

January 9, 2012

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200 E. Wells St. Room 205
Milwaukee, WI 53202

2011 Sister Cities annual report

Dear Sister City Committee:

This summer, the official website of the Milwaukee-Carora Sister Cities Committee was launched (<http://mkecarorasc.wordpress.com>). This website currently serves to inform the public about the Sister Cities partnership as well as announce/review upcoming/past events, links to news/articles on Venezuela and the partnership, and also includes links to music from Lara State. Contact information for the committee is also provided (MkeCaroraSC@gmail.com).

Perhaps the most exciting development of 2011 for MCSCC is the Technological Exchange, made possible through partnership with the Venezuelan Consulate in Chicago and our allies in Madison. The goal of this initiative is to create mutually beneficial connections between cooperatives and small business in Carora and Milwaukee. Special thanks should be given to Ald. Joe Davis for his support and insight into this project. Jesus Espinoza of the Venezuelan Consulate in Chicago recently met with a large group of representatives of cooperatives in Carora, bringing back photos and news of very positive interactions with the Carorans. MCSCC currently has James Godsil of Sweetwater Organics confirmed to join this partnership and visit Carora in March, 2012. We, as well as the people of Carora, are excited for him to share his amazing energy and expertise in aquaponics and sustainable agriculture, as well as to continue working in this partnership after that visit. We look forward to expanding this project and believe that the sky is the limit with this exciting project of economic solidarity!

In our 2009 report, we mentioned our desire to facilitate some kind of language program, or language school. We are pleased to report that Jesus Rojas is still involved in this initiative, and a Milwaukee resident will be heading to Carora this spring to partake in Spanish language instruction with Jesus. This will give us a chance to run through how a program like this will work, create curriculum, and gather valuable feedback in moving forward, eventually offering the language program to the public.

Documentaries Desde el Sur is an annual, week-long film festival at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee that is now in its sixth year (2011). The festival offers a variety of films, many of which are focused directly on Venezuela and its culture, social system, etc. Attendance throughout the week has risen each year and usually reaches about 300 people, who leave with a greater grasp of the reality of life in our Sister City. Aside from being an enjoyable event,

MCSCC takes this opportunity to reach members of the community and update individuals on upcoming events and opportunities.

On May 2, 2011, MCSCC was also proud to host Dr. Mark Weisbrot, an economist and co-director of the Center for Economic Policy and Research who has served (and continues to serve) as an advisor to a number of Latin America nations, including Venezuela. Mr. Weisbrot gave the audience an expert analysis of the history and reality of Venezuela's politics, economics, and culture, and also shed light on many questions about daily life for Venezuelans, their government's foreign policy (including prospects for improving relations with the United States).

The Milwaukee-Carora Sister Cities Committee is proud of our mission to promoting peace, education, and people-to-people connections between Milwaukee and Carora. We are pleased with work we have done thus far, and look forward to working diligently on our upcoming projects. We thank the City of Milwaukee for its support of both our local organization and Sister Cities International.

Respectfully,

Volunteers of the Milwaukee-Carora Sister Cities Committee