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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 10, 2026

Shelby County Tourism and Visitor Bureau awards Naomi Garringer the Inaugural Shizuoka Sister City Trip Scholarship.

Naomi Garringer is the winner of the 2026 Shizuoka Sister City Scholarship - and her video will soon be featured on the Shelby County Tourism and Visitors Bureau website and various social media channels.

Shelby County Tourism and Visitors Bureau created this scholarship opportunity for any Shelby County student, grades 7 through 12, who would like to be a part of the student delegation for the Sister City, Shizuoka/Kambara, Japan this summer.

The scholarship does not involve a written paper. Instead, Shelby County Tourism and Visitors Bureau wanted to tap in to the creativity of our Shelby County students. “Our Shelby County students are continually on the cutting edge of today’s technology. This, combined with their creativity and video prowess, produced some fantastic submissions. Students were given the unique opportunity to tell viewers what is so special about Shelby County... the people, places, and events that make our communities exceptional. Our Shelby County Tourism and Visitors Bureau tagline is ‘Find Your Place in Shelby County’ - and we encouraged students to use this vision tag to help enlighten and educate, creating a fun and inviting video that tells viewers why they should visit Shelby County. Plus, we’re seeing this from a demographic that is so valuable to our communities overall, students!” remarks Rachael Ackley, Executive Director of Shelby County Tourism and Visitors Bureau.

“The Shelby County Tourism and Visitors Bureau Commission had a great time reviewing the submissions, and we hope to receive even more for the 2027 scholarship,” stated Tony Titus, President of the Shelby County Tourism and Visitors Bureau Commission/Board.

Since July of 1998, Shelbyville has been sending students and adults to Shizuoka City for a cultural exchange. “The students stay with a host family and learn about life in a typical Japanese household. During the day, the students tour various locations in Shizuoka City and Shizuoka Prefecture. They often meet the Mayor of Shizuoka and test their skills at introducing themselves in Japanese. They also visit the local schools and eat traditional Japanese Cuisine,” states Shelby County International Relations Council member Linda Sanders. “These cultural exchanges have positively impacted and changed lives and have opened our students’ eyes to a much larger world. The relationships they create on this trip truly last a lifetime, and students will often visit their host families repeatedly.”

The cost of this trip can be more than some students can afford. “In the spirit of hospitality, travel, and destination management, Shelby County Tourism and Visitors Bureau has created a scholarship opportunity for students considering this trip,” remarks Executive Director, Rachael Ackley.

Detailed information will be released this summer regarding submissions for the 2027 scholarship entries.

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