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## **San Diego and Jalalabad establish Sister City relationship**

**San Diego, CA** – The San Diego City Council today approved a resolution recognizing the Sister City relationship with citizens of Jalalabad, Afghanistan. “This is one of the final steps in an internationally successful and personally rewarding effort,” said Steve Brown of the La Jolla Golden Triangle Rotary Club. “It’s important for people from different cultures, and from different parts of the world, to meet and understand each other. Linking San Diego and Jalalabad offers opportunities at this critical time in history.”

“Our sister city program is intended to promote peace and prosperity through interaction and understanding between cultures,” San Diego Mayor Dick Murphy said. “This new relationship with Jalalabad offers us an excellent opportunity to pursue those worthy goals.”

In 2002 Brown and Flouran Wali, a local Afghan-American, explored the founding of a school in Jalalabad as a result of fellow Rotarian Fary Moini’s work with Afghan refugees in Peshawar, Pakistan. Moini learned of the refugees’ desire for a school in Jalalabad, the home where many would return following the liberation of their country by a US-led military coalition.

In November 2002, Brown, Wali and Moini traveled to Jalalabad. They were warmly received by government officials and citizens. They were encouraged to develop the school, and also learned of needs at Nangarhar University, with its 3,000 students and 250 faculty members.

James Ritchie, a San Diego County resident and friend of Jalalabad Mayor Abdul Razzaq Arsalai, initiated the idea of a Sister City pairing. Brown and Ritchie approached Mayor Murphy, who wrote a letter of invitation to the Jalalabad mayor. Mayor Arsalai responded enthusiastically. Committees in both cities formed in fall 2003 to develop the program.

Brown, Moini, San Diego State professor Steve Spencer and Farid Saydee, a leader in the local Afghan-American community, returned to Jalalabad in March 2004 and met with Mayor Arsalai and his Sister City committee. Brown reported back to San Diego’s International Sister Cities Corporation, which approved a resolution for the relationship to develop. Following the unanimous recommendation of San Diego City’s International Affairs Committee, the matter came to the San Diego City Council for final approval today.

Jalalabad, one of Afghanistan’s largest cities, is the capital of the Nangarhar province, near the Khyber Pass with Pakistan. The population of Nangarhar is 3 million people; Jalalabad proper has a population of several hundred thousand.

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“We highlight personal interaction between citizens of both communities,” says Brown. Rotarians Chuck DuVivier and Steve Gardality from the Encinitas-La Costa Club traveled to Jalalabad this past May for the dedication of an Afghan Women’s Development Center that received funds from their club and The Rotary Foundation.

This fall marks the first exchange program: the Jalalabad mayor and several Nangarhar University professors will arrive in San Diego to interact with colleagues in their fields. Cynthia Willis, Rotarian and Associate Provost at the University of San Diego, assists this Sister Cities Committee and will host the Mayor at USD’s Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice.

San Diego State University is also on board. A satellite-based computer lab at Nangarhar University was funded by Brown and Padres owner John Moores. SDSU President Steve Weber wants to export distance learning to Nangarhar University. SDSU and USD will also collaborate to provide instruction in the teaching of English as a Second Language to the Jalalabad professors.

Many Afghan-Americans are members of this Sister Cities committee, including a cardiologist at UCSD Medical center and a local attorney. “Establishing sister city relations between San Diego and Jalalabad opens a permanent channel for people-to-people contacts and exchange between the citizens and institutions of our two cities. It provides an opportunity to improve mutual understanding and cooperation with a culture and part of the world Americans know little about,” said David Edick, Jr. President of the San Diego International Sister Cities Corporation.

“This effort began with local Rotarians and members of the Afghan community, and we welcome the participation of all interested individuals,” says Steve Brown (learn more at [www.stevebrownrotary.com](http://www.stevebrownrotary.com)).

Jalalabad projects completed or in progress with the assistance of Sister Cities Committee members and local Rotary Clubs include

- Building a K-6 elementary school in Jalalabad, with student capacity of 1,400 (March 2004)
- Establishing a satellite-based computer lab at Nangarhar University (March 2004)
- Distributing 6,000 English Dictionaries (March 2004)
- Equipping Afghan Women’s Development Center (May 2004)
- Shipping an ultra-sound machine to Nangarhar Public Hospital (in transit)
- Shipping a container of medical books for Nangarhar Medical School (in transit)
- Establishing an eye care and eye surgery center in Jalalabad (in development)

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