



# NEWS RELEASE

**Sister Cities of Newport News, Inc.**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 7, 2009**

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## **Deadline Extended for Newport News Youth Interested in Traveling to Chinese Sister City**

The Newport News Sister City organization has extended until May 1 the application deadline for local students interested in being *Youth Diplomats* on the city's first student exchange to Taizhou, China. "This is truly a unique opportunity for young people in Newport News to make a global connection that could open numerous educational and career doors," states SCNN Executive Director, Kate Helwig. "In these days of a contracting domestic economy, it is more important than ever that we give our local students opportunities to have experiences outside of their own communities. I cannot think of a more appropriate place for a young person to travel and gain new experiences than China."

Over the years, elementary and high school students as well as numerous citizens, business professionals, and government leaders have traveled to Newport News' Japanese Sister City, Neyagawa. However this will be the organization's first youth delegation to China. The students selected to travel will participate in cultural and informational sessions conducted by Sister Cities prior to departure to help prepare them for their experience. "We want the students to be as well prepared as possible," states Sister Cities Board Member and Taizhou Committee Chair Dr. Willie Carrington. "Fortunately we have 17 adults who traveled to Taizhou last fall who will be able to help get them ready. These *Citizens Diplomats* have made it their priority to organize a youth delegation to Taizhou; their commitment to share with the students what they experienced and give back to the Sister Cities organization is fantastic."

Details of the exchange are still developing with tentative travel scheduled between July 2 and 10, 2009. It is anticipated that all students will be home-stayed with families during their visit and may get a chance to visit other areas near Taizhou which is located in the Jiangsu Province along the Yangtze River. Taizhou is much larger in area than Newport News and currently

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reports a population of over 5 million in comparison to Newport News with just over 187,000. Taizhou has a port and ship building facilities but has recently positioned itself to become a leader in international pharmaceutical research and manufacturing.

Students interested in being selected as one of ten *Youth Diplomats* must complete an application, have a personal interview and meet the following criteria:

- ü Be 15 to 21 years of age as of August 1, 2009
- ü Have primary residence in Newport News
- ü Be a full-time high school (public/private or homeschooled) or college student
- ü Have a current U.S. passport or show proof with their application that a U.S. passport has been applied for. (Students with a passport from another country may submit an application, but their eligibility to secure a Chinese visa will have to be verified prior to selection)
- ü Be a member of Sister Cities of Newport News (Membership is \$1 for high school aged students/\$10 for college students)
- ü Commit to provide or fundraise for their expenses to include airfare (estimated at \$1,200), spending money (est. at \$500) and their visa application (\$130).

“At least two chaperones will escort the students during their travel,” states Dr. Carrington, “but only students who are **flexible, mature and have an adventurous spirit** need apply.” Students will also be required to participate in local Sister Cities programming upon their return. Notes Mrs. Helwig, “We are calling the delegates ‘Student Diplomats’ because it’s important that they represent Newport News both abroad and when they return – that is how the benefits of the Sister Cities program are realized – delegates sharing their experiences with others. We know everyone can’t go to China, but others can still benefit from this exchange.”

Applications for the exchange can be downloaded at [www.sistercities-nn.com](http://www.sistercities-nn.com) or requested by calling the SCNN office at 757-926-1348. All applications must be received by Sister Cities by 5 pm, Friday, May 1<sup>st</sup>.

Sister Cities of Newport News (SCNN) is a member of Sister Cities International (SCI), the nation’s foremost citizen diplomacy movement with more than 2,300 communities participating

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in 130 countries. The mission of SCNN is to build and strengthen international cooperation, understanding and development between the citizens of Newport News and those of the world.

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