



The Dispatch

Spring 2024

You can read our newsletter via this link: <https://app.mlsend.com/p6p4n8u...>



We hope you're hungry for news of your Sister Cities because we have a lot of delicious updates in this issue, starting with *We Are What We Eat*, our current food-themed exhibit at the Palo Alto Art Center. After a standing-room-only opening reception in early February, the exhibit served as the backdrop to a royal visit a few weeks later: Neighbors Abroad was honored to welcome the Princess and Prince of Sweden! Pictured above: Crown Princess Victoria and Palo Alto Mayor Greer Stone in front of a mixed-media sculpture by Linköping artist Joanne Posluszny-Hoffsten. Read more below.

An Appetite for Art: 'We Are What We Eat' Now on Display at the Palo Alto Art Center

Neighbors Abroad salutes local arts champion Harriet Stern (pictured at left), who singlehandedly conceived and



curated a delightful food-themed art exhibit featuring works from all eight of our Sister Cities. Through the universal languages of art and photography, *We Are What We Eat: Culinary Heritage of our Sister Cities* encourages viewers to consider the role of food in defining a place and its people. The exhibit is up in the Palo Alto Art Center's meeting room until March 31, so don't miss it!

Joanne Posluszny-Hoffsten, our participating artist from Linköping, Sweden, joined us for the opening reception, along with her whimsical sculpture "Meatballs with Mashed Potatoes, Brown Gravy, Peas and Lingon Jelly." She is pictured here, at center, with Mayor Greer Stone and Youth Community Service board member Sally Bemus. Read more about Joanne and her whirlwind week in Palo Alto in the Linköping report below.

A big "thank you" to our event sponsors: The Graduate Hotel (which graciously provided lodging for our visiting artist), Hassett Hardware, HE&C Tea + Pot (for a delightful tea ceremony during our reception), and Taste restaurant (scrumptious dumplings). Board member Bing Wei gets a special shout out for organizing the dumplings donation and the Chinese tea ceremony. As always, everyone on our all-volunteer board pitched in to make the magic happen, including making heaps of food in their own kitchens.

Click [here](#) for a gallery of images and highlights from our opening reception on February 5.





Left to right: Neighbors Abroad board member Bob Wenzlau, Palo Alto Councilmember Pat Burt, Neighbors Abroad President Sarah Burgess, Neighbors Abroad board member Bing Wei, Yangpu committee member Dora Tao, and videographer Yu Xiao celebrate the opening of the *We Are What We Eat* exhibit, which coincided with the start of Lunar New Year festivities.

Calling Palo Alto Teen Artists, Writers, and Musicians

Continuing with the theme of art telling compelling stories across cultures and languages: We invite local teens to submit to Sister Cities International's [2024 Young Artists and Authors Showcase](#). This annual art and writing competition encourages young people aged 13-18 to express the mission of Sister Cities International through original artwork, writing (including poetry), photography, and music. This year's theme is "ClimateScape: Resilient Cities for Tomorrow's Climate." The grand prize is \$1,000, with runners up receiving \$250, and third place winners taking home \$100. We were blown away by the local submissions we received last year. Check them out [here](#). For more information, please visit <https://yaas2024.org> and then fill out [this Google form](#) to indicate your interest to local contest coordinator Harriet Stern. Submissions are due to Harriet by April 28, 2024. For more information, please email yaaspaloalto@gmail.com.



Pictured above are two local submissions from last year's contest: "Equal Food for All" by Meher Birari, left, and "Helping Hands" by Maya Caran.

Updates from Linköping: A Major European Award, Artists on the Move, and a Royal Visit



Our Linköping VP Ed Fike and his counterparts in Sweden have been busy these past few months. Linköping ended 2023 on a high note, receiving a distinguished honor that recognized the city's status as a hub for technology and sustainability. At December's European Capital of Innovation Awards in Marseille, France, Linköping was named the Rising Innovative City. The prize is given annually to the city within the European Community that best connects citizens with academia, businesses, and the public sector while simultaneously

boosting game-changing innovation. The winning submission required years of effort from city officials and committee members. (That explains the expressions of unbridled joy in the photo.)

Congratulations to Team Linköping on this impressive distinction!

A Palo Alto Artist Goes to Linköping and a Linköping Artist

Comes to Palo Alto

While Linköping is often lauded for its tech prowess, it also boasts a vibrant art scene. Palo Alto artist Lorenz Sonneman (pictured) will experience the city's creative culture first hand when he embarks on an artist-in-residency in Linköping this spring. Lorenz, who previously participated in Neighbors Abroad's Art and Sustainability exhibition, was selected last fall from among eight local finalists to receive the prestigious post. The City of Linköping's Elisabeth Asp and Lars-Ove Östensson, manager of the acclaimed Passagen Gallery, served as judges for the competition and designed the artist-in-residency opportunity. The position includes these incredible perks: a six-week stay in an apartment located in a Linköping art colony, round-trip airfare, a monetary stipend, and the chance to exhibit art and present lectures. Many thanks to our Swedish friends for generously sponsoring this once-in-a-lifetime experience.



We were thrilled to welcome Joanne Posluszny-Hoffsten from Linköping as our special guest artist for the opening of *We Are What We Eat*. Several Neighbors Abroad board members volunteered to show Joanne – a native of Buffalo, New York – some notable Bay Area sites during her stay. After receiving a warm welcome at SFO from Jennifer Kleckner, Joanne was treated to a varied itinerary over the next six days that included a tour of the Cantor Art Museum led by Barbara Newton, a visit to San Francisco with Ellen Valentine, and an introduction to the Cubberley Artist Studio Program. Denise Laxen di Zazzo from the Palo Alto Public Art Program (who coincidentally is from Linköping) arranged for Joanne to visit the Cubberley artist studios of Nina Ekman and Kiana Honarmand. Joanne also enjoyed several local dining favorites, including Hobe's (with former CEO Ed Fike) and Osteria (with NA president Sarah Burgess and her husband, Ron Valencia, as well as board members Ken and Flor Sanchez). The incomparable Harriet Stern provided a delicious home-cooked feast on Joanne's final evening in Palo Alto. Upon departing, Joanne expressed her deep appreciation for the gracious hospitality she received. She looks forward to reuniting with some of her new friends at one of Linköping's charming cafes.

Neighbors Abroad Welcomes Sweden's Crown Princess

Though Joanne concluded her visit to Palo Alto in early February, she was surprised to be a topic of conversation in both California and Sweden several weeks later. Photos of Sweden's Crown Princess Victoria and Palo Alto Mayor Greer Stone exchanging gifts during the Green Transition Summit in front of her sculpture were widely shared on the internet. A royal surprise, indeed! Princess Victoria and her husband Prince Daniel made a stop in Palo Alto as part of their three-day visit to the Bay



Area. Per the Swedish royal family, "The trip is made at the request of the government and the purpose is to broaden and develop relations with California in innovation, green transition and emerging technologies with a focus on artificial intelligence."

Neighbors Abroad board members played a key role in the Royal Visit. President Sarah Burgess worked on logistics with Team Sweden in the weeks leading up to the big day, and suggested the Palo Alto Art Center as the ideal venue. (All the better to set up that awesome princess-mayor photo opp amidst our foodie art exhibit.) Others, including Ed Fike, Jeannet Kiessling,

Nodelyn Smith (with husband Doug) and Jennifer Kleckner, volunteered as greeters, ushers, and – in Nodelyn's case – personal escort to Nobel Laureate Steven Chu, who spoke at the conference. After the program, attendees enjoyed refreshments in the Art Center's beautiful sculpture garden, where several toasts were made in honor of a majestic day.

A Fascinating Eco Tour in the Philippines



In February, Neighbors Abroad board members Nodelyn Smith, Ellen Valentine and Evelyn Shimazaki, along with administrative assistant Carmina Barrera and Bay Area teachers Diana Cabcabin and Claudia McDonagh, participated in an eco-tour in and around Palo, Leyte, our Sister City in the Philippines. Fun fact: Palo was the first Sister City paired with Palo Alto, way back in the 1960s.

Guided by Professor Marge de la Cruz, the group met with local leaders who are restoring ecosystems such as mangroves, rainforests, and small fisheries. The tour was the first step in the creation of a new program Neighbors Abroad plans to offer to students and adults interested in seeing firsthand how coastal communities near and surrounding our Sister City deal with their environmental issues, including climate change, overfishing, and habitat destruction.

Nodelyn penned a great blog about the visit. Read it [here](#).



At Amandaraga Waterfalls: Nodelyn Smith, Carmina Barrera, Prof. Marge de la Cruz, Ellen Valentine, Doug Smith, and Evelyn Shimazaki



The ecotour group enjoyed a breakfast meeting with Palo Mayor Matin Petilla,

during which the team discussed potential new initiatives in education and sustainability between Palo and Palo Alto. Mayor Martin expressed her desire to broaden the scope of the Palo community's engagement with the Palo Children's Library and discussed the upcoming 80th Leyte Landing Commemoration for which Palo Alto/Neighbors Abroad will send a delegation in October 2024.

A Mayoral Visit and Students BEAM-ing With Excitement



Heidelberg, Germany

Welcome to Palo Alto, Mayor Eckart Würzner and German BEAM Students!

Palo Alto was honored to welcome Heidelberg, Germany's Lord Mayor Dr. Eckart Würzner (pictured at left with Chief of Staff Aline Moser) in February. Our Heidelberg VP Jeannet Kiessling, a native of our German Sister City, organized a robust itinerary, which naturally included the requisite photo opp in front of the Sister City sign and dinner at Neighbors Abroad's favorite restaurant, Terun on California Avenue.

Mayor Würzner met with Palo Alto city officials, including Mayor Greer Stone, attended a conference at Stanford University's Doerr School of Sustainability, and met with local entrepreneurs. The visit coincided with the arrival of 12 high school students from Heidelberg who traveled to Palo Alto under the umbrella of a program called Business, Entrepreneurship and Math (BEAM), which was conceived by a former Neighbors Abroad board member, rolled out in Gunn High School, and subsequently adopted by schools in Heidelberg, as well as in Enschede, our Sister City in the Netherlands. Later this year, the Palo Alto BEAM students will travel to Heidelberg. BEAM provides high school students with a targeted business and math education experience, allowing them to start their own businesses and dive into projects with real-world impact.



Palo Alto Middle Schoolers Preparing for the Arrival of Their Tsuchiura Friends

The Palo Alto-Tsuchiura student exchange program, which has endured for more than 30 years, is in full swing for the 2024 school year. Pictured below are our Palo Alto students with their Tsuchiura buddies in a Zen meditation class during last year's exchange.

The middle schoolers are busy exchanging emails in anticipation of March 16 when the Tsuchiura students arrive in Palo Alto to spend a week with their host families. In June, the Palo Alto students will head to Tsuchiura for their own cultural experience in their Sister City.

During their busy week in Palo Alto, the Tsuchiura students will attend JLS and Greene Middle Schools with their host buddies for 2 1/2 days, visit Google, Stanford University, Yosemite, and San Francisco, among many other activities.

Palo Alto and Tsuchiura have been Sister Cities since 2009, but the close relationship between the cities dates back to 1993 when parents on each side of the Pacific started the middle school student exchange program.



Tsuchiura, Japan

Welcome New Board Members!

Neighbors Abroad recently welcomed four new board members who are all eager to help with our growing list of projects, events, and mandates (as if these newsletters aren't long enough already, right?). Jennifer Kleckner (at left), a 40-year resident of Palo Alto, is sharing VP duties for our French Sister



City, Albi, with Monica Schreiber. After graduating from U.C. Berkeley, Jennifer served as a Peace Corps volunteer in the Democratic Republic of Congo. She went on to become a registered nurse specializing in internal medicine and later served as a school nurse in the Palo Alto Unified School District until she retired in 2022. Jennifer is interested in world affairs, travel, the environment, cooking and gardening. Over the years, her family has hosted several foreign exchange students, an experience she highly recommends.

Barbara Newton might be new to our board, but she is not new to Neighbors Abroad. For decades, she worked closely on Neighbors Abroad projects with her late husband Jim Newton, who passed away last year. Jim was a stalwart contributor to our organization, served a lengthy term as treasurer, and had a special affinity for Mexico, where he and Barbara lived for several years. Barbara came to California from the East Coast in 1960. She has two sons, Jim and John, the latter of whom lives in Merida, Mexico. She is very involved with Trinity Church in Menlo Park and serves on the board of Adolescent Counseling.

We have another Barb to introduce:

Barb Mackraz will be the co-VP for Narok, Kenya, which is poised to become Neighbors Abroad's first Friendship City (more about Friendship Cities below). Barb is founder and executive director of Oliveseed Foundation and co-founder of the grassroots nonprofit Oliveseed Kenya Trust. In the Maasai Mara, Barb and team develop libraries and other educational resources for villages and the most underserved rural schools and run a women's work center with



sustainable livelihoods for women, among other projects. In rural Morocco, Barb has developed English libraries with teachers and Peace Corps volunteers in over 30 locations. Previously, Barb was a software product designer in Silicon Valley, focusing on speech recognition. She also was an editor for Princeton University Press. Barb has a BA in European history from University of California, San Diego and a Master of Liberal Arts from Stanford University. A Kenyan newspaper recently wrote about Barb's library program in the Maasai Mara. See it [here](#).

We also welcome Bruce McLeod to our board. Bruce serves as co-VP for Heidelberg, Germany, along with long-serving board member Jeannet



Kiessling, who recently was tapped to be the Executive Director of the German American Business Association. As Jeannet transitions out of Neighbors Abroad (we are still in denial), Bruce will assume full responsibility for Heidelberg. From 2006 until his recent retirement, Bruce was an instructor and Production Manager for the Theatre Arts program at Foothill College.



[Albi, France](#)

Albi Student Selected for Summer Exchange

Since 2022, we have coordinated with our French Sister City to allow students in both cities to participate in bespoke summer exchanges designed to fit the particular schedules of the

students and their families. The exchanges, which can be reciprocal, range from two to four weeks. In Palo Alto, two fantastic host families have stepped up to host Julien Gandra-Moreno, who will spend two weeks with one family and a week with the other. Julien is excited for his first-ever visit to the United States and looks forward to experience summer teen life in Palo Alto.

Palo Alto-area teens interested in participating in the same type of arrangement in Albi, can contact jennifer@kleckner.net and mschreiber@neighborsabroad.org. Some French language experience is highly desired, but not mandatory. Students should be between 15 and 17 years old.

Enschede and Linköping: BFFs Forever

Strengthening Palo Alto's relationships with its Sister Cities is what we at Neighbors Abroad do every day. What doesn't happen every day is two of Palo Alto's Sister Cities forging their *own* ties and bonds of friendship. We are delighted to see our Netherlands Sister City, Enschede, and our Swedish Sister City, Linköping, becoming "Best Friends Forever." The two university towns have, over the last year, collaborated and conversed on a number of topics of shared interest, including sustainability, urban planning, and business innovation...with more to come.

On January 11, the budding friendship was on full display when Neighbors Abroad VPs Ed Fike and Monica Schreiber attended a lively networking event at the Nordic Innovation House - Silicon Valley. The event included alumni from Linköping University, Enschede's University of Twente, and other Dutch technical universities.

The program included speed-round business pitches from representatives of seven European startups.



Left to right: Michiel Krake and Mike Verkouter from the University of Twente and Enschede's startup community, Monica Schreiber, Åsa Wallin of the Nordic Innovation House, and Ed Fike.



Thank you, Kiwanis!

In January, the Kiwanis Club of Palo Alto awarded a generous \$2,000 grant to Neighbors Abroad at its 5th Annual Grantee Reception. Neighbors Abroad President Sarah Burgess is pictured alongside the legendary Hank Heubach, who is a longtime Kiwanian in addition to being a Neighbors Abroad board member and past president. Thank you, Kiwanis Club, for your consistent support!

Palo Alto Teens: Be a Summer

Student Ambassador in Mexico!



The poster features a QR code in the top left corner with the text "Click to know everything we do". The main image shows a street scene in Oaxaca, Mexico, with a circular inset showing a lake and another showing a bowl of food. The text on the poster includes:

SUMMER STUDENT AMBASSADOR OAXACA, MÉXICO

Palo Alto's 60-year sister city relationship with Oaxaca will open doors for you to explore and immerse in this unique community. Our long-standing relationship with this city includes personal contacts as well as partnerships with non-profit organizations which allow a full breadth of experiences.

As a summer exchange participant, you will spend **four weeks in Oaxaca with your host family**, then your exchange brother or sister will spend **four weeks at your home**. You will:

- Participate in the daily life of a Mexican family.
- Improve your Spanish.
- Earn community service hours in an area of your choice.
- Possibilities include medicine, environment, and education—we can even explore other areas of interest.
- Visit archeological sites, and learn about ancient civilizations.
- Earn a Sister City Ambassador accommodation from Neighbors Abroad.
- Make friends for life.

Spanish classes available upon request

INTERESTED? FILL OUT A SIMPLE APPLICATION, THEN WE WILL MEET

LEARN MORE

DATES: You will be in Oaxaca from approximately June 8 through July 6 and return home as host from about July 6 to August 3. Final dates are to be determined.

COST: Roughly \$3,000 plus spending money. This includes round trip airfare and a pre-paid amount toward chaperone's expenses. Financial support is available.

HOW TO APPLY: Applicants should be high school students, at least 15 years old by June of 2024, and be studying Spanish. Rising Juniors and Seniors preferred.

Palo Alto residency is not a requirement.

VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO OBTAIN AN APPLICATION.

Sarah Burgess, Vice President Oaxaca
sarah.burgess@neighborsabroad.org
www.NeighborsAbroad.org

Applications are due no later than **April 1st, 2024**, to allow us to assign students to appropriate families. Students will be contacted about an interview when all paperwork is received.

Neighbors Abroad is a local nonprofit civic organization, affiliated with Sister Cities International and the City of Palo Alto.

Oaxaca, Mexico

Neighbors Abroad's longest running exchange program is gearing up for the summer and we are eager to hear from Palo Alto-area teens who would like to go to beautiful Oaxaca for a life-changing experience. Fun fact: Neighbors Abroad's own President, Sarah Burgess, participated in the exchange program as a teenager in the 1970s!

Our students will stay with a Oaxacan host family from approximately June 8-July 6 and then the Palo Alto students' families will host the Oaxacan students from July 6 to August 3 (precise dates are still to be determined). This is a unique, affordable way for young people in Palo

Alto and Oaxaca to learn about each other's cities while improving their English/Spanish. For more information, please [contact sarah.burgess@neighborsabroad.org](mailto:sarah.burgess@neighborsabroad.org).

Applications are due April 1. You can find the application [here](#). Check out Sarah's [blog post](#) that touches on her experiences in Oaxaca.

Delegation from Ukraine Visits Palo Alto



Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine two years ago, Neighbors Abroad has raised more than \$125,000 for vulnerable children, including orphans, in Ukraine. On

January 23, we welcomed a delegation from Irpin, a city near Kiev. The group met with Mayor Greer Stone, councilmember Pat Burt, Neighbors Abroad President Sarah Burgess, and board member Jeannet Kiessling, who has spearheaded our Ukraine fundraising efforts.

Irpin is one of several cities that could be poised to join our global family now that the Palo Alto City Council has greenlighted the addition of Friendship Cities (read more below). Learn more about our Ukraine fundraising efforts [here](#).

Speaking of Friendship Cities...



Get ready for some big announcements in the coming months. The Palo Alto City Council approved the formation of Friendship Cities at a recent council meeting, and soon we will be inviting other cities to join our family. At a recent Neighbors Abroad board meeting, we voted to move ahead with the first city in line and our first city in Africa: Narok, Kenya, the capital city in the wildlife-rich region of the Maasai Mara.

Friendship Cities are similar to Sister Cities, but a bit less formal in structure. A Friendship City relationship is often formed as a stepping stone to a more formal Sister City agreement.

Anniversary News

Soon we will mark milestone anniversaries with three of our Sister Cities: Tsuchiura (15 years), Albi (30 years) and Oaxaca (60 years!) So far, we can share that the Oaxaca diamond jubilee is set for June (precise date to be announced). Our Mexican friends will bring the vibrant spirit of Oaxaca to Palo Alto, including traditional dancing, food, mezcal tastings, and an art exhibition. In September, Oaxaca will mark the anniversary with a celebration in their own city. Stay tuned!



Music to Our Ears: Neighbors Abroad and the San Francisco Chamber Orchestra

Neighbors Abroad is proud to join forces with the San Francisco Chamber Orchestra, a tightly-knit ensemble of musicians from around the Bay Area. All SFCO performances are admission-free, presenting classical, contemporary, and commissioned works to audiences of all ages and backgrounds around the Bay Area.

Mark your calendars for two Palo Alto dates: April 8 at Terun (did we mention that's Neighbors Abroad's favorite restaurant?) on California Avenue, 6-8 p.m. On April 20, SFCO comes to the United Methodist Church on Hamilton Avenue at 7:30 p.m. Did we mention all performances are free?



[Join Neighbors Abroad as a Member](#)

Donate (including to the Jim Newton Scholarship Fund for Oaxaca)

Neighbors Abroad

355 Alma Street, Palo Alto
CA 94301 United States

You received this email because you signed up
on our website or made a purchase from us.

[Unsubscribe](#)

