

Mercer Island and Thonon les Bains, France:  
20 years as Sister Cities

By the numbers:

Official delegation trips to Thonon:	3
Students exchange trips to/from Thonon	8
Students who've been on an exchange	160
Years that MISCA has given up to three student scholarships	9
Adults who have visited Thonon with our program	50+
Official delegation trips to Thonon	3
Mercer Island mayors since 2000	6
Thonon mayors since 2000	1

But the numbers don't begin to tell the of the eyes opened to a different culture, language and way of thinking; the countless rich experiences felt; and the lasting friendships formed.

It was in 2000 that the mayors of Mercer Island and Thonon les Bains signed the official agreement of "jumelage," establishing an official sister city relationship between our two cities, through Sister Cities International. Our sister city relationship as been growing and going strong since then. Since then, we've organized a number of cultural exchanges, a handful of "official" delegations and numerous student exchanges between our two cities.

And meanwhile, at home, our association has put on dinners, sponsored French films, conversation evenings, wine tastings, travel events, art lectures and many programs and activities to foster an interest in all things French and in Thonon les Bains in particular.

Hundreds of Island residents have either visited our sister city, hosted a French visitor, sent their student to experience a 10-day peek into French life, or been otherwise personally touched by our sister city relationship.

All of these activities, exchanges, programs, scholarships have been accomplished at virtually no cost to the city. Nevertheless, the "city" part of sister city is essential. We cannot be a sister city without the city. The involvement and support of the mayor, the City Council and the highest officials of both cities are essential to a sister city relationship. There is no Sister City without the City.

- by Jane Meyer Brahm