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Lansing Sister Cities Leader Wins National Volunteer Award

(LANSING) – Barbara Roberts Mason, chairperson of the Lansing Regional Sister Cities Commission (LRSCC), has won the Sister Cities International (SCI) 2017 Volunteer of the Year Award. The Volunteer of the Year Annual Award honors an exemplary volunteer for contributions to the sister city movement and recognizes the leadership and talent that benefit local sister city programs and the larger sister city network.

Barbara Roberts Mason has been President of the LRSCC for over 16 years. Her tenure has been filled with accomplishments that include an HIV-AIDS project in Ghana; medical and vision missions; the construction of a health clinic in a remote village; renovations of two other health clinics; the adoption of several schools; an economic development project for a remote village; scholarship programs and much more.

“I’m thrilled to see Barbara’s extraordinary contributions to the metro Lansing community and the State of Michigan recognized through this prestigious award,” said Mayor Virg Bernero. “Her dedication to building and sustaining global relationships in arts, culture, health, education and economic development have connected Lansing to the world in countless ways.”

Mason, a former 24-year member of the Michigan State Board of Education, has led trade delegations to South Korea and China; assisted with setting up student exchange programs in Japan, South Korea, and Ghana; and in 2013 she led a delegation to Ghana meet with President John Mahama and facilitated the signing of a Joint Declaration of Economic and Cultural Cooperation between Ghana and Michigan.

Mason has led more than 13 delegations to Ghana and is working with Lansing companies to create an economic development and training mission there. Under Mason’s leadership, LRSCC has been awarded grants from the U.S. Department of State and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in order to work on water, sanitation, and hygiene initiatives in Ghana. Additionally, Mason coordinates plans for Lansing’s Spanish and Chinese language immersion and global studies programs. For her work as a community activist, scholar, educator, international leader and humanitarian Barbara Roberts Mason is the 2017 Sister Cities International Volunteer of the Year.

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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 61st Annual Conference in Virginia Beach, VA.

SCI's 61st 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.

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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