



September 15, 2025

Subject: Letter of Intent to Explore a Friendship City Partnership

Dear Milwaukee Friendship City Committee,

I am writing on behalf of the Alliance Française de Milwaukee to express our intent to pursue a Friendship City partnership with Chasse-sur-Rhone, FRANCE.

The purpose of this relationship is to establish a framework for cooperation that benefits both communities. Our cities share an interesting history: the oldest architectural structure in Milwaukee, and the oldest structure in the western hemisphere still being used for its original purpose, is the Joan of Arc Chapel at Marquette University. The chapel was originally built in Chasse-sur-Rhone, FRANCE, in the 15th century. In the 1920s, the chapel was bought and transferred to New York by Gertrude Hill Gavin. In 1962, Gertrude sold the chapel to Marc & Lilian Rojzman who donated it to Marquette University in Milwaukee. The chapel is what brought our two cities together.

A delegation of 12 high school students - as well as chaperones, videographers, and city hall officials from Chasse-sur-Rhone - will visit Milwaukee October 27-29, 2025. The purpose of their visit is to follow and document the chapel's journey from Chasse-sur-Rhone to Milwaukee as well as to sign a Friendship City Agreement between our two cities. During the visit we will explore educational, cultural, artistic, and sports partnerships. Our two mayors, Cavalier Johnson & Christophe Bouvier, met in April 2025 and the Mayor of Chasse-sur-Rhone has also drafted a friendship city agreement.

Milwaukee and Wisconsin have strong ties to France. The first mapmakers of the state were French. The name "Ouisconsin" was first written in 1673 when the first mapmakers, Jacques Marquette and Louis Joliet, came to the area and printed the Indian word with French spelling. The spelling of the state remained "Ouisconsin" for more than 100 years. It was changed to "Wisconsin" in 1820. The first mayor of Milwaukee in 1825 was Solomon Juneau, a French-Canadian.

We look forward to your response and to developing a cooperative relationship that brings long-term value to both Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and Chasse-sur-Rhone, FRANCE. Milwaukee has no sister or friendship city alliances with French-speaking countries despite an extensive history with France and a growing French-speaking population.

The mission of l'Alliance Française de Milwaukee is to promote, share, and enjoy the culture, language and friendship of the French-speaking world. It is one of the 1,000 chapters in the world and one of over 100 chapters in the United States. The Alliance Française was created in 1883 in Paris by renowned humanists, including Louis Pasteur and Jules Verne, with the principal mission of promoting and teaching the French language around the world.

Anne Leplae
Executive Director, Alliance Française de Milwaukee