

Application to Become a Sister City In Conjunction with the City of La Crosse Wisconsin

In order to be considered as a Sister City of La Crosse, a supporting organization must submit this application to the City of La Crosse International Committee. Upon receipt of the application, the organization will be contacted with a date to appear before the committee to answer any questions about the application. The Committee will make a recommendation to the City Council as to accept or reject the application. The final decision rests with the City Council.

This is a Microsoft Word Document, so you may expand the spacing below as necessary.

1. Contact Information of Person Submitting the Application:

Name: James Birnbaum
Address: 6218 River Run Rd, La Crosse, WI
Phone: 608-780-6815
Email: jimdianabirnbaum@gmail.com

2. City and Country of the proposed Sister City: Junglinster, Luxembourg

3. Please describe the proposed city and reasons that make the proposed city suitable to be a Sister City with La Crosse. For example, the areas may have similar geography, culture, heritage, economic bases, or may be linked historically, educationally or economically.

La Crosse has a rich Luxembourg history and exciting potential for a modern friendship with Junglinster, Luxembourg. There are many reasons that make Junglinster, Luxembourg a suitable Sister City with La Crosse.

La Crosse was the place where many Luxembourg immigrants decided to settle. The landscape of eastern Luxembourg resembles La Crosse with its similar bluffs, farmland, and rivers which attracted Luxembourg immigrants. The Luxembourg immigrants brought with them carpenters, joiners, farmers, brewery workers and other skilled trades who built La Crosse's churches, schools, hospitals, convents, hotels, and of course taverns. They also started many farms. Many of their achievements are still standing today.

Junglinster, Luxembourg is the largest municipality in the east of Luxembourg. Education and recreation are of primary interest in Junglinster just as in La Crosse. Much like La Crosse, Junglinster recreational interests include soccer clubs, scenic hiking trails and golf. Junglinster has a city center similar to La Crosse with businesses, shopping and restaurants.

Junglinster, Luxembourg has a renowned interest in education. The Junglinster International School has recently pioneered an environmental student exchange with LaCrosse's Aquinas High School where it is now a permanent program. Additionally, educational exchanges are being pursued through the University of Luxembourg with Viterbo University and UW-La Crosse. Recently, a Luxembourg student graduated from UW-La Crosse and is now a teacher in the European Schools.

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A Luxembourg Sister City is advantageous to LaCrosse business interests as Luxembourg is an international leader in the field of finance and one of the most financially successful countries in the European Union.

Finally, Luxembourg is a founder and leader in the formation of the European Union, a gateway for trade and commerce.

Therefore, to honor La Crosse's Luxembourg heritage, enhance current relationships and pave the way for new opportunities, a Sister City friendship with Junglinster, Luxembourg is an asset for both La Crosse and Junglinster

4. Is there an organization that supports the proposed Sister City?

Yes

No

Name of Organization___La Crosse Junglinster Friendship Association, a subsidiary committee of the Luxembourg American Descendants Society

5. Is the supporting organization formally structured? For example, the organization has elected officers or a board of directors.

Yes

No

If not, please explain how the organization operates.

6. Please list the name of the officers, board of directors and describe the official structure of the supporting organization. Include how many years or months that the supporting organization has been in operation. You may attach a separate page if needed.

The Luxembourg American Friendship Association will be a subsidiary of the Luxembourg American Descendants Society (LADS). The LADS is a La Crosse not for profit corporation, created and inspired by the visit to LaCrosse of Archbishop of Luxembourg Ferdinand Franc in August of 2007. LADS was then incorporated and maintained by Attorney Jim Birnbaum and Attorney Mindy Wiesjahn, both founders and past Presidents of the LADS.

La Crosse American Descendants Society current Officers and Board of Directors are as follows:

President – Carolyn Bagniewski
Vice President - Mindy Wiesjahn
Secretary – Barb Smith
Treasurer - David Wolf

Membership Officer – Marlene Hendrikson

Board Members:

James Birnbaum

S. Mary Ann Gschwind

S. Carrie Kirsch

Larry Scheckel

Sandy Hammes

Linda Bechly

Bill Wiesjahn

Naomi Wiesjahn

7. Please describe past activities of the supporting organization with the proposed Sister City.

La Crosse has a large descendant population of immigrants from Luxembourg who settled in La Crosse and made this their home. Many of the descendants have reclaimed their Luxembourg citizenship. La Crosse residents frequently travel to Luxembourg meeting relatives and making many lifelong friends. They have visited the honored WWII cemeteries in Luxembourg reminding us of our permanent bond and commitment to each other.

Since its creation LADS has hosted Luxembourg Ambassadors, numerous Luxembourg Tours, Luxembourg musicians including an organist, a concert pianist, an opera singer and others. LADS annually celebrates Luxembourg National Day. LADS has also hosted and been part of the upper Mississippi support and gatherings of settlements of Luxembourg immigrants in Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Iowa along the Mississippi River

Annually LADS has a week-long celebration of St. Nicholas. St. Nicholas is the patron saint of Luxembourg and widely celebrated in Luxembourg. To honor the Luxembourg heritage of St. Nicholas, LADS spreads the spirit of comradery and gift giving by providing a homemade meal for the homeless, singing songs and sharing stories at local nursing homes and sharing a Mass followed by a meal for Viterbo students and community.

Most recently, the Chair Emeritus of the Luxembourg American Descendants Society (LADS), a Luxembourg citizen and lifelong LaCrosse resident, Jim Birnbaum made arrangements with his high school alma mater Aquinas High School for a high school exchange with Junglinster Academy. The exchange was so successful that the exchange is now ongoing, annual and a permanent commitment with international notoriety. In 2022, the Aquinas students are planning on coming to Junglinster, Luxembourg and the Junglinster students are coming to La Crosse. At Aquinas High School, the number of excited new students has increased from 15 to 30 students for 2022.

By accepting the proposed city as a Sister City of La Crosse, what benefits may the citizens of the area expect?

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The La Crosse Junglinster Friendship Association intends to organize adult Zoom Meetings for citizens of Junglinster and La Crosse fostering language, culture, family connections, travel and International common issues. Additionally, work has been started to move student exchanges beyond virtual and include University student exchanges at UW-La Crosse and Viterbo University.

For years La Crosse has been included as a multiple day stop for Luxembourg citizens on bus tours in the US. The Sister City friendship will help solidify La Crosse's place as a tourist destination for Luxembourg citizens touring the United States. Plans have already begun for future tours. As the La Crosse Junglinster friendship grows it is hoped our collaboration will find more heritage sites and future interests to enhance these tours.

8. Please provide any additional comments to assist with the application process.

Thank You.

Please return the completed form to:

**Art Marson, Chair
City of La Crosse International Committee**