

We're Neighbors Abroad, and this is your passport to what's happening with Palo Alto's Sister, Sibling, and Friendship Cities.

Scroll down for stories that span the globe — or click [here](#) for the best view.

Letter From the President



As regular readers of *The Dispatch* know, there's a real spark around Neighbors Abroad these days. That momentum is driven by our dedicated board of directors and generous members from the Bay Area and beyond. Volunteer time and donations keep Palo Alto's relationships with its ten international partner communities vibrant and growing.

From Albi to Yangpu, we're strengthening global goodwill through student exchanges, humanitarian projects, cultural events, and delegation visits. It's incredibly rewarding work, and the best part is making lifelong friends from faraway places along the way.

Memberships keep our programs alive. So if you've been meaning to join, or if your membership has quietly lapsed, consider this your friendly nudge. It's easy to sign up, and even easier to feel good about being part of something that is globally minded and locally rooted.

Join Neighbors Abroad today and make a world of difference.

Join Our Global Neighborhood

WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST MEMBERS

Julia Angeles • Steve and Patricia Emslie • Bob and Jan Fenwick • Bob and Jan Fisher • Joe Iglesias and Don Myers • Proteus Consulting • Ann and Tony Russo • Society of Hearts Delight

A World of Art, All in One Place

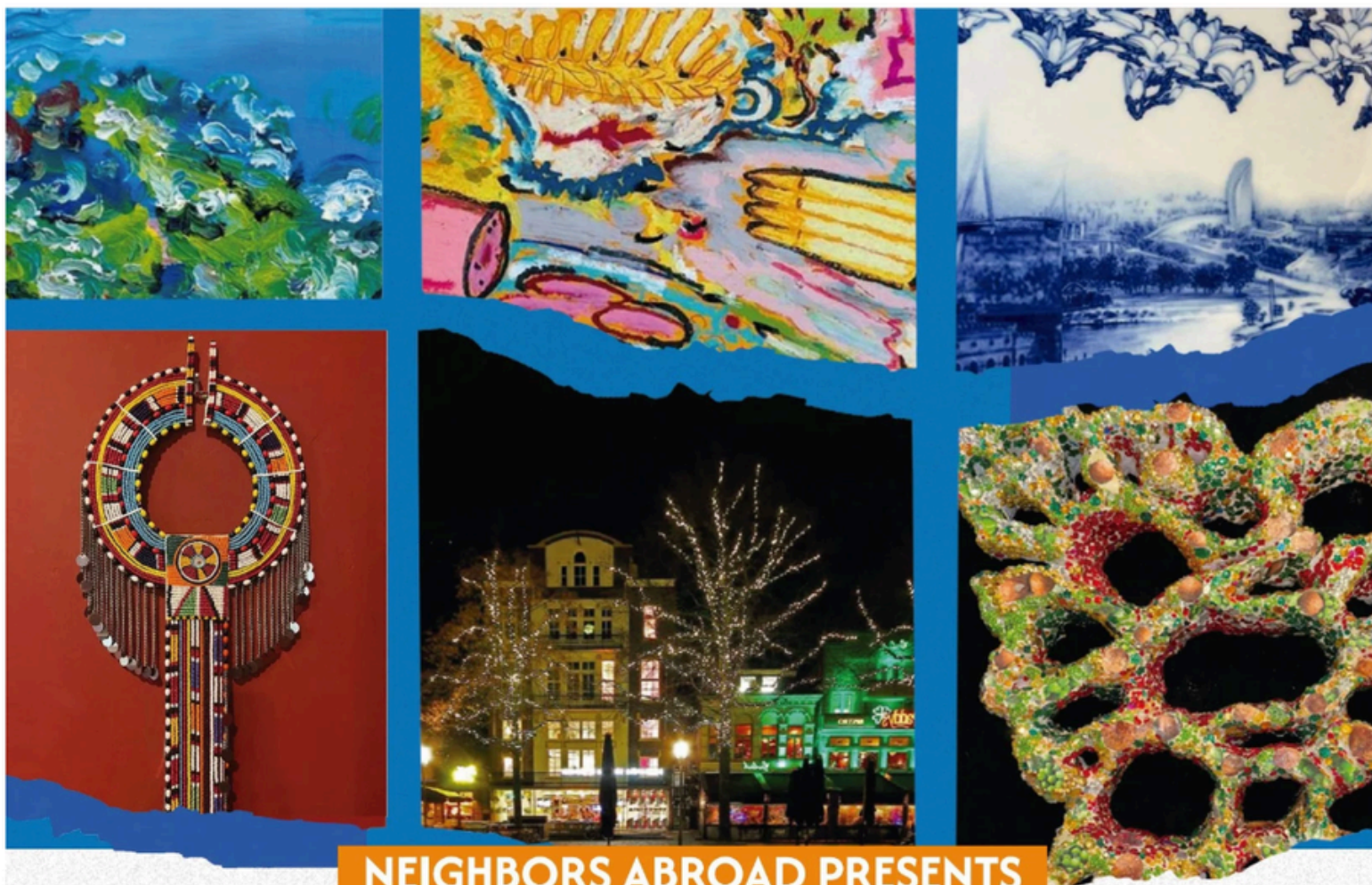
Here's something Neighbors Abroad has not done before, at least not in our recent memory: We have gathered decades' worth of art, photography, textiles, and other assorted treasures from Palo Alto's Sister Cities for everyone in the community to enjoy.

See the flyer below for all the details.

Our President, **Ed Fike**, conceived and led the organization of the **Connected Worlds** exhibit, with help from the rest of the Neighbors Abroad board, while our friend **Harriet Stern** of the Palo Alto Public Art Commission is thoughtfully curating the show, which we are honored to host at the **Pacific Art League**.

The fun kicks off on **Friday, August 7**, when we join downtown Palo Alto's evening **Art Walk**. Make an evening of it: stroll the galleries, bring a friend, and come see how much of the world we managed to fit into one exhibit. And on **Friday, August 21, from 5 to 8 p.m.**, join us and our friends from the Palo Alto Camera Club for a special reception highlighting some of the photographs that have emerged from the PACC's collaborations with like-minded photographers in Enschede and Albi.

And because two receptions are just not enough for this much global goodness, come by again on **Saturday, August 22 from 1 to 4 p.m.**, for an open house sponsored by nonprofit **Oliveseed**, founded by Neighbors Abroad board member **Barb Mackraz**. Join Barb and her Maasai guests for a little song, dance, tea, and native arts from the Maasai Mara, our Friendship City region in Kenya. Oliveseed has various projects in Kenya and Morocco to empower women and encourage education in underserved communities.



NEIGHBORS ABROAD PRESENTS

CONNECTED WORLDS:

ART AND ARTIFACTS FROM PALO ALTO'S SISTER CITIES

Visit the historic Pacific Art League to experience Neighbors Abroad's vibrant collection of artwork and memorabilia celebrating Palo Alto's global partner communities.

Friday, August 7: 6:30 – 8:00 pm

Saturday, August 8: 1:00 – 4:00 pm

Friday, August 14: 5:00 – 8:00 pm

Saturday, August 15: 1:00 – 4:00 pm

Friday, August 21: 5:00 – 8:00 pm

Saturday, August 22: 1:00 – 4:00 pm

Pacific Art League, 668 Ramona Street
Palo Alto (650) 321 - 3891

The free exhibit brings together fine art, photography, textiles, and other objects that reflect over 60 years of international friendship and cultural connection.

Featuring works from: Albi, France • Bloomington, Indiana • Enschede, The Netherlands
Heidelberg, Germany • Linköping, Sweden • Narok, Kenya • Oaxaca, Mexico
Palo, Leyte, Philippines • Tsuchiura, Japan • Yangpu District of Shanghai, China



neighbors abroad
PALO ALTO, CALIFORNIA
SISTER AND SIBLING CITIES
www.neighborsabroad.org

Neighbors Abroad Invites You!



Mark Your Calendars for the Calenda

On **Saturday, September 26**, Neighbors Abroad will once again bring its colorful Oaxacan-style **calenda**—part parade, part street festival—to California Avenue for a free community celebration filled with music, mezcal, and plenty of *alegría*. Precise time will be announced, but plan on late afternoon into early evening. Photo of dancers at last year's event by **Roland Wilhelm** @HeyRolandPhotography.com.

[Oaxaca, Mexico](#)



A Big Honor for the Jim Newton Scholarship

Sister Cities International, our umbrella organization, hands out annual awards for outstanding Sister City initiatives. We recently got the wonderful news that

SCI has recognized our **Jim Newton Scholarship**—and the opportunities it creates for young people in Oaxaca—with a **2026 Innovation in Youth and Education Award**.

For decades, Neighbors Abroad has supported the Albergue Infantil Josefino in Oaxaca, helping it provide care, stability, and opportunity to children whose families cannot support them. After longtime board member **Jim Newton** (pictured above) passed away in 2023, his wife **Barbara Newton** established the scholarship in his memory. It helps young people from the Albergue continue their education as they move into the next stage of their lives.

The award recognizes both the strength of our partnership with the Albergue and the promise of the students it serves. Our first two scholarship recipients, **Fredy E. Díaz** and **Camila L. Cruz**, graduated last year from the Preparatoria de la Santa Cruz.

Congratulations to Oaxaca co-VP **Sarah Burgess** for putting together the winning submission and helping to administer the scholarship.

[Enschede, the Netherlands and Linköping, Sweden](#)

Three Cities, One Very Full Week



The Palo Alto delegation, including Mayor Vicki Veenker, right front.

In May, delegations from Palo Alto and Enschede arrived in Linköping for three-way gathering of Sister Cities, giving our superb Swedish hosts quite the crowd to manage.

Delegates were treated to packed agendas—one for the Palo Alto group and another for the large Enschede regional contingent. Our hosts, including **Katrin Englund** and **Elisabeth Asp**, made it fit together like a diplomatic Rubik's Cube: meetings, tours, cultural events, dinners, and visits with world-renowned researchers like **Professor Anders Persson**, director of Linköping University's Center for Medical Image Science and Visualization.

The big takeaway: Linköping is a city on the move—innovative, cultured, beautifully livable, with many resources for the people lucky enough to call it home.

One of the week's highlights was **"Brass Meets Rock,"** a joint concert by **Brasset Linköping** and **Rockkoor Enschede**. More than 50 rock choir members and supporters traveled from Enschede (some driving all the way from the Netherlands in camper vans!) for an exuberant concert. Huge thanks for our Enschede collaborators, **Cor Bouwhuis** and **Edith Bouwhuis-Kroon** for introducing so many of us to the thrill of Led Zeppelin belted out by a black-clad choir members with serious rock 'n roll swagger.

And the Sister City web of connections kept growing. Photographer **Roald Kooijman** joined the Enschede group in Linköping, extending the friendships that began during his 2025 visit to Palo Alto with the Palo Alto Camera Club. We love seeing one Sister City connection lead to another—and then another—until suddenly a Dutch photographer is on the Sister City train to Sweden, camera in hand.

Mayor Vicki Veenker joined the Palo Alto delegation and had some productive sit downs with Linköping Mayor **Mikael Sanfridson** (pictured here). Another highlight was a visit with artist **Joanne Hoffsten**, a great Neighbors Abroad friend who previously exhibited in Palo Alto.

And there's more.

Palo Alto Sustainability Manager **Christine Luong** was in Linköping at the same time for a five-day "study abroad" program organized through our Sister City partnership. Christine spent several



agencies, exchanging ideas on climate action, nature conservation, renewable energy, waste management, sustainable transportation, and the design of climate-neutral neighborhoods. Christine was thrilled with the experience: "I learned so much about innovations and best practices in sustainability and climate action, met with climate and sustainability experts, and got to see first-hand the great work the city of Linköping is doing."

We are grateful to Mayor Sanfridson and so many others in Linköping. From the first greeting at City Hall to the memorable dinner at the Linköping Castle, they gave all the delegates an extraordinary experience.



Enschede's rock choir came to Linköping with 50-plus voices and some serious rock 'n roll swagger.



Pictured above: Neighbors Abroad President Ed Fike looking sharp in front of Linköping Castle. Artist Joanne Hoffsten shows off one of her delightful pieces along with Linköping VP Claire Lauing and Bloomington VP Wayne Thompson.

Albi Through Student Eyes and Camera Lenses

Two recent projects with our French Sister City are giving the Palo Alto–Albi relationship fresh energy, new friendships, and a welcome burst of creative collaboration, thanks in large part to the hard work of our Albi co-VPs, **Jennifer Kleckner** and **Candace Gunther**.

Palo Alto French Learners Attend School and See the Sights in Albi

In June, a group of students from Gunn High School and JLS visited Albi as part of a summer language and cultural trip to southern France, led by Gunn French teachers **Kirsten Tasker** and **Julia Angeles**. They were honored at a VIP reception at City Hall where **Jean-Luc Dargein-Vidal**, Albi's Municipal Councilor for International Relations, welcomed them with inspirational words about how much Albi treasures its partnership with Palo Alto (see photo of him and Kirsten Tasker below). Wonderful to see our former Albi exchange student **Julien Gandra-Moreno** in attendance! The group also explored the city's many beautiful sites, including the famous red-brick Cathédrale Sainte-Cécile and the Toulouse-Lautrec Museum.





Then the students spent a half-day at the **Bellevue Lycée**, where they toured the campus, joined an English class, and had lunch with the students. The cafeteria meal was reportedly every bit as gourmet as one would expect in France, but the real highlight was the chance to compare notes on teenage life in Albi and Palo Alto.

Another highlight: JLS Middle School French teacher **Jacqui Kandell**, whose students have been exchanging letters with Bellvue teacher **Laëtitia Fabre's** English class for the past two years, joined the visit and got to finally meet her longtime pen pal collaborator in real life. A huge thanks to **Laëtitia** who has partnered with us on various occasions and who worked extremely hard to make the high school visit happen. And a shoutout to the wonderful **Carole Barbera** in the Albi Mayor's office, who always makes the magic happen.

"These are exactly the kinds of experiences we hope to create through our Sister City relationship," Jennifer says. "The students saw Albi's extraordinary cultural treasures, but they also got to sit down with French teenagers, talk about their lives, and discover how much they have in common."

"We are so grateful to Neighbors Abroad for helping to make this trip a reality and for giving our students the chance to experience an international partnership firsthand," trip co-leader Kirsten Tasker says. "We all felt incredibly privileged to represent Neighbors Abroad, and we were truly in awe of the deep connection and vibrant exchange shared between these two cities."





Thank you to the city of Albi for a wonderful reception that brought together our exchange students, teacher partners, city officials, and other friends.

Palo Alto Camera Club and Albimage Share Love of Photography

Meanwhile, the Palo Alto Camera Club and Albimage, an aptly named amateur photo club in Albi, have kept the transatlantic creative exchange humming, with three lively Zoom sessions built around the themes "Solitary Tree," "Doors and Windows," and "Wind." At each gathering over the past few months, members from both clubs share a selection of photographs, complete with translated captions, and then spend 90 minutes or more digging into the images together.

"It has been delightful seeing friendships and creative collaborations form between the two camera clubs," Candace says. "This project offers evidence that photography and art are truly international languages."



Immediately above: An image of "Wind" by Albimage photographer Alain Chincholle. Further up, a dreamy photo of lavender and a lone tree was taken by Albimage photographer Gisèle Chevy.



Kelly Zhang

Wind Beneath Wings

The nest of this peregrine falcon was high on a cliff above a San Diego beach. For a week, I spent hours standing in the ocean water for the best viewpoint to catch the female aggressively defending her 3 chicks from intruders, especially pelicans. Finally I got this shot, which likely will be included in my forthcoming book, "American Birds of Prey." Maybe my most challenging wildlife photo experience ever!

Le nid de ce faucon pèlerin se trouvait en haut d'une falaise, au-dessus d'une plage de San Diego. Pendant une semaine, j'ai passé des heures debout dans l'eau de mer pour trouver le meilleur point de vue et photographier la femelle défendant avec agressivité ses trois oisillons contre des intrus, en particulier des pélicans. J'ai fini par obtenir ce cliché, qui figurera probablement dans mon prochain livre, « American Birds of Prey ». C'est peut-être l'expérience photographique animale la plus éprouvante que j'aie jamais vécue !

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Palo Alto Camera Club photographer Kelly Zhang captured a stunning duel between a peregrine falcon and a pelican, submitted to the Albi-Palo Alto Zoom initiative as part of the "Wind" theme.

A Week in Tsuchiura, Friendships for Life



An annual highlight of the student trip to Tsuchiura is a visit to a Zen meditation center.

For more than 30 years, the middle school exchange between Palo Alto and Tsuchiura has resulted in lasting friendships and lifelong memories. Following the Tsuchiura students' visit to Palo Alto earlier this year, it was the Palo Alto students' turn to cross the Pacific in June.

As always, Tsuchiura rolled out the welcome mat.

As the group's bus pulled into the Niihari Community Center, students and chaperones found a cheering greeting party waiting for them, including Tsuchiura **Mayor Mariko Ando**. From there, the exchange unfolded as an enriching mix of family life, school, history, culture, and plenty of adventure.

Highlights included a Zen meditation session, a hike to the top of Asahi Pass with sweeping views of Tsuchiura and a bento lunch, visits to shrines and historic neighborhoods, and a trip to Tokyo Skytree for a 360-degree view of the city. The chaperones also toured the Shibamura soy sauce factory, where enormous wooden vats and the rich smell of fermenting soy made a strong impression.



As always, the most important part of the trip was the time students spent with their host families and exchange buddies. Shared meals, school days, shopping trips, inside jokes, and tearful goodbyes are what keep this remarkable program going strong more than three decades after it began.

Kudos once again to organizers extraordinaire **Evelyn Shimazaki** and **Lydia Kou**, co-VPs for Tsuchiura.



Congratulations to Our Marathon Man in Japan



Tsuchiura Mayor Mariko Ando, right, greets Denis Shovkoplyas and his sons after Denis completed the Kasumigaura-Tsuchiura Marathon

Congratulations to **Denis Shovkoplyas**, who completed the Kasumigaura Marathon in April. He was one of more than 40,000 participants in the race, which is close to Tsuchiura and provides a scenic journey around Japan's second-largest lake.

Each year Tsuchiura extends an invitation to a Palo Alto (or nearby) resident to compete in



the event, which is considered to be one of the highlights of the Japanese running calendar. One of Denis' sons, Austin, was a past participant in the student exchange between the two cities.

Denis said this about his time in Japan: "What an amazing experience for us! I had little understanding what this trip representing the city of Palo Alto through Neighbors Abroad nonprofit would entail. Beat all of the expectations."

Yangpu Comes to Palo Alto—and Palo Alto Goes to Yangpu



Our Yangpu, China connection has been busy on both sides of the Pacific. In April, a delegation from Shanghai's Yangpu District, led by **Mayor Zhou Haiying**, made a brief visit to Palo Alto and met with Mayor **Vicki Veenker**, Councilmember **George Lu**, Neighbors Abroad President **Ed Fike**, and board members **Judy Deng** and **Bing Wei**.

Then in June, Ed returned the visit with a whirlwind tour of Yangpu that included the Riverside, meetings with local officials, the newly opened Dunhuang Contemporary Art Museum, and a skyline view from the top of the Sci-Tech Innovation Group building. Ed is pictured

here with Yangpu District Party Secretary **Xue Kan**.

Spin the Wheel, Find a Sister City



Neighbors Abroad had a blast again at Palo Alto's annual May Fete celebration.

Neighbors Abroad had a blast again at Palo Alto's annual May Fete celebration.

It's always a joy watching young curious minds guess where our Sister, Sibling, and Friendship cities are on the globe. Friends new and old stopped by to spin the wheel, share stories, and learn about the exchanges, projects, and connections we're building around the world. Thank you to our board members and volunteers for bringing the energy, and to **Mayor Vicki Veenker** and **Hobee's** for their support.

Pictured above, left to right: Board members **Claire Lauing**, **Wayne Thompson**, **Jennifer Kleckner**, **Barb Mackraz** and **Sarah Burgess**. Photo by **Roland Wilhelm** @HeyRolandPhotography.com.

Young Artist and Poet Shine in Sister Cities International's Contest



Big congratulations to Gunn High School student **Jiayu Gu** (pictured here) and Greene Middle School student **Zosia Clark**, our two local winners in Sister Cities International's 2026 **Young Artists and Authors Showcase**. This year's theme, "Voices of Today, Visions of Tomorrow," invited young people ages 12–18 around the world to imagine how creativity, friendship, and today's ideas can help shape tomorrow's global community.

Jiayu, who was a student at JLS Middle School when she submitted to the contest, won second place in the 12–14 age group in the poetry category for "Echoes of Tomorrow," and Zosia won third place in the 12–14 age group for digital art for her piece titled "Love Mother Earth" (pictured).

Sister Cities International said their work "stood out for its talent, thoughtfulness, and creative response to the Sister Cities mission of people-to-people diplomacy."

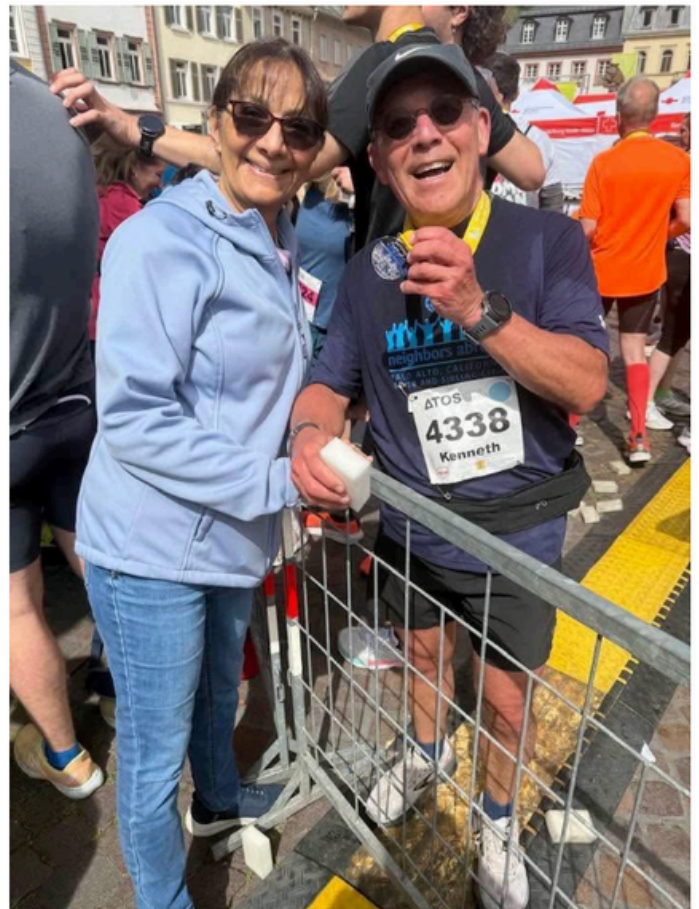
We are thrilled to see young local voices recognized on an international stage—and we hope this is only the beginning of their creative adventures.



Running the Hills of Heidelberg



Congratulations to Neighbors Abroad board member **Ken Sanchez** who completed a hilly half marathon in our German Sister City, Heidelberg, in April. Ken was one of the special guests of Heidelberg's **Lord Mayor Eckart Wurzner** (pictured with Ken below), who also invited runners from other Heidelberg Sister Cities to participate. Ken was met by his cheering wife, **Flor Sanchez** (our Oaxaca co-VP), at the finish line.



How 72 Sewing Machines Made It to Oaxaca



As we reported in our last newsletter, Neighbors Abroad organized a major shipment of items to Oaxaca this spring, including medical and firefighting equipment—and, for the first time, 72 sewing machines destined for women building new skills and livelihoods.

Our partners at **Sewing Peace** have now published a wonderful account of the effort, with a generous shout-out to Neighbors Abroad and board member **Ken Sanchez** for helping make the complicated cross-border delivery possible. The article highlights our longstanding relationships in Oaxaca, our coordination with local government and partner organizations, and the

experience we brought to moving a shipment through the many rules and logistical hurdles involved.

To read more about other donations we recently sent down to Oaxaca, including medical equipment in partnership with Avenidas, see our last newsletter [here](#).

[Read the Article](#)

Think Global, Support Local: Become a Member of Neighbors Abroad!

For more than 60 years, Neighbors Abroad has been creating meaningful people-to-people connections between Palo Alto and our communities around the globe. From youth exchanges to cultural delegations, from sustainability summits to book donations, we bring our city's values—curiosity, compassion, collaboration—into global action.

Our work thrives on local support. By becoming a member, you're not only helping us sustain global friendships and life-changing programs, you're also joining a community of people who believe in diplomacy at the human level.

Click the red button below and join today!

[Support Neighbors Abroad by Becoming a Member](#)

Neighbors Abroad

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