

Charleston-Banska Bystrica

Sister City Alliance



A New Organization Forms

Charleston and Banska Bystrica Unite!

An exciting new partnership has been formed between residents of Charleston, West Virginia and Banska Bystrica, Slovakia. The Charleston-Banska Bystrica Sister City Alliance will provide the framework for Charleston's city government, Rotary, Charleston Business Alliance, Charleston Area Medical Center,

higher education institutions, Friendship Force and many others to explore exchanges with their counterparts in that European city. The first formal exchange is a visit to Charleston by a delegation from its Slovak Sister City in October, 2009.

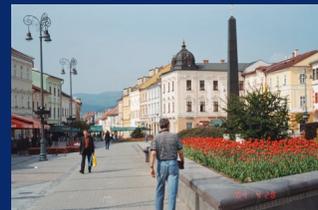
Building the Alliance

Contacts between the residents of Banska Bystrica, Slovakia and Charleston, West Virginia go back more than a decade. Charleston resident Christine Weiss Daugherty directed a rural economic development program headquartered in Banska Bystrica for three years from 1996 to 1999. Many volunteer advisors to the project traveled from Charleston to Slovakia and groups from Slovakia visited Charleston and West Virginia.

In 2006 the development of a sister city relationship was proposed. A group gathered in Charleston to explore this idea and incorporated as the Charleston-Banska Bystrica Sister City Alliance, a non profit organization. In 2007 Banska Bystrica Mayor, Ivan Saktor wrote Charleston Mayor Danny Jones proposing that the city governments explore a formal relation. In November of that year the citizen

What's Banksa Bystrica like?

Banska Bystrica is a city of around 85,000 people in the middle of Slovakia, a country in Central Europe. Slovakia, which from the end of the First World War was part of Czechoslovakia, became an independent country in 1993, three years after the Velvet Revolution which peacefully brought down the communist government. Slovakia's mountainous terrain and its predominantly rural



nature make it similar in many ways to West Virginia. In recent years Slovakia has been called the Slavic Tiger with a thriving economy including automobile manufacturing. Banska Bystrica is a commercial center in the middle of Slovakia. The town square with its buildings dating back to the Middle Ages is the focus of community life and is a thriving business center. Banska Bystrica has long been known as an especially pleasant place to live. Local lore has it that after going to Banska Bystrica - only in heaven will you find a better life.

coordinator of the sister city program in Banska Bystrica, Chuck Hirt visited Charleston. During the visit he was greeted by Mayor Jones at a City Council meeting and asked to carry a letter back to Mayor Saktor indicating Charleston's interest in exploring a sister city relation. At the same time Mayor Jones appointed two City Council members, Cubert Smith and Kasey Russell to work with the Charleston-Banska Bystrica Sister City Alliance on development of the relationship.

2009-2010

The Alliance includes representatives of a wide spectrum of groups in Charleston. The Board of Directors of the Charleston Rotary Club has voted to explore a relationship with its counterpart in Banska Bystrica. First Presbyterian Church continues to support a long term relationship with a ministry to Roma (Gypsy) children in Banska Bystrica called Hope for Children. The Charleston Area Medical Center is developing an exchange program with the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Hospital in the Slovak city. The Friendship Force chapter in Charleston is encouraging the development of a chapter in Banska Bystrica so that "people to people" visits can be made.

As the various strategies for building the relationship grow leaders in the business community are considering trade and financial ties. Cultural groups such as Mountain Stage are considering music and art exchanges. Secondary and higher education institutions such as Charleston Catholic High School, University of Charleston and West Virginia State University are exploring exchanges with their counterparts in Banska Bystrica.

In October 2009 a delegation from Banska Bystrica representing city government, the business community and higher education will arrive in Charleston. In the spring of 2010 a delegation from Charleston will visit Slovakia.

How to Take Part

Ask to be placed on the emailing list, join groups developing an exchange or start another one.

Contact the co-chairs for details:

Chuck Daugherty: 123 Falls Run Rd., Charleston, WV 25311. (304) 347-9249 or (304) 546-8812. chuckdaugherty@att.net

Linda Elliott: 818 Scenic Dr., Charleston, WV 25311, (304) 344-2075, koffeelade@gmail.com



Charleston-Banska Bystrica
Sister City Alliance
Together we stand in mutual support



What is a Sister City?

A Sister City program is a connection between two cities, usually in different countries, that encourages and supports exchanges between residents and institutions of those cities. The relationship is usually formalized by the respective city governments and often includes exchanges of mayors and other city officials. This public recognition supports a variety of activities between residents of the two cities in which persons with an interest in a particular area of the life of the city exchange information, resources and work together on projects of mutual interest. Visits to the Sister City are often part of their work together. For example, the Rotary clubs of the two cities may exchange delegations exploring areas of mutual interest. A Rotary club that gives scholarships to students may designate a scholarship for a student from the sister city. An international organization of sister cities provides technical and financial support and serves as a clearing house of information.