Urbana-Malawi Sister Cities Project Launched

Urbana's sister city relationship with Zomba in Malawi is well underway. City Councilman Scott Dossett, who is also Secretary of the Urbana Sister City Committee, attended the Sister Cities International Conference in Arlington, Virginia in early March. There he met with his counterparts from Zomba, Charles Kalemba, Zomba District CEO, and Mussa Mwale a District Administrator. Once the conference was over, Councilman Dossett accompanied Kalemba and Mwale back to Urbana where the two Malawians spent a week establishing their new “sisterly” relationship.

The visit to Illinois included a dinner with Mayor Laurel Prussing where the two received a key to the city and an evening of interaction local community members at a “Malawi Mixer” which featured a “Soul Food Buffet” prepared by City Clerk Phyllis Clark. In addition, Kalemba and Mwale attended a Rotary Club meeting, visited Wiley Elementary School and various other sites, including the Center for African Studies. On their final evening in town, U of I President Michael Hogan and his wife hosted the Malawians at his home.

While establishing social contacts is vital to initiatives like the Sister Cities Project, the Urbana-Zomba relationship also has a development component. The partnership falls under the African Urban Poverty Alleviation Program which targets addressing major issues of health, sanitation and water in Zomba.

Over the coming months a number of individuals and organizations from Urbana, including our Center Director Merle Bowen, will be making their way to Zomba to try to build on the foundation laid by the visit of Kalemba and Mwale. People in both Illinois and Zomba have high hopes for the future of this relationship.