



The Dispatch

Summer 2023



Welcome to *The Dispatch*, Neighbors Abroad's regular round up of our projects around the world and within our community. In the summer edition of our 60th anniversary year, we:

- Report on a recent teen trip to our Dutch Sister City, Enschede, the culmination of an innovative cross-border essay contest. Pictured above, on a train to meet essay contest winners in Münster, Germany, are our Young Ambassadors from Palo Alto, our Sibling City Bloomington, and Enschede.
- Tell you about the first post-Covid middle school student trip to Tsuchiura, Japan, one of Neighbors Abroad's flagship exchange programs.
- Report on a Palo Alto High School student's summer experience in our Mexican Sister City, Oaxaca, and provide an update on the current installation of life-changing rainwater capture tanks in Yaxe.
- Explain why we are so excited over a Palo Alto garbage truck.
- Announce a generous artist-in-residence opportunity offered by our Swedish Sister City, Linköping, and report on a recent brass band concert by our Swedish friends.
- Share news of a classroom pen pal program between middle schoolers in Palo Alto and their counterparts in our French Sister City, Albi.
- Announce the establishment of the Iraidia Espinosa Scholarship to further the education of young people in our Philippines Sister City, Palo. We also congratulate two of our former Scholars who just passed their teaching exams.
- Report on what's going on over at our partner organization, Sibling Cities USA.
- Show you some of the fantastic art produced by local teens for the Sister Cities International's annual Young Artists and Authors Showcase.

YOU'RE INVITED! Celebrating Six Decades of Sister City Friendship

Please join Neighbors Abroad on Friday, October 27, from 6-9 p.m., at the Lucie Stern Community Center to celebrate our 60th anniversary of cultivating Palo Alto's Sister City relationships. The fundraising party will include a silent auction, international cuisine, and entertainment.

Proceeds benefit our service projects in Mexico and the Philippines, youth exchange programs, and other initiatives around the world and here at home. For more information, please visit our event web page [here](#). Tickets should be up for sale by the end of the summer. Mark your calendars and join the fun! If you have questions, please email mschreiber@neighborsabroad.org.

Enschede, the Netherlands

Essay Contest Trip Honors WWII Humanitarian and Brings Together Teens from Sister & Sibling Cities

Palo Alto and Enschede, Sister Cities since 1980, joined forces last year to

launch the [Leendert Overduin Civil](#)

[Courage Essay Contest](#), open to high school students in Palo Alto, our Sibling City,

Bloomington, Indiana, as well as students in Enschede and its Sister City Münster, Germany. The innovative cross-border contest offered an opportunity for the winners to visit Enschede as Sister City ambassadors in June 2023. During the impactful one-week visit, the teens met Holocaust survivors, forged friendships with their Dutch and German counterparts, lived with host families, attended a Dutch high school for a day, appeared on the local news, took a day trip to Münster, visited the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam, and experienced much more.



Local media in Enschede took a great interest in the trip honoring Enschede's Pastor Overduin, who saved hundreds of Jewish children during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands, and later helped the children of arrested collaborators after the liberation. There were several newspaper articles like the one at left featuring student ambassador and Palo Alto resident Sydney Ernest with her "new best friend" from Enschede, Carmen ten Tusscher. A local TV station conducted a live interview with the students.

Trip leaders Ed Fike and Monica Schreiber were impressed with the Young Ambassadors.

They showed an interest in history, wanted to learn

about each other's countries and cultures, and made the most of a truly unique travel experience. To see additional photos from the trip, click [here](#). To read a blog post about the historical poignancy of the trip, click [here](#).

Tsuchiura, Japan

Palo Alto Middle Schoolers Return to our Japanese Sister City

After a three-year hiatus due to COVID-19, Neighbors Abroad is delighted to share that our flagship middle school Japan exchange program resumed in June. Ten Palo Alto area middle school students, along with four chaperones, traveled to Japan to visit Hiroshima, Kyoto, and Himeji, followed by a five-day homestay with Tsuchiura families. In this reciprocal exchange, our students were matched with Japanese families who have children close to the same age. While in Tsuchiura, our students attended Japanese middle school classes with their Japanese buddies, learning about a variety of subjects. Some of the students received instruction on the Japanese koto, a stringed instrument (pictured above), while others learned Japanese calligraphy and attended a Zen meditation with a Buddhist monk (pictured below).



Our students met Tsuchiura's Mayor Mariko Ando the City of Tsuchiura staff and others, including Yuko Fujita, the President of Tsuchiura International. Thanks to Neighbors Abroad board members Jennifer Buenrostro and Evelyn Shimazaki for their efforts in resuming this dynamic exchange program.



And the fun is just beginning! A group of Tsuchiura students will come to Palo Alto in March 2024 and we are looking for 16 families with middle school-aged children to provide homestays for these delightful young people who are eager to learn about life in Silicon Valley. It is only a one-week commitment, but the friendships forged by these exchanges often endure for a lifetime. The families who host a student can then send their

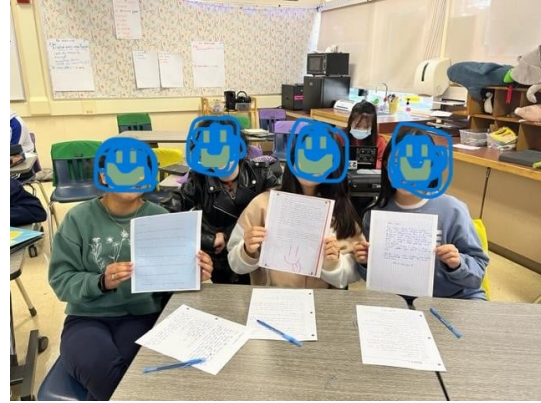
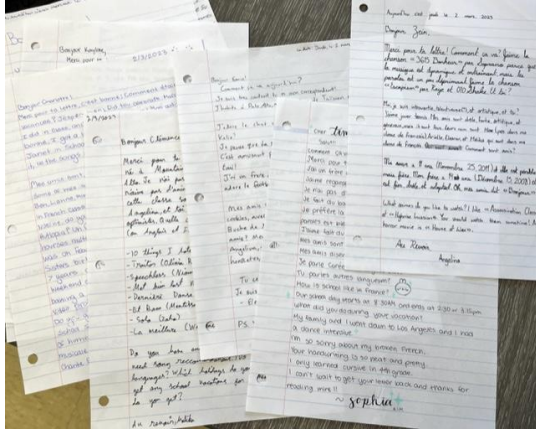
own children to Japan on the trip next June. For more information about this unique opportunity, please send an email to evelyn.shimazaki@neighborsabroad.org or sistercity.tsuchiura@gmail.com.

Albi, France

Classrooms in Palo Alto and Albi Share Letters and Friendship

Over the 2022-23 school year, Neighbors Abroad's VP for Albi, Monica Schreiber, worked with French teachers at JLS and Fletcher Middle Schools to launch a delightful pen pal exchange with English learners in our Sister City, Albi. French teacher Jacqui Kandell from JLS and Mathilde Lenoir from Fletcher led the charge in the Palo Alto classrooms, having their students correspond with Emily Delalande's students at Collège Cordes in Albi. Mathilde also did a classroom exchange with Myriam Yousfi at Lycée Lapérouse in Albi. "It has been

great to watch the students' excitement and interest in learning about their pen pals, some of whom live in rural areas and on farms. We hope that this exchange will continue in the future and perhaps grow into a visit to Albi some day," said Kandell.



Past, Present, and Future Exchange Students: YOU'RE INVITED!

Neighbors Abroad is hosting a backyard barbecue on August 7 at 6:30 p.m. for past, present, and prospective exchange students. Please join us to meet fellow world travelers, reminisce, and to learn more about our programs for middle school students in Tsuchiura, Japan, and high school students in Oaxaca, Mexico. While Neighbors Abroad does not currently have full-fledged exchange programs in other of Palo Alto's Sister Cities, we often can arrange one-off, customized exchanges and homestays, something few, if any, other exchange programs can offer.

To RSVP and for more information, including the location of the event, please email nodelyn.smith@neighborsabroad.org or call [+1 650 995 6858](tel:+16509956858).

Oaxaca, Mexico

Refuse Truck To Head Across the Border

For almost 30 years, Palo Alto has periodically provided Oaxaca with surplus firetrucks, a project launched by the late Joe Carlton and led in recent years by Neighbors Abroad's past President Bob Wenzlau. These donations have provided a sustainable second life for numerous trucks that state law requires be retired after a certain number of years, even if fully operational. This year, the project expands to include a much-needed refuse collection truck donated by GreenWaste, Palo Alto's waste management service. The truck will be parked at Palo Alto City Hall on September 26 when a delegation that includes the President of Oaxaca visits Palo Alto to officially accept the donation. Meanwhile, Neighbors Abroad will be working on numerous fronts to raise the thousands of dollars



necessary to transport the truck, execute the paperwork, and otherwise complete this win-win initiative. We are also working with the Palo Alto Fire Department to determine if we might be able to donate a firetruck in the near future. Stay tuned!



Neighbors Abroad's Oaxaca Exchange is Back!

Our long-running Oaxaca student exchange program has resumed! Palo Alto High School student Anna Van Riesen (pictured at left, in center of group) spent four weeks in our Mexican Sister City this summer, where she lived with a host family, improved her Spanish, and experienced unique

cultural and service opportunities. Anna volunteered at the *Albergue Infantil Josefino* and *Centro Calpulli*, both child-focused non-profits that Neighbors Abroad has supported for decades. She met the President of Oaxaca, visited the *bomberos* to see the fire trucks donated by Palo Alto over the years, traveled, and enjoyed the warm Oaxacan hospitality.

As this is a reciprocal exchange, Anna's Oaxacan sister, Ana Paula Eugenio Reyes, came back to Palo Alto with her in early July. The teens are enjoying a typical American summer: backyard barbecues, outings to the Stanford Shopping Center, the beach, soccer games, and more. For more information about our Oaxacan exchange program, email sarah.burgess@neighborsabroad.org.

Yaxe Rainwater Capture Tanks: An Update on Our Award-Winning Project

The second phase of the Yaxe rainwater capture project is in full swing thanks to generous donations from our community, including our friends at the Kiwanis Club of Palo Alto. On July 7, a delegation including Sarah Burgess, Ron Valencia, Nodelyn Smith, and Evelyn Shimazaki, traveled to Yaxe, an indigenous village near Oaxaca, to meet with members of the Oaxaca committee and the agencies with which we have been working for years to bring fresh water to the village. After three years of Zoom meetings, it was wonderful to meet Delfin Montañana and other members of non-profit Isla Urbana, a driving force behind the rainwater capture tank project. The municipal government welcomed us and our partner Vidas Y Sueños organized a tour of some of the homes that have received rainwater capture tanks. A young mother of five (pictured above with child in her arms) described how she no longer has to travel 40 minutes to and from the river, with all her children in tow, in order to wash her dishes and clothes. Walking through the streets of Yaxe, one can now see the signature blue tanks on every street.



Jefe Manuel Maza of the Oaxaca *Bomberos* was on hand to deliver backpacks with medical equipment to Yaxe and Stanford's Global Wellness Project again sent students to track the effects of drought, pollution, and industrial activity on the community. We dedicated a plaque to the many groups and individuals who have

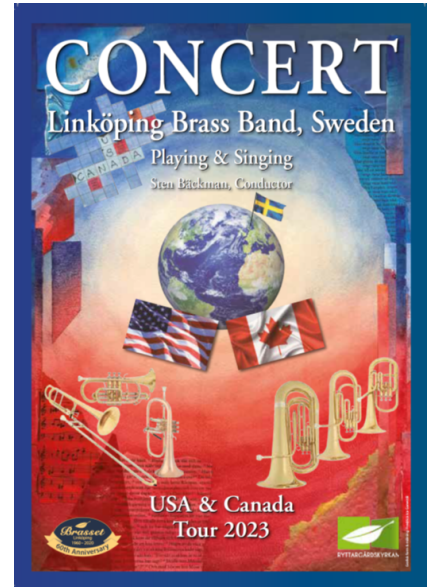
supported this project and were treated to traditional dances from *Danza Calpulli*. Back in Oaxaca, we enjoyed a parade from Guelaguetza Convite. Many thanks to Marisela Flores, president of the Oaxaca Comité, as well as Andrea Ortiz and Martin Mijangos from Vidas y Sueños for such a rewarding experience.

Read [here](#) about the history of this life-changing program.

Linköping, Sweden

Brass Band Concert and Tree Planting Honor the Late Barbara Evans

The acclaimed Linköping Brass Band, from Palo Alto's Swedish Sister City, performed a joint concert with the locally-based Foothill Symphonic Winds Brass Ensemble on April 6. More than 200 attendees packed Cubberley Theatre for an evening of rousing classical and contemporary selections, organized by Linköping VP Ed Fike.



The concert – the final stop in the Linköping Brass Band's 23rd World Tour – was dedicated to the late Neighbors Abroad president Barbara Evans, who frequently traveled to Sweden and hosted members of visiting Linköping delegations at her Palo Alto home.

Earlier that day, Neighbors Abroad and Canopy presented a memorial tree planting at Palo Alto's Seale Park in honor of Barbara. The tribute featured moving comments from Barbara's Neighbors Abroad colleagues and a special performance by a sextet from the Linköping Brass Band.

Calling Local Artists: Opportunity for Residency Program in Sweden



Attention Palo Alto area artists! Neighbors Abroad is seeking applicants for an amazing opportunity to serve as an artist-in-residence in Linköping, Palo Alto's Swedish Sister City. The selected artist will receive airfare, an apartment, a monetary stipend and the chance to exhibit their art in gorgeous Linköping, which is located two hours southeast of Stockholm. This is truly a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity! The opportunity is open to artists who reside or maintain a studio in Palo Alto, East Palo Alto, Mountain View, Los Altos, Los Altos Hills, Stanford, Portola Valley or Menlo Park. The residency will begin during spring 2024. Applications must be received by September 15, 2023. Full details about the program may be found [here](#).

[Palo, Leyte, the Philippines](#)

Palo Committee Establishes Scholarship in Honor of Iraida Espinosa

At a reception hosted by our Palo Committee in March, Neighbors Abroad VP Nodelyn Smith announced that one of the annual scholarships we give to deserving college students in Palo Alto's oldest Sister City, Palo, Leyte, the Philippines, will be named after Iraida Busó Espinosa, who passed away on January 5, 2023, a month shy of her 105th birthday. The Iraida Espinosa Scholarship, which is funded for two years, will go to a deserving college student in Palo who is pursuing a degree in teaching/education. A longtime Palo Alto Unified teacher, Espinosa was a Neighbors Abroad leader in the 1980s and 1990s. She developed a special interest in Palo, Leyte, and worked to raise funding for a children's library and vocational training center there. Palo Scholarship recipients are young college students who would otherwise have trouble paying for books and expenses if not for the financial support. Learn more about our work in Palo [here](#).



News about Palo Scholars and Local Support of Daycares

Neighbors Abroad congratulates two of our former Palo Scholars, Jay Rose Martillo and Ma Hannah Isabel Agustin, who recently passed the licensure exam to become elementary school teachers. As undergrads, both of these young women benefitted from Neighbors Abroad's Palo Scholar program, which provides funding for books and other expenses to deserving students who otherwise would have trouble pursuing higher education. Many of our Palo Scholars have gone on to professional careers, as teachers, engineers, and social workers, thereby helping to shape the next generation of Palo leaders. Congratulations to two of Palo's newest teachers!

Meanwhile, Sheilane Cabag, who runs the Children's Library that Neighbors Abroad has long supported, along with university student Gemmalyn Tejones, are conducting site visits to daycare

centers around Palo to bring crayons, coloring books, and snacks to the children. They travel, often long distances, by motorized Filipino tricycles.



[Bloomington, Indiana](#)

Virtual Town Halls Planned for Sibling Cities



It's hard to believe that our groundbreaking Sibling City relationship between Palo Alto and Bloomington, Indiana, is just over a year old! The twinned domestic cities have already accomplished so much together, including bringing together teens from each city during the Overduin Essay Contest trip to Enschede, the Netherlands in June (see article above). Read more in this [Annual Report](#) published by Sibling Cities USA ("SCUSA").

Next up for the pairing is a fall Town Hall series, an exciting component of SCUSA's innovative Civil Discourse initiative. Town Halls will have a very special hybrid structure: residents of Bloomington and Palo Alto will each gather in person and connect with those in the other city by videoconference. Crowdsourcing brought these three topics to the top of the list for this year:

September: Bridging Our Country's Regional Divides

October: Climate Action

November: Race and Belonging

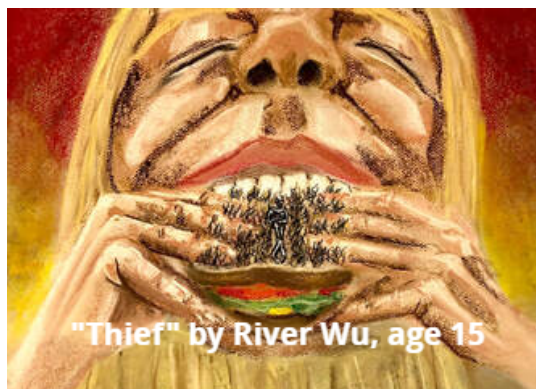
Planning committees for each Town Hall will include students, seniors, and those in between. SCUSA needs a few more residents in each city to help set the agenda and get the word out. Like to help? Email admin@siblingcitiesusa.org.

[Sister Cities International](#)

Local Teen Artists Submit Eye-Popping Art, Music, Writing to Contest

Sister Cities International, the national non-profit that serves as our umbrella organization, is running its annual [Young Artists and Authors Showcase](#). The

annual art and writing competition encourages young people aged 13-18 to express the mission of Sister Cities International through artwork, writing, photography, and music. The theme this year is "Peace by Piece: Food Security in my Community."



The competition has six categories: Classic Art, Digital Art, Photography, Essay, Poetry, and Musical Composition. Winners receive cash prizes and will have their artwork displayed on the Sister Cities International website and other places. For the 2023 competition, we had an impressive showing of entries from talented teens in Palo Alto and surrounding communities. Winners will be announced August 10, 2023.



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