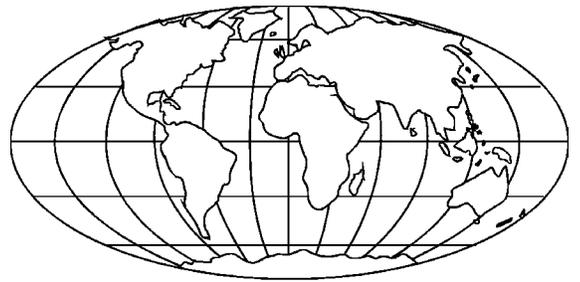


# EL CHISME

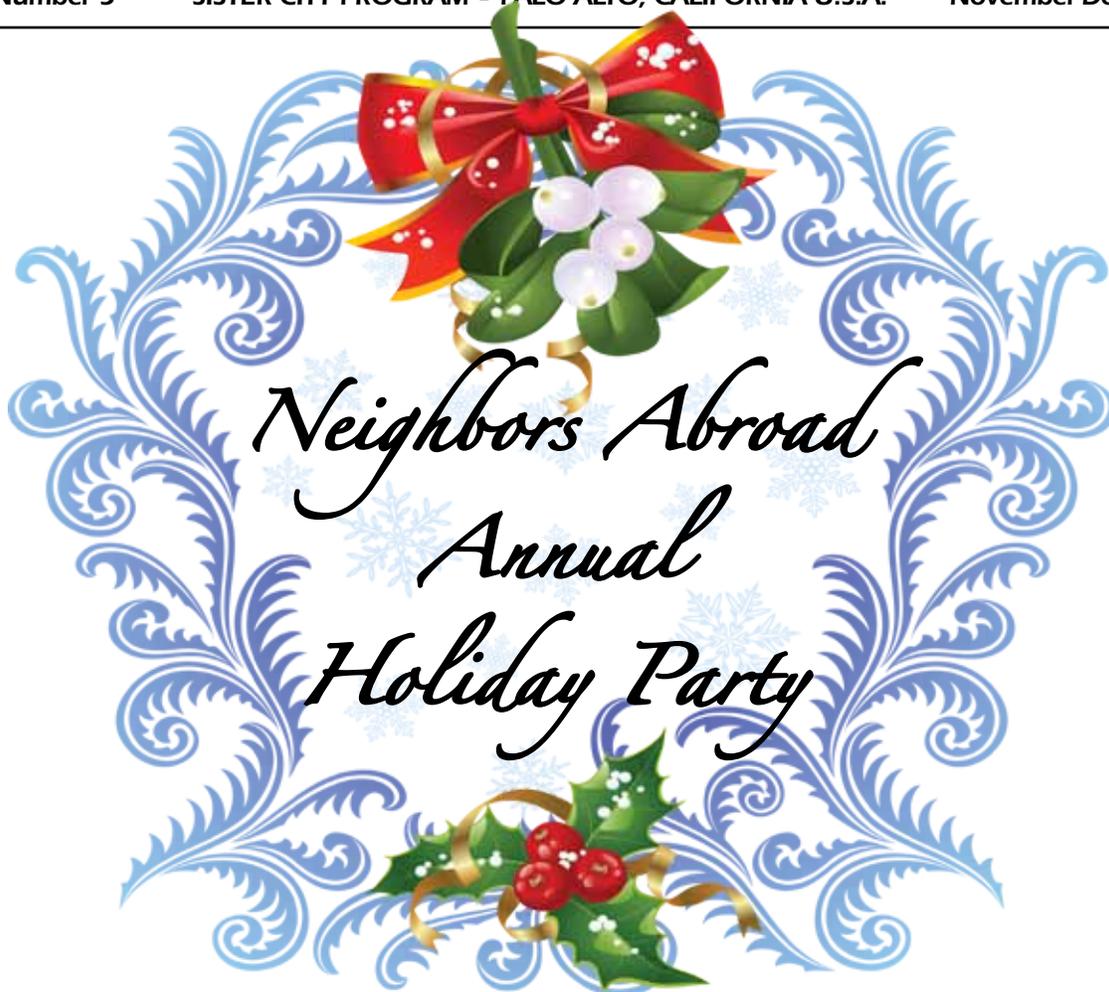
## de Neighbors Abroad



Volume 54, Number 5

SISTER CITY PROGRAM ■ PALO ALTO, CALIFORNIA U.S.A.

November-December 2016



*Saturday, December 3, 4:00 to 7:00 p.m.  
Hardesty-Parker Home, 69 Santiago Ave., Atherton*

*featuring food representing each of our 6 sister cities  
and an encore performance by the*

*Neighbors Abroad International Band*

*\$25 Donation per person*

*All proceeds go to Neighbors Abroad Children's Projects in Oaxaca and Palo*

*Reserve by calling Ruth Carleton at 650-324-3635  
Checks payable to Neighbors Abroad should be sent to:  
Ruth Carleton, 36 Pearce Mitchell, Stanford, CA 94305*

# President's Report

I want to share the sense of big shoes I step into filling Neighbors Abroad's presidency. Thanks again to Joe and Barbara for their leadership for so many years. I also appreciate the constancy of Jim Newton's financial reports.

Neighbors Abroad is a great collection of colleagues working for international culture exchange. I hope to bring more members, more fun and stronger alignment to the City of Palo Alto through my tenure as your president. Let's see how it goes.

I am trying to focus Board meetings more on discussions and fewer reports. I hope to encourage sister city committee work as well as broader areas of committee work including school coordination, membership, fund raising and external affairs. External affairs encompasses not only our work with the City of Palo Alto, but also Kiwanis International, Sister Cities International and even venues like our United Nations Association. You will see some information about these partner organizations in this issue.

While Neighbors Abroad has a cultural mission, I believe the impact of the organization will grow as we align with our schools and local government. I believe creating new alignments in the schools and with the City can bring more members. We get member interest when we help with language, and we would likely get member interest when we help with sustainability, a core element of Palo Alto. All of this is still mindful to culture, but brings a bit of freshness.

PAUSD: Jennifer Buenrostro and I have met with Dr. Max McGee to present an overview of how our organization might evolve to support the World Languages program taught in the school district. We gained his support to promote our exchange programs at the high school level with the proviso that we would address any financial barriers in the exchange services.

City of Palo Alto: I have met with the mayor to discuss efforts to align the Sister City and Smart City affiliations. One Smart City is already a Sister City: Enschede. Another is Heidelberg, Germany and third, the Yagnpu District of Shanghai China. The Smart City program brings candidate cities that can complete some gaps in our World Language strategy with PAUSD. The Mayor is encouraging pursuing a Sister City relationship with Heidelberg.

The Board has created some new committees that allow moving forward. The balance was not to have too many committees, but also align with the natural groupings we have.

*Finance and Membership:* This is the back room where we can build a stronger framework including fundraising, membership growth, and knowing our members.

*Schools:* This focuses on developing progress within Palo

Alto public schools, but also reaching out to local private schools and public schools in neighboring communities. The effort works to coordinate the existing exchanges managed by the city committees.

*Partnering and Programs:* This collects the activities where we work with other organizations including Kiwanis International, Sister Cities International, United Nations Association, City of Palo Alto and others where we seek to coordinate efforts.

*Communications:* This collects the various forms we inform and engage with members including *El Chisme*, the website, Facebook (see our page), email and mailings. This committee will work on messaging, images and sorting out how we serve audiences that like to learn in print or online.

*Oaxaca Committee:* Collecting all the active projects in Oaxaca as well as the student exchange.

*Asia Committee:* This will focus on our Tsuchiura exchange program led by Jennifer and outreach and relations with Palo lead by Chris and Maya, as well as the Smart City connection with the Yagnpu District of Shanghai China.

*European Committee:* This collects the engagement with Albi, Enschede and Linkoping and European Smart City Heidelberg.

There is a lot of work to be done and we need many people to help. One immediate need is someone to be recording secretary for the Board, and members to join any of the other committees. You are welcome at Board meetings to see how we are progressing, or you may contact me at bob@wenzlau.net or 650-248-4467. I hope to meet many of you at our annual Neighbors Abroad Holiday Party and fundraiser on December 3.

Bob Wenzlau

**It's time to renew your Neighbors Abroad membership. Renewal envelopes went out in September for the upcoming year. Please return with your check. Your label indicates the last time you paid. Your membership shows support for our Sister City program. We appreciate your ongoing support of Neighbors Abroad. Call or email Joe Evans, 650-856-0618 or evansbanjo@sbcglobal.net if you've misplaced your envelope.**

# GET TO KNOW OUR PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

## Kiwanis and Neighbors Abroad

The Kiwanis Club of Palo Alto (KCPA) has been supporting through Neighbors Abroad (NA) children's projects in Oaxaca for more than a decade and has contributed over \$16,000 to date. The KCPA had also contributed books and backpacks for the children and has been active in enabling the delivery of Palo Alto's surplus fire vehicles to Oaxaca. The International Committee (IC) of the KCPA, at the request of NA's president, is forming the leadership of NA's new Partners Committee (PC) that is to reach out to local community organizations and businesses in search of synergies among the organizations and NA.

NA's PC currently has nine members, seven of whom are members of the KCPA. The nine are tasked with reaching out to the City of Palo Alto, the PAUSD, the KCPA, Stanford University, Sister Cities International (SCI), the Northern California chapter of SCI, the United Nations Association gift shop, Avenidas, the YMCA, the Palo Alto Rotary, and the University Rotary. They are working on getting a liaison to the Palo Alto Chamber of Commerce. It is anticipated that initial accomplishments will be to open channels of regular communication. Watch this space for more information once this committee gets going.

The Partners Committee is actively seeking NA members who might be able to help with outreach efforts to local community organizations. Interested individuals should contact Hank Heubach via email at hgheubach@sbcglobal.net

## United Nations Association Gift Shop

A reminder to Neighbors Abroad members that Palo Alto's United Nations Association Gift Shop continues to showcase a lively, charming collection of painted folk art animals from Oaxaca! If you haven't been in to the shop lately, now might be a good time to check these out. A photo board accompanying the display mentions that Oaxaca is one of Palo Alto's sister cities and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. UNICEF Christmas cards are also in. As always, for anyone interested in fair trade gift items that help provide a livelihood for artisans from around the world, the shop remains a special place in the hearts of Palo Altans old and young. The store has new vendors from Ghana (textiles), India (handbags, scarves), beautiful vintage blankets and pillows from Peru, and a new shipment of delightful felt toys from Nepal.

Upcoming UNA Gift Shop events of note: Basket and Textiles Home Event. On Sunday, November 6, from 10 to 5, shop volunteers will host a special one-day shopping event featuring baskets, textiles, home decor, kitchen and dining items, and linens (hand-dyed placemats, runners, napkins, aprons for children and adults, and more) from artisans around the world. Charming, durable Haitian metal art for walls indoors or out will also be for sale. A few countries whose basketry, wall hangings, pillows, or blankets will be ready for purchase include Ghana (market baskets, Kente cloth), Guatemala, Namibia, Peru, South Africa (Zulu wire in beautiful color combinations) and Swaziland (sisal). The event is free to the public and takes place at the UNA Gift Shop, 552 Emerson St., in downtown Palo Alto. With every purchase you help to support artisans directly in the area where they live. Also, for anyone who might be interested in a three-hour weekly shop shift, the shop always welcomes new volunteers.

### STUDENTS WHO WILL BE 15 YEARS OR OLDER BY JUNE OF 2017, AND STUDYING SPANISH, WHAT WILL YOU BE DOING NEXT SUMMER?

If traveling to Oaxaca and becoming a member of a new family sounds good to you, be sure to come to the **FAMILY INFORMATION MEETING** about **Neighbors Abroad's Student Exchange to Oaxaca**. Bring your parents to hear about the program too! (So they can find out how financially reasonable it really is...)

**The meeting will be on Monday, November 14 at 7:00 P.M. in Room A-3 at Cubberley Community Center, 4000 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto**

Application packets will be available and all of your questions will be answered. This is the place to get your information. If you have an urgent advance question, please call or email Marion at 650-493-3798 or marionb@sonic.net

During my time in Oaxaca, I kept a journal in which I wrote "pro-tips", or anecdotal things I had learned that day. Some were specific and others broad, some funny and others serious. When I received Marion's request for a summary of my trip, I went back through my pro-tips and chose some of my favorites. It was a great experience for me to go back and reread what I had written only hours after the events had happened. It was like living my trip over again. Hopefully these excerpts will share a bit of my transforming experience with Neighbors Abroad and El Chisme readers.

Pro-tip #12: ensure you know the whole plan for the day, and if you don't, ask. Other-wise, you may end up spelunking in complete darkness while wearing ballet flats and white shorts and having no idea what is happening.

Pro-tip #20: spicy candy is an evil trap.

Pro-tip #21: same for corn.

Pro-tip #24: [When you are giving someone greeting or parting kiss on the cheek,] if you move too quickly you'll hit cheekbones with the other person...it will hurt and be very awkward for both parties.

Pro-tip #37: no one expects you to be perfect.

Pro-tip #52: learn to cross yourself before coming to Mexico.

Pro-tip #53: don't be afraid to try something you think you can't do.

Pro-tip #54: and if you don't get it all perfectly the first time, keep trying!

Pro-tip #70: different does not mean bad, but rather a change to experience something new.

There were a lot of ups and downs while I was in Oaxaca. I left with some fantastic stories that I want to shout from the rooftops. I left with other stories I would prefer to keep to myself, like the time I tried to tell my host mom there was a bug on her leg but used the wrong word and she slapped her face instead. Ultimately, despite the occasional mistakes and embarrassment, I'm very blessed to have been able to go on this exchange. It was an experience like no other and one I will remember for the rest of my life. The depth of child-like wonder it ignited in me is something I can't even begin to express. Thank you to all those who made it possible at Neighbors Abroad, both in California and in Oaxaca. Gratitude and best wishes for all,

Katie Cardoza

## OAXACA EXCHANGE STUDENT IMPRESSIONS

Despite being nervous for what would soon be remembered as one of the most challenging and amazing experiences of my life so far, I decided to take a chance and go to Oaxaca, Mexico for a month and have an Oaxacan exchange student, "my sister Aranza" return home with me. When I first arrived I was really nervous but my family accepted me with open arms, taught me not just their language but their culture, and showed me a glimpse of the distinct and beautiful traditions and customs of Oaxaca. I got to see everything from the breathtaking view in Hierve el Agua on some gorgeous mountains to simply hanging out in the market with my "sister", Ara and her friends. The overall experience turned out to be a memorable one that will be etched in my mind forever. It was not just a fun experience but a learning one as well. I am so thankful my family made adjustments in our lives to provide me the opportunity to go on the exchange and thankful to have gained a whole new family and group of friends in Oaxaca.

Natania Jones Mitchell

What was it like in Oaxaca? To truly answer that question in its entirety, I would need to write a book. But I'm not going to do that. Yet. What I will do is try to give you a feel for what it was like and why it was one of the best summers I ever spent.

When I was on the plane from Mexico City to Oaxaca, I was feeling so nervous. If there had been a "stop and turn back" button right then, I probably would have pressed it. Going in, I was terrified. I'd never spent more than a week away from my family before, and even that was at sleep-away camp. Even worse, I was going to have to speak another language for a whole month. Since the morning, I'd been trying to conjure even a single phrase in Spanish to address the customs officers, but every time I worked up the courage to say a carefully planned sentence, the person would speak to me in English, and whatever I was going to say would melt away.

When we reached the Oaxaca airport, we got our bags and then, all together, we went through the passageway between the bag check and the reception area. At that point, the only thing going through my head was "there's no turning back now." It was like just when you're about to jump into a pool, and right after you make the decision to jump, you're already moving and you know in your head that it's too late to stop going forward, too late to un-jump, you just have to hold your breath and plunge.

What followed was completely different from anything I'd expected. Over the course of a month, I got to be a part of someone else's family. I was welcomed wholeheartedly, and I grew to love my host parents and siblings, so much so that I miss being with them even now. I miss being their "sandwich daughter", named because I was their new middle child. With my host sister as my guide, I learned how to function in a city completely different from my own. I got to visit breathtaking mountains, waterfalls and beaches, and walk through ruins that were thousands of years old. Every day, I got to use my knowledge of Spanish in a new way, and every day I made many mistakes. It was a struggle, trying to communicate across a language barrier. In my head, I'd formed the sen-

continued on page 6



## OAXACA

Well, it seems like we have barely finished with last summer's highly successful student exchange to Oaxaca and it's time to start planning for the summer of 2017! Please tell your children, grandchildren, neighbors, friends, and all the folks you know that there will be a **family information meeting for the Summer 2017 Student exchange to Oaxaca on Monday, November 14 at 7:00 pm in Room A3, Cubberley Community Center, 4000 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto**. See the announcement on page 3. Be sure to read write-ups from three of the past summer's exchangees on the adjoining page.

By now you have probably received the annual Children's Projects appeal letter, describing the activities and needs of the service projects for children in our Sister Cities in Oaxaca, Mexico and Palo, Philippines. We in Palo Alto and the people in Oaxaca and Palo work together to support these successful projects—the Albergue Infantil Josefino (the orphanage) and the Programa Niño-a-niño (Child-to-child Health Program) both in Oaxaca, and the Children's Library in Palo, Philippines. Please try to support these terrific projects as generously as you can.

And did you notice the information about Neighbors Abroad's traditional Holiday Party, on the front of this *El Chisme*? This annual party at the lovely Hardesty/Parker home also helps the Children's Projects in Oaxaca and Palo. There will be plenty of international treats from all the countries where Neighbors Abroad has Sister Cities! YUM! And the famous Neighbors Abroad International Band will be back "by popular request"! Mark December 3rd on your calendar and send or call in your reservation.

For those of you who REALLY like to fill in your calendars early, how about this event? During the last week of April, 2017, we will have a group of Folkloric Dancers here from the Instituto Blaise Pascale, an Arts High School in Oaxaca. They will present a program of the traditional dances from the seven geographic regions of the State of Oaxaca, "La Guelaguetza"! Times and locations of performances will be announced later. There will be forty dancers in traditional costumes, plus four or five chaperones. Since we will be providing homestays for them, two by two, begin to think about whether you want to be involved in the process—it's really fun! More on this later!

It appears that many of you have been clearing out your children's closets and drawers and have donated much BEAUTIFUL clothing and shoes for the children at the Orphanage and Child-to-child programs in Oaxaca. Now we need travelers to Oaxaca to take some of our wonderful ready-packed suitcases with you. If you or anyone you know will be traveling there, please contact me first! (650) 493-3798 or marion@sonic.net.THANKS!

**Hasta luego!**  
Marion

Thank you to Lupita Vargas who kindly sent the following report and photos for inclusion in *El Chisme*.  
(Translation by Marion Mandell)

## Fire Fighters Day in Oaxaca

I am sending you photos of the Fire Fighters Day Breakfast, attended by members of the Oaxaca/Palo Alto Sister Cities Committee. After breakfast, the new Fire Department Substation of Santa Cruz Amilpas was inaugurated by the Governor of the State of Oaxaca, Lic. Gabino Cué and presented to Lic. Manuel Maza, Fire Chief and State Fire Marshal, and to all of the fire fighters and those who help them. The new substation was thereby delivered to all the citizens of the area. The program also included honoring many of the fire fighters who had completed twenty-five years of service.



Above, substation dedication ceremony. At left, Governor of Oaxaca addressing the crowd. Below, Lupita Vargas and the latest addition to Oaxaca's fleet of fire vehicles, named for Bob Wenzlau, who facilitated the transfer from Palo Alto.



**Student Exchange Letter, continued from page 4**

tences, the correct tone to use and the possible responses to my question but when I tried to say it, the words and conjugations would jumble, and I would feel like a fool.

But I was treated with such patience and kindness in response. And I learned so much in what, in the end, felt like such a short time. Some of it was new words, like sandía (watermelon) or trueno (thunder) but overall I gained confidence in my words, and the courage to speak to a perfect stranger, in Spanish, about something more than the cost of an item.

When I was on the aforementioned plane, with nothing left to do but wait, I took out the brand-new sketchbook that my mother had given me the day before, started to draw, and by the time we began our descent, I had filled the page with color. I decided, right there, that that sketchbook was going to be my record. Some of the other girls were going to keep journals, but that wasn't really my style. I made myself a promise, that no matter how exhausted I was, or how boring the day, I would fill a page with each day of my journey. By the end, I had 56 drawings, dozens of new friends, and an unforgettable summer of memories.

Jessalyn Grant-Bier, Sept 30, 2016



Collage of some of Jessica's sketches of her time in Oaxaca

# ASIA-PALO

The City of Palo Alto and Neighbors Abroad had a surprise visitor early in October. Dr. Ciriaco "Junie" Agner, from Palo, Leyte, our sister city in the Philippines, was in the U.S. visiting his daughter and her family in Monterey and stopped by Palo Alto City Hall, where Bob Wenzlau, Neighbors Abroad President joined him to show him around.

A week or so later he was able to return before the end of his family visit, and met with Bob Wenzlau, Palo Committee Co-chair Chris Torres and Mary Ashley, *El Chisme* editor.

Junie has served on the Palo City Council for 9 years and has been a member of the Giants, a community service organization in Palo that helps maintain the library. Junie is in charge of Health and Safety, and Emergency Services for the City. He had harrowing tales of the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan and the resulting storm surge, when over 1,000 Paloans died. Supplies and equipment were not adequate. Many people lived within 1-2 km from the shore, so the effects of the storm surge were devastating.

Work is underway in Palo to develop a sewage treatment facility and a series of levees with support from the Philippine government and several NGOs, but Palo remains vulnerable to typhoons, storm surges and tsunamis.

Dr. Agner's particular focus is to improve emergency communication and response in the event of future emergencies. He shared the picture below of the entire emergency radio equipment available in Palo. The Palo Committee will explore what Palo Alto might do to help, just as we help with emergency equipment in Oaxaca.

He also mentioned vacant land in Palo being developed into a sports center and his dream to bring baseball and other team sports to Palo youth. This is another area where Neighbors Abroad and the Giants might be able to help with future projects.

In the meantime, when your annual Children's Projects donation request arrives in the mail, please be generous as you can.

Chris Torres

Junie Agner, third from left, and other city employees with the single emergency radio for use in Palo.



Bob Wenzlau and Junie Agner at the NA Kiosk in King Plaza



# EUROPE-ALBI

Nikki Merkle-Raymond's exchange to Albi happened this summer. Last summer her French sister came to Palo Alto to spend a month.

During my month in Albi, France, Palo Alto's sister city, I learned about different cultures, norms, and my love for the French language. My experience was phenomenal from start to finish and I will never be able to articulate my appreciation for the Neighbors Abroad program connecting me to my host family.

We started the month by spending a week in Albi. H el ene, the girl with whom I did the exchange, showed me typical French culture and fun. We enjoyed many lunches and dinners in downtown Albi, hung out with her friends, celebrated Bastille Day, visited her adorable grandparents, and ate a lot of chocolate.

After my first week in Albi, I drove with the family about three hours to the coast of the Mediterranean Sea to a beach town called Cape d'Agde. We spent 12 days at the "campground" which was pretty far from my experiences camping among redwoods. We stayed in a mobile home, which had two bedrooms, a bathroom, a small, yet sufficient kitchen, and a nice porch with a table where we ate all of our meals. The camping resort had two pools, four amazing water slides, and nightly entertainment shows. During the trip, we went to the beach, played in the pool,



Nikki and H el ene out on a promenade

and biked around the town of Cape d'Agde. My favorite day of the trip was when we rented a motorboat and went tubing on the Mediterranean.

The following few days once we returned from the beach were restful and short. H el ene and I soon left for Geneva, Switzerland to visit my cousins and great-aunt for five days. We explored the city, visited salt mines, and spent the Swiss national holiday weekend walking in the Swiss Alps with my cousins. I enjoyed seeing family and comparing the differences between Switzerland and France.

After Geneva, H el ene and I rejoined her parents to visit Paris. We rented a small apartment located right next to a Metro station and I spent the next five days falling in love with Paris. We visited the top of the Eiffel Tower, toured the Louvre, and Notre Dame, along with numerous other highlights (too many wonderful sights to list). Paris far exceeded my expectations. I loved everything from the feeling as I walked down the streets, to couples in love sitting along the Seine, and the street performers enhancing every major tourist attraction.

I am beyond grateful for the connection Neighbors Abroad arranged, for my host family who welcomed me into their home, and for my family for supporting me in my journey. I grew so much as a person from the independence and adventures this trip provided me. I learned a language that may offer me opportunities that I cannot predict now, but I am sure this trip and my improved French language abilities will stay with me. Through Neighbors Abroad and the Albi host family, I have created relationships and memories that will last me a lifetime!

Nikki Merkle-Raymond

**The Kasumigaura Marathon is an annual race held in our Japanese Sister City Tsuchiura every spring. In 2017 the Marathon will be run on Sunday, April 16.**

**Each year Tsuchiura extends an invitation to a runner from Palo Alto to participate, and we have just received an invitation for the 2017 race. The invitation is for 5 or 6 days, April 13-18. Tsuchiura will pay for the round trip economy class plane ticket and hotel room for the guest runner.**

**Palo Alto Vice Mayor Greg Scharff was the guest runner last year and the city of Tsuchiura treated him very well. He had an amazing experience, as have the runners in previous years. This is an amazing opportunity for anyone that can run a marathon!**

**If you have any questions or know a runner who might be interested email or call me: Mobile: 650-224-9539; Email: jbueroastro@apr.com.**

**Thank you!  
Jennifer Buenrostro, VP for Tsuchiura**

# EL CHISME

## de Neighbors Abroad



Neighbors Abroad  
P. O. Box 52004  
Palo Alto, CA 94303  
U.S. A.

NEIGHBORS ABROAD is a volunteer organization which maintains and carries out the activities of the City of Palo Alto's officially recognized Sister City Program with Palo in the province of Leyte in the Philippines, Oaxaca in Mexico, Enschede in the Netherlands, Linköping in Sweden, Albi in France, and Tsuchiura in Japan. Its activities have served and continue to serve the community interests of international and intercultural understanding.

Bob Wenzlau, President	248-4467
Jim Newton, Treasurer	854-4360
Mary Ashley, Newsletter	494-1829

<http://neighborsabroad.org>



## Neighbors Abroad Plus Community Events Calendar

**Board Meetings** are generally held on the second Wednesday of the month. Schedule and location are currently in transition. Call President Bob Wenzlau (above) for time and location.

**November 14, Monday, 7:00 p.m.**, Family Information meeting for Oaxaca exchange. See notice on page 3 for complete details.

**December 3, Saturday, 4:00 to 7:00 p.m.**, Neighbors Abroad Annual Holiday Party. See cover for details and reservations.

### **The 29th Annual Christmas Creche Exhibit**

**December 3-7, 2016 Saturday-Wednesday  
Noon-9:00 p.m. daily**

**3865 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto 94303**

**Admission is FREE. Come and enjoy 350 nativities from around the world in a festive holiday setting with live holiday music daily and free musical programs in the evening at 7:00 p.m.**

**The Children's Room has craft activities, nativity costumes, stories, and marionette shows daily.**

**For more information:  
[www.christmascreche.org](http://www.christmascreche.org)**

**Next El Chisme Deadline—TBD**

- Send your articles to Mary Ashley
- E-mail: [meashley@pacbell.net](mailto:meashley@pacbell.net)
- 3114 Cowper St., Palo Alto, CA 94306