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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Foley Sister Cities Delegates Return from Hennef Germany

Foley, AL – The cities of Foley and Hennef, Germany, are working together in a Sister Cities Partnership, according to the Foley's Sister Cities Commission. The Foley Sister Cities Delegation returns from their first trip to Hennef, Germany with high spirits and good feelings about their recent trip to investigate a Sister Cities Partnership. Foley delegates were received with warm greetings and special activities from their new friends in Hennef. This is the first people exchange as Foley begins to develop this sister cities partnership. Hennef will send its first delegation to Foley in October 2023. The first student exchange will occur at the end of May 2024 when Foley High School students visit Hennef. The following October 2024, Hennef students will visit Foley.

Why Hennef, Germany? Foley's interest in developing a sister city partnership with Hennef, Germany is due to the similar characteristics: population, size, educational institutions, economic industries, many halls, playing fields and clubs for sports (especially soccer), and natural environmental settings. Both cities are rural yet urban and have close connections to surrounding communities with diverse shopping facilities. Foley citizens have personal and family connections to the city of Hennef. The greatest interest of this partnership is in creating educational and cultural exchanges.

The Foley delegates were treated to many wonderful events, including a special reception held at Hennef's new City Hall. Mayor Mario Dahm of Hennef welcomed its citizens and Foley guests addressing the issues that must be considered when developing this partnership, one of the greatest concerns being the great distance. He talked more about what these types of "town-twinnings" (sister cities partnerships) mean as Hennef already has three European town partnerships. *He concluded with these words "Friendly contacts between people and countries is always a guarantee for peace. That was and is the point of town friendships, which were and are an essential motor for peace in Europe. Even at the beginning of long-lasting, actual town-twinnings within Europe the focus was on common ground because we had painfully learned that looking only at differences leads to conflicts!" He then said to Mayor Hellmich, "Your visit shows esteem for Germany and Hennef and our citizens. I thank you very much for this and wish you a pleasant stay in Hennef, from which you can take many good impressions back to Foley."*

Mayor Ralph Hellmich of Foley then addressed the audience and started his speech out with *"I do not have a written speech. I want to talk from my heart."* His opening comments were so warm and sincere that it immediately captured everyone's attention and had them tuned in. Mayor Hellmich mentioned that Hennef's Declaration is very similar to Foley's mission. He went on to explain that cultural student

experiences and exchanges were his number one priority for this partnership. Mayor Hellmich also explained that he had deep roots in German ancestry himself. In addition to thanking Hennef for the invitation to visit and stating he looks forward to Hennef's upcoming visit to Foley, Mayor Hellmich concluded his speech with, "Foley looks forward to continuing the dialogue of Friendship between our two cities. Our students are the future of our countries. What better way to educate them than by the experiences of international friendships."

The rest of the trip went off like clockwork with many new relations established. Walking tours around Hennef's city center, along the nature paths and other parts of Hennef, occurred. A trip to Cologne, a stop at the top of the picturesque Petersburg Resort (the seat of Allied High Commission 1949) overlooking the Rhine River across from Bonn, and a tour of the vintage Stadt Blankenburg built around 1123 also occurred. While at Blankenburg tours of the museum, tower, church, and vineyard took place. In the following days, tours of the schools, and a visit to a local eco-friendly bakery happened.

Linda B. Spangrud the executive director of Foley's Sister Cities' Partnership also traveled with the delegates. She states the "trip was more than she expected." She was very thrilled with the results and was honored to do a "Kinder Hour" turtle talk at the Hennef's Public Library while visiting. She talked about her children's books the "Turtle People Series" which describes the Alabama sea turtle preservation program. Her cousin, Gabi Heinz, served as an interpreter.

The first initiative of this partnership took place in November 2022. An art gallery in each city showcased photos of each city's landmarks and scenery. Those photos are now on display throughout the city in different places, i.e., the city library, schools, city hall, tourist center, etc.

Foley Sister Cities Commission will host its inaugural ***"Foley Sisters Cities, 5K Octoberfest Run"*** on Saturday, October 7,2023 at OWA starting at 8 AM. This fundraiser will assist in raising funds for the student trips and other sister cities' initiatives. If you wish, come dressed in your German Oktoberfest customs (dreidels and lederhose). Beer and pretzels will be available. More information will be available soon. Contact Linda B. Spangrud if you are interested in getting involved with the Foley Sister Cities program and events.

The Foley Sister Cities Commission exists to promote long-term, global people-to-people relationships through the development of international leadership, friendship, and understanding. It seeks to facilitate valuable partnerships and citizen diplomacy with cultural, educational, and commercial entities. The Commission provides an avenue for the people in each city to develop friendly and mutually beneficial personal and professional relationships, and to work together in facing the unique and diverse challenges and opportunities of the future. It provides an opportunity for student and community delegations and educational, cultural, informational, and commerce exchanges. Sister Cities will reach every part of our community and improve our quality of life.

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Sister Cities International

Since its inception in 1956, Sister Cities International has worked to create global relationships based on cultural, educational, information and trade exchanges. According to Sister Cities International (www.sister-cities.org), there are nearly 2,000 partnerships between U.S. and international cities. These partnerships are spread throughout 140 different countries. The sister city program was launched at a 1956 White House conference by President Dwight D. Eisenhower. Hundreds of American cities responded to that call and are continuing to carry out meaningful exchanges in 136 nations around the world.

Facts About Hennef, Germany

City. Countryside. River. These three terms characterize Hennef in its contrast between the young modern city and its more than 90 villages in an old cultural landscape at the foot of the Siebengebirge, Bergisches Land and Westerwald. Hennef itself has 25,000 inhabitants; with the surrounding areas it becomes 49,000. Covering approximately 105 square kilometers, it is located at the mouth of the Riever Sieg and Rhine Bay and located near Cologne and Bonn.

City: Hennef has a successful mixture of urban flair and rural idyll. Its many stores can be found in the modern designed marketplace in the center of the city and along the Frankfurter Straße Baroque courtyards. Industrial buildings from the time of the founders bear witness to the town's lively history. A diverse range of events is held throughout the year. Formerly an independent municipality, Uckerath (population 3,400) is now the town's second center.

Countryside: Embedded in the hilly wooded landscape of the Siegtal, the city is surrounded by numerous villages. The recreational areas of the Bergisches Land and the Westerwald begin just east of the city at the entrance to the Siegtal, Brölbach and Hanfbach valleys.

River: The connecting element of the region is the river. The Sieg—with its tributaries Bröl and Hanfbach—meanders through picturesque meadows and valleys. Along the Sieg, a well-developed bicycle path leads through the beautiful landscape.

Stadt Blankenberg: The main tourist destination in Hennef is the Stadt Blankenberg castle. The town of Blankenberg takes you back to the Middle Ages with its picturesque half-timbered houses. The town wall and town gates are worth seeing, as well as the local history museum in the Katharinentorturm.

Hiking, local recreation, sports, golf course: Hennef is home to 50 sports clubs with more than 11,000 members, and the Golfclub Rhein-Sieg e.V. is nearby. The spa park in the Geistingen district plays an important role in the area's outdoor activities. The 200-kilometer Natursteig Sieg hiking trails offer fantastic views of the Siegtal valley as they pass by historic cultural landscapes and monuments such as Allner Castle, the pilgrimage church Zur schmerzhaften Mutter in Bödingen, and Blankenberg Castle and town.

The invention that turned Hennef into an industrial location: The Hennef industrial pioneers Carl Reuther and Eduard Reisert invented the Chronos scale—the first calibratable automatic scale in the

world. Its approval by the Kaiserliche Normal-Aichungs-Kommission in Berlin in 1883 marked the first time that an automatic scale was granted legal recognition as a measure of value; until then, goods were weighed by hand. The history of scales is closely linked to the history of Hennef; thus, the invention of the industrially manufactured Chronos scale also marked the beginning of Hennef's rise as an industrial location.

A special feature: 25 million years ago, during the Oligocene epoch, there was a lake where Hennef-Geistingen and Hennef-Rott are today. It was in that area that one of the most important fossil deposits in the world was discovered. A small exhibit in Hennef's town hall now features dragonfly larvae, leaves, a winged insect, a weevil and the imprint of a fish from that excavation.