



**MEDIA RELEASE**

**July 23, 2008**

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**For Immediate Release**

**Newport News Sister Cities Delegates Travel to Japan  
July 2008**

Newport News Sister Cities formed a delegation of citizens to travel to Neyagawa, Japan, for seven days as part of the annual cultural-exchange program that has been ongoing for 25 years. This was the first delegation comprised of citizens, and without City Officials, representatives of City Council, or the School Board, to visit Neyagawa. A call for delegates was posted in local newspapers, newsletters and periodicals, and on city television channels. As a result fourteen delegates were selected. Ranging in age from 20 to early 60s, with backgrounds of college students to executive vice-presidents, the group was willing to take part in a study program to learn some of the language and customs, and to work together to exchange and share their talents and interests with citizens of Neyagawa.

While each delegate was hosted by a family while in Neyagawa, pre-travel stipulations required each delegate to pay their own airfare and personal expenses and to expect no compensation from Newport News Sister Cities. Additionally each delegate would take part in contributing to a July 4<sup>th</sup> program, representing how Americans celebrate the holiday with family and friends. The group departed Newport News on July 1, 2008, arriving in Neyagawa on July 2.

Newport News Sister Cities Board President, Gary Hunter, expressed the opinion of the delegates in saying, “While this was the first opportunity many of us had to visit Neyagawa - or even Japan, I would have to say that we were overwhelmed with the hospitality and generosity of the Neyagawa International Exchange and Friendship Association (NIEFA). Our requests to visit senior centers, elementary and high schools, financial institutions, nursing homes and day care centers were all fulfilled. We visited the World Heritage Site of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial (Genbaku Dome) and Miyajima Island who’s Torii (gate) is listed as one of the three most scenic views in Japan. NIEFA staff was always there to answer our questions and make sure we were comfortable. It was an incredible experience that we shall all remember for a lifetime.”



Delegates included: Gary Hunter, Sylvia Hunter, Sherry Wolfson, Barbara Hutchko, Joe Hutchko, Willie Carrington, Terry Martin, Nancy Hodges, Ty Marien, Nora Marien, Tarita Stonewall, Ved Malhotra, Sarah Vann and Nick Nagovich.



Photo: July 3, 2008, Delegates with NIEFA staff and monks at the entrance to the Naritasan Temple in Neyagawa, Japan.