

Bridges to the World

SSCA Forms Global Education Alliance

by Andrew Ezzell

President, Global Virtual Classroom

The Give Something Back International Foundation of Sarasota and the Sarasota Sister Cities Association have formed an alliance to work together on an online collaborative education program for primary and secondary school students from around the world. The program, known as the Global Virtual Classroom (GVC), is sponsored by the GSBI Foundation and funded by a grant from the AT&T Foundation.

The program, created by AT&T in 1996 and transferred to GSBI in 2003, has involved approximately 35,000 students from 63 countries to date. Its purpose is to “empower, enable and connect students around the world using internet technology.” It provides students with a stimulating, positive and enjoyable learning environment along with the opportunity to develop 21st-century job skills including cross-cultural communication, collaboration and teamwork; project planning; and the innovative use of technology — skills needed by all to participate in the new global economy.



American School in Lahore, Pakistan

Primary- and secondary-level students around the world can participate in two Global Virtual Classroom projects:

The **GVC CLUBHOUSE** is a free, collaborative, non-competitive, project-based program for schools from different countries. In the past, schools have worked

together on such projects as digital pen pals; discussion groups; and classroom exchange projects such as language, geography, poetry, culture, photo and music exchanges. There have also been specific projects such as a Global Water Quality Research study conducted by a university professor with the help of students from around the world. Schools from two or more countries can participate in this program at any time during the school year.



School #11 in Krasnoyarsk, Russia

The **GVC CONTEST** is a free, collaborative website design contest for students from around the world with cash prizes totaling \$10,500 presented to the winning schools. Once schools have applied, three schools from different countries are selected as a team and compete with other teams from around the world. The websites they create are judged by an international panel of judges. This program starts in September and ends in April each year.

Previous winning websites and more information about the GVC programs can be seen at VirtualClassroom.org. A link to the Global Virtual Classroom website will be set up shortly on the Sarasota Sister Cities site.

SSCA President Carla Rayman announced the alliance, saying, “I look forward to a fruitful cooperation between our two organizations.”