunteers" award at the 2006 SCI annual conference.

Councilman Tom Dugger represented the City Council at the annual conference. Dugger traveled to Japan with the 20th anniversary delegation to Kameoka in 2005 and continues his support of sister cities programs. He assisted with development of Kameoka Tomodachi and the OSU scholarship, is co-adviser to the Japanese Student Association at OSU, hosts students and delegates in his home with his wife Ann, and attends meetings and serves as liaison with the city council and sister cities.

Dr. James G. Hromas serves as Director of International Education and Outreach at Oklahoma State University and was elected to the Board of Directors of Sister Cities International at the 50th Anniversary Conference in Washington D.C. in July of 2006. Hromas is serving a three-year term on the board and continues to represent Stillwater and OSU in national and international relations.

The committee that developed the award presentation for SCI consisted of Chair Larry Jones, Sylvia Duncan, Linda Ely, Sistie Givens and John Mills. The award packet and Power-Point presentation was prepared by Stephanie Walker, Community Center Manager and coordinator of the Sister Cities Council.

Stillwater has been a member of SCI since 1985 when the partnership with Kameoka, Japan was established. The Best Overall Program Award is the highlight for sister cities in Stillwater and an honor that represents many years of volunteer efforts by many members of the community.