



CONTACT: Kim Heidemann
Executive Director, Iowa Sister States
Kim.heidemann@iowasisterstates.org
515.215.0118 (C)

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***** **For Immediate Release** *****

Celebration to Honor International Contributions made by Governor Branstad

Iowa Sister States will host an event on February 16th to honor the support and contributions that Governor Branstad has made to the organization, and to overall international relationship building efforts.

In 1983, Governor Branstad directed the Director of the Iowa Development Commission to develop the Sister State Friendship Committee. Mr. Luca Berrone was tasked as the first Coordinator/Director of the program. This program has since blossomed into 9 sister state relationships and supported hundreds of exchanges, connections made, and friendships forged.

“It’s difficult to measure the success of Iowa Sister States because we connect people and then they (companies, educational institutions, etc.) form their own bonds and we don’t always know if true relationships have been made.”, said Ms. Kim Heidemann, Executive Director of Iowa Sister States. “Thanks to recent developments, including Governor Branstad being looked at as the next U.S. Ambassador to China, we have tangible evidence that this concept works. We have Governor Branstad, Governor Ray and many others to thank for the international path Iowa is currently on”, she said.

Iowa Sister States is the largest type of sister state program in the United States. Governor Branstad has signed most of the sister state agreements and has met countless sister state visitors over the years.

The celebration will be held at SACMI USA in Urbandale which is the North American headquarters of the Italian-based company. Several sponsors have stepped forward to participate in the celebration as well. “I believe the number of sponsors for the event shows the type of respect that organizations have for the leadership that Governor Branstad has shown by being supporting international connections for the betterment of Iowans, companies and other institutions.”, said Mr. Luca Berrone, General Manager of SACMI USA.

Iowa Sister States (ISS) is a non-profit organization founded in 1985 to manage Iowa’s official relationship with foreign states, as established by the Governor of Iowa, including: Yamanashi Prefecture, Japan (1960), Yucatan, Mexico (1965), Hebei Province, China (1983), Terengganu, Malaysia (1987), Stavropol Krai, Russia (1988), Taiwan (1989), Cherkasy Oblast, Ukraine (1996), Veneto Region, Italy (1997), and Kosovo (2013).

For more information about Iowa Sister States, visit IowaSisterStates.org. Follow its presence on social media on Facebook (facebook.com/IowaSisterStates) or Twitter (@IASisterStates).