



The Dispatch

Summer 2024

Welcome to *The Dispatch*, Neighbors Abroad's quarterly roundup of Palo Alto's Sister and Sibling City activities around the world and here at home. You can read our newsletter below or via [this link](#)

Moving Forward on our First Friendship City: Narok, Kenya!



The Palo Alto City Council voted unanimously on June 17 to move forward on the next steps to bring our first Friendship City into the fold. Mayor Greer Stone has been authorized to sign a three-year Friendship City agreement with Narok, Kenya. Welcome Narok!

Friendship Cities are similar to Sister Cities, but a bit less formal in structure.

Narok, situated west of Nairobi, is in one of the most wildlife-rich areas of the country. It is the seat of safari tourism and the world-renowned Great Migration and Maasai Mara National Reserve. It is the district capital of Narok County and is the major center of commerce in the district. Like Palo Alto, the city has a population of around 65,000 people, primarily Maasai.

Co-VP Barb Mackraz has forged deep ties to Narok and the region over many years as the founder and executive director of Oliveseed Foundation and co-founder of the grassroots nonprofit Oliveseed Kenya Trust. In the Maasai Mara, Barb and her 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. Barb, who is also a longtime Palo Alto resident and also a Kiwanian, will serve as co-VP for Narok with Barbara Newton (let's hear it for the Mighty Barbs!).

Among other initiatives, the relationship will focus on sustainability and literacy.



Palo Alto Welcomes Yangpu Delegation



Officials from the Yangpu District of Shanghai, which has been part of our Sister City family since 2018, came to Palo Alto in late May to reaffirm the cities' continued cooperation through student and cultural exchange programs. Members of Neighbors Abroad, including President Sarah Burgess and board member Bing Wei, along with Palo Alto City Council members Pat Burt, Lydia Kou and Mayor Greer Stone, welcomed Governor Xue Kaib and Yangpu's Director of Foreign Affairs,

Chen Fan, to Palo Alto, where the cities entered into a Memorandum of Understanding outlining the cities' goal to foster exchanges in education, culture, and the arts.

According to Bing, who helped launch the Sister City relationship, the meeting was especially meaningful in that it followed on the heels of the 2023 APEC summit during which Presidents Biden and Xi met just a few miles away, at Filoli, to focus on improving bilateral relations.

Yangpu VP Yudy Deng and committee member Dora Tao helped organize the visit logistics, including coordinating visits to local schools.



Left to right: Council member Lydia Kou, Neighbors Abroad President Sarah Burgess, Council member Pat Burt, Yangpu Governor Xue Kaib, Neighbors Abroad Board Member Bing Wei, and Yangpu's Director of Foreign Affairs Chen Fan.

[Palo, Leyte, the Philippines and Oaxaca, Mexico](#)

Attention Neighbors
Abroad Members:
You're Invited to Join
Delegations to our
Sister Cities in
Mexico and the
Philippines



Traveling to a new country as a tourist can be a fun and eye-opening experience. But experiencing a country and its people as part of a Neighbors Abroad delegation? That's next level!

We have two opportunities for members of Neighbors Abroad to join us on organized Sister City trips this year: Oaxaca, Mexico in September and Palo, Leyte, the Philippines in October.

Oaxaca: Sept. 17-22, 2024

Celebrating 60 years as one of Palo Alto's Sister Cities, Oaxaca is a lively town recognized world-wide as one of Mexico's creative and artistic centers. A UNESCO World Heritage City, Oaxaca boasts a thriving indigenous culture and is a major tourist destination.

In honor of the big anniversary, we have a special opportunity for Neighbors Abroad members to join our delegation heading to Oaxaca September 17-22, 2024.

We will be warmly welcomed by our Sister City counterparts and experience a variety of educational and fun activities, including a likely tour to Monte Alban, a world-famous pre-Columbian archaeological site.

For more information about the logistics, cost, opportunities to extend your stay and other details, please contact: Flor Sanchez at florm.sanchez@neighborsabroad.org

Palo, Leyte: Oct. 17-20, 2024

The second of our open-to-members trips this year is to our first Sister City: Palo, in the Province of Leyte, in the Philippines, part of our Sister City family for 61 years. The dates of the official visit are October 17 to 20 and, of course, travelers can choose to extend their trip to visit more of the Philippines.



World War II buffs might be especially interested in this trip given that the province of Leyte is celebrating the 80th anniversary of the World War II landing by General Douglas MacArthur on Red Beach, after which he gave his famous "I have returned" radio address to the Philippines (pictured here is the memorial honoring the landing). In addition to checking in on various of Neighbors Abroad's programs in Palo, including our long-running Children's Library, the delegation will attend a parade, enjoy convivial meals with our hosts, and engage in sightseeing.

For more information about logistics, cost, opportunities to extend your stay and other details, please [contact: ellen.valentine@neighborsabroad.org](mailto:ellen.valentine@neighborsabroad.org)

A Sustainability Summit in Sweden

(Plus a Plethora of Public Art, Technology Talk, and a Raucous Hockey Game)



A Neighbors Abroad delegation received a warm welcome in unseasonably cold Linköping in late April. President Sarah Burgess, Vice President Ed Fike and Sarah's husband Ron Valencia spent four days meeting with Linköping's political, business, and community leaders. They were joined for part of the time by representatives from Enschede, the Netherlands, another of Palo Alto's Sister Cities. (Linköping and Enschede have formed a close bond in recent years through their mutual friends from Palo Alto.) A primary goal of the visit was the sharing of best practices around environmental sustainability.

The visit kicked off with a survey of Linköping's public art, which included a tour of the Golden Love Pavilion by its creator, American-Swedish artist Joanne Hoffsten. (Joanne memorably visited Palo Alto in February for the "We Are What We Eat" show at the Palo Alto Art Center.) Lars-Ove Östenson, director of the acclaimed Passagen Gallery, led a walk-through of the gallery's popular Andy Warhol exhibit, followed by a private tour of Gamla Linköping, an open-air museum that recreates Swedish life from the early 20th century.



Sarah and Ed met with leaders from Linköping University, a world-class institution with nearly 40,000 students.



Later that evening, Linköping Economic Director Erik Aqvist treated the group to a raucous hockey game between the national teams of Sweden and Finland. Though Team Sweden came up short, the score hardly seemed to matter to the exuberant fans.

After a tour of Linköping's groundbreaking waste management facility, which converts all of the municipality's waste to energy, the focus was on the region's efforts to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030. The day's high

point was the three-city seminar (live streamed to Palo Alto) on sustainability best practices. Thanks to Mayor Greer Stone, Councilmember Pat Burt, and Sustainability Manager Christine Luong for their input. Later, participants and guests enjoyed an elegant reception hosted by Linköping Mayor Mikael Sanfridson at the renowned Linköping Airforce Museum.

The final day featured briefings on economic growth and technology at City Hall and the Linköping Science Park. Officials were justifiably proud as they reviewed Linköping's winning submission in the Rising Innovative City category of the 2023 European Capital of Innovation Awards. In between meetings, Palo Alto and Enschede delegates visited trees dedicated to each city in the lush Tinnerö Oak Forest.

Tak to Katrin Englund from the Linköping International Affairs and Collaborations Department for curating such a comprehensive and engaging program.



Palo Alto Artist Lorenz Sonneman Leaves His Mark on Linköping

In our last edition of *The Dispatch*, we reported on the plum Artist-in-Residence opportunity created by art officials in Linköping exclusively for a Palo Alto artist. We can now report that the winner of the post – Lorenz Sonneman – completed his five-week program in May with distinction.

After selecting Lorenz, committee members Lars-Ove Östensson and Elisabeth Asp remarked that his ability to create "big works" gave him an edge over seven other applicants. Indeed, Lorenz employed his talents to create expansive, eye-catching pieces that were enthusiastically received by his Swedish



hosts. Lorenz' assignments included producing a mural in a downtown Linköping shopping mall, "live painting" a library bus in the city's main square during the annual Culture Days Festival, exhibiting at the Gjuteriet Gallery, and giving a lecture on the intersection of Art and AI. The beginning of his residency overlapped with the visiting delegation from Palo Alto (see above), which

allowed him to connect with longtime family friends Sarah and Ron. Lorenz and Neighbors Abroad are grateful to the Linköping Culture and Sport Department for generously sponsoring this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

Another Sister Cities International Award: First Place for our Overduin Essay Contest and Teen Trip to Enschede



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Connect globally. Thrive locally.

We have some wonderful news to share: Neighbors Abroad has won the Sister Cities International 2024 Innovation in Youth and Education Award, which we share with our collaborators in Enschede, the Netherlands. The recognition is based on our cross-border

Overduin Civil Courage essay contest and the resulting 2023 teen trip to Enschede. The impactful educational program shined a light on a little known WW II hero from Enschede and brought together teens from three countries and four cities, including the City of Palo Alto's Sibling City, Bloomington, Indiana. What an honor to be recognized by our global umbrella organization for this ambitious project. Many people worked hard for over a year to conceive and roll out the project, including Monica Schreiber, Ed Fike and Jeannet Kiessling in Palo Alto and Dayenne Smolders, Bart Molenkamp and Muriel Platenkamp in Enschede. And none of it would have happened if not for Uri Elzur, Willy Berends, Sonna Krom, Bert Wouldstra, and Herbert Zwartz. Click [here](#) for more information on our award-winning program.



Our Young Ambassadors to Enschede: Left to right, Sydney Ernest, Ailuen Liu, Rena Cohen, and Jack Steiner (Sydney, Ailuen and Rena also figure into a Sibling Cities story below -- keep reading!)



Tsuchiura, Japan

Palo Alto to Kasumigaura: Assistant Principal Runs to Unite Sister Cities

She did it! Neighbors Abroad's 2024 running ambassador, Hanisi Accetta, completed the Lake Kasumigaura Marathon on April 21, 2024. Jointly organized by our Sister City of Tsuchiura, and Kasumigaura City, the Kasumigaura

Marathon attracts about 20,000 participants who run along the shores of Japan's second-largest lake, Lake Kasumigaura. Hanisi, the Assistant Principal at JLS Middle School, drew a huge local cheering section, which included many teenage exchange students who had visited Palo Alto the prior month and attended classes at JLS for a few days. Neighbors Abroad has sent a local representative to the marathon for many years (Chris Cummings in 2023 and prior to that, Neighbors Abroad Board Member Ed Fike in 2019). The event is just one of the numerous bridge-building activities undertaken by the two Sister Cities for decades.

And speaking of longtime collaborations ...

... Palo Alto Middle School Students Visit Tsuchiura

The Palo Alto-Tsuchiura student exchange program, which has flourished for more than 30 years, enjoyed another highly successful reciprocal exchange this year. In March, as reported in our last *Dispatch*, middle school students from Tsuchiura spent a week in Palo Alto, staying with host families, attending classes at JLS or Greene middle schools, and exploring Google and Stanford campuses, as well as taking trips to Yosemite and San Francisco. In early June, 16 enthusiastic Palo Alto students traveled to Japan for a similar cross-cultural experience, reconnecting with their Tsuchiura friends, staying with their families, and exploring the region.



Highlights of the group's many adventures and experiences in Japan included a visit to Kyoto's Arashiyama Bamboo Park, climbing to the top of Himeji Castle, a Zen Meditation exercise at Tsuchiura's Kojo-an Temple, Taiko drumming lessons on the grounds of Tsuchiura Castle, and a trip to Nikko's Tokugawa Shrine. In between the sightseeing, the students and their host families enjoyed many meals and bonded over making Takoyaki at home, wearing yukata, and attending tea ceremony among other experiences. "There were definitely some tears on the bus when we left," observed Neighbors Abroad board member Nodelyn Smith. Nodelyn and her husband, Doug, served

as chaperones together with Dr. Songli Wang, a parent of an exchange student, and Evelyn Shimazaki, trip leader and our VP of Tsuchiura. The group was warmly welcomed at a reception hosted by the Mayor of Tsuchiura, Mariko Ando as well as Tsuchiura city officials and staff. The reception was attended by local and national media. They were entertained by members of Tsuchiura International Association, Neighbors Abroad's counterpart in Tsuchiura, and by several parents of Tsuchiura students who prepared lavish feasts for the chaperones.

The City of Palo Alto and Neighbors Abroad eagerly await the arrival of Mayor Ando and members of Tsuchiura International Association who will travel to Palo Alto in October to celebrate the 15th anniversary of their Sister City relationship. For more

information about the Palo Alto-Tsuchiura Exchange Program, please contact evelyn.shimazaki@neighborsabroad.org.

Oaxaca, Mexico

Oaxaca Anniversary Celebration Set for August 3 in Palo Alto

To mark the 60th year of the special relationship between Oaxaca and Palo Alto, Neighbors Abroad is partnering with our Oaxacan friends to throw a public celebration in Palo Alto on August 3.

Stay tuned for more details!



Donated Garbage Truck Arrives in Oaxaca After Long Drive South



For decades, we have helped give retired Palo Alto firetrucks a second life in Oaxaca by donating to our Mexican Sister City the still-fully-functional vehicles (mandated by law to be retired for local use after a certain number of years). The program has been a huge win-win. Now, we have expanded the tradition to a slightly less glamorous type of truck, but one that is just as important: garbage trucks. In June, after a long drive south of the border and following various paperwork hurdles, our truck made it to Oaxaca--with another special gift inside: redwood tree saplings for planting in our Mexican Sister City. A huge thanks to Greenwaste of Palo Alto and the City of Palo Alto!



[Heidelberg, Germany](#)

Gunn High School Students 'BEAM'ing and a City Councilmember Visiting

A group of students from Gunn High School recently traveled to our German Sister City, Heidelberg, as part of a business and math program conceived by Cristina Florea, a former Neighbors Abroad board member and Gunn High School teacher. Business, Entrepreneurship and Math (BEAM) provides high school students with a targeted business and math education

experience, encouraging them to start their own businesses and dive into projects with real-world impact. The program is now being run by Steffen Haschler from the English Institute in Heidelberg. Earlier this year, 12 high school students from Heidelberg traveled to Palo Alto on a similar exchange. BEAM marks its 10th anniversary this year.

Palo Alto Councilmember Pat Burt (at left in the accompanying photo) also paid a recent visit to Heidelberg for City Cycling 2024, a 21-day competition designed to encourage more city residents to travel by bike. He joined Heidelberg Lord Mayor Eckart Würzner (pictured at right wearing the very on-point T-shirt) and former Neighbors Abroad Board member (and Heidelberg native) Jeannet Kiessling.

[Bloomington, Indiana](#)

Happy Second Anniversary!

Supporters from Palo Alto and Bloomington gathered to commemorate the second anniversary of their pairing as Sibling Cities on June 1. The event, held concurrently in each location and broadcast via Zoom, featured inspiring testimonials from both cities' mayors, community leaders and Sibling Cities USA founder, Vicki Veenker (pictured). Three of the students who represented Palo Alto and Bloomington in last year's Neighbors Abroad-coordinated trip to Enschede, our Sister City in the Netherlands, recounted their

memorable experiences as student ambassadors following their winning of a cross-border essay contest. One of the Palo Alto contest winners Sydney Ernest gave a poised and powerful speech about the need for understanding across borders, whether international or domestic. Bloomington essay contest winners Ailuen Liu and Rena Cohen made a guest appearance via Zoom.

Congratulations to Palo Alto and Bloomington on their second sibling celebration!



Welcome to the Board, Wayne and Yudy!



Wayne Thompson has joined our board to serve as a liaison with Palo Alto's Sibling City, Bloomington Indiana. Originally from Massachusetts, Wayne Thompson relocated to Santa Barbara, California in the mid-1980s when he took a position in finance and contracts for Raytheon Company. After a number of corporate relocations across the United States, Wayne and his wife Marilee returned to California in 2000, settling in Menlo Park.

They were welcomed by close neighbors and longtime Neighbors Abroad board members Jim and Barbara Newton, who, over the years, became their adopted parents. Wayne was intrigued by the couple's work with Neighbors Abroad and the rest, as they say, is history.

Wayne and Marilee are lifelong curious travelers. They have two adult children. Wayne also enjoys gardening, cooking, time with family, and walks with the family dog Buddy.

Yudy Deng is our new Co-VP for Yangpu District, Shanghai, China. She moved to Palo Alto with her two children from

Bellevue, Washington in 2018, quickly becoming an active community volunteer and champion of a wide variety of athletic, cultural, academic, and professional endeavors.

Building on her longtime love of fitness and running, Yudy joined the Board of the Friends of the Palo Alto Recreation and Wellness Center, a local nonprofit that is working toward the establishment of an indoor recreation and wellness facility in Palo Alto. She also serves as a board member for ZGZG Chinese

Cultural Events, the U.S.-China Chamber of Commerce in Silicon Valley, and the Shanghai Jiao Ton University Alumni Association of Silicon Valley, where she was the past-President. Yudy is also the Co-President of the Ohlone PTA.



During her time in Bellevue, she served as a Parks and Community Services Board Member. As a former fitness franchise owner, she gained experience as a small business owner. Yudy has also been a fitness instructor and enjoys a wide variety of sports, including marathon running, dancing, climbing, soccer, tennis and golf.

[Join Neighbors Abroad as a Member](#)

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Neighbors Abroad

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