

Sister Cities Annual Report Milwaukee - Carora, 2015

2014 was an eventful year for the Milwaukee-Carora Sister Cities relationship. The events taking place within Venezuela as well as US-Venezuela relations at the federal level have demonstrated the vital role for local level engagement between our Sister Cities.

In 2015-2016, the Milwaukee-Carora Sister Cities Committee (MCSCC) will continue its focus on person-to-person cultural exchanges and wide-ranging educational activities in the Milwaukee area full the Sister Cities mission of “promot[ing] peace through mutual respect, understanding, and cooperation — one individual, one community at a time.” This “citizen diplomacy” is particularly critical given the current political and economic volatility inside Venezuela, as well as the increasingly contentious relationship with the United States after the imposition of sanctions on Venezuelan government officials.

Over the previous year, the MCSCC spent significant time and resources planning and recruiting for the upcoming Sister Cities delegation scheduled for early 2015. This delegation, though well-planned, regrettably had to be postponed due to internal challenges in Venezuela that prevented our partners in Carora from fully completing the wide range of tasks necessary to conduct a successful person-to-person exchange at that time.

MCSCC continues to maintain close relationships with Sister Cities advocates in in Carora and closely monitors events with the aim of organizing a new delegation when conditions are more conducive. As part of these efforts, MCSCC member and 2014 Sister Cities delegate to Venezuela Andreas Guardalabene has temporarily relocated to Carora as part of a MCSCC initiative to promote individual exchanges. In addition to the work done by our Venezuelan partners, Mr. Guardalabene helps keep MCSCC volunteers in Milwaukee well-informed about the latest developments in Carora and across Venezuela, and conducts important outreach to establish new partners in Carora and Venezuela and doing preliminary planning for the future people-to-people exchanges.

MCSCC has also conducted educational activities including delegation report-out events highlighting our previous January 2014 Sister Cities delegation. The MCSCC also conducts regular digital educational communications via emails, social media and content featured on the websites of supportive organizations, including Peace Action Wisconsin. This type of engagement was highly beneficial to public education and debate at a time when increased media coverage and general public interest in Venezuela had greatly increased due to news coverage of events inside Venezuela.

Over the next year we will continue to provide educational opportunities to Milwaukee residents about events taking place within Venezuela and developments in U.S.-Venezuela relations, proceed with planning for the next delegation to Carora, maintain our relationship building with the people of Carora, and pursue new possibilities for cultural and economic engagement as they become available. We will continue to navigate the fluid relationship between our two cities and work to determine the best possibilities for growing our engagement. It is when our respective

governments experience tension that the “citizen diplomacy” promoted by Sister Cities are most critical for bringing people together across national, political, and cultural boundaries.

On behalf of the citizens of both Sister Cities, I thank the City of Milwaukee for continuing to support this important work.

Sincerely,

/s/

Daniel Pneuman
President, Peace Action Wisconsin