



The Dispatch

Fall/Winter 2023

We recommend you read this newsletter by clicking on the "view in browser" link found in the top right corner.



Welcome to *The Dispatch*, Neighbors Abroad's round up of our recent projects around the world and within our community. Pictured above, left to right: Neighbors Abroad board members Ellen Valentine and Nodelyn Smith, along with Margarita de la Cruz, delegate from our Sister City in the Philippines, at Neighbors Abroad's 60th anniversary party. Read more about this milestone event and many more initiatives below.



60th Anniversary of Neighbors Abroad

Wow, What a Celebration!

It has been a whirlwind few months for all of us at Neighbors Abroad and our Sister City friends. A lively 60th anniversary fundraiser and party at the Lucie Stern Community Center brought together more than 130 Neighbors Abroad supporters,

dignitaries, and other VIP visitors. We were honored to welcome a 16-member delegation from Heidelberg, Germany, and representatives from three of our other Sister Cities: Tsuchiura, Japan; Enschede, the Netherlands; and Palo, the Philippines. Thanks to the generosity of our community, the party raised thousands of dollars for our service projects in Oaxaca and Palo, as well as other Neighbors Abroad endeavors.

Many members of the Palo Alto City Council and staff, including the indefatigable Mayor Lydia Kou, took time out of their busy lives to join us in our festivities and we are immensely grateful. (Pictured above is Mayor Kou with with German Consul General Oliver Schramm and his wife Diana Schramm.) We were honored to welcome many other dignitaries, including Philippine Consul General Adrian Baccay. *Grazie mille* to our benefactor Maico Campilongo, owner of California Avenue hotspots Terun and iTalico, not only for donating some tasty Italian wines, but also for lending his musical talents to the party AND effortlessly hosting a Neighbors Abroad dinner for 45+ earlier in the week at iTalico. Another of our perennial supporters, Hobe's, kindly donated beer. One more shout out goes to international man of mystery Juan Vargas, who shows up to so many of our events and does the work of a small army.

It was a pretty big lift for small volunteer group to put together a fundraising event of this type and everyone deserves kudos. Special thanks go out to those who worked behind the scenes for months to make the evening seem effortless. That's pretty much everyone on our board, but especially President Sarah Burgess (event visionary and world class project manager), President-Elect Ed Fike (silent auction king and emcee extraordinaire), and Jeannet Kiessling (unflappable event planning guru).



There's so much to celebrate and so many people to honor, so we created a web page to tell the story of our party--and the many other events around it--during the last week in October. See it [here](#).





Join us at our Annual Membership Meeting and Holiday Party

Neighbors Abroad Members: We look forward to celebrating the holiday season with all of you, and to honoring your outstanding contributions to Neighbors Abroad during this milestone anniversary year. We'll enjoy scrumptious fare from Hobee's, premium beer and wine, festive music, and much merriment. All members should have received an invitation on Evite. Non-members, this is your chance to join! Do so by December 7 [here](#). We'll see you at Ho Ho Hobee's!

Thursday, December 7

6-8 p.m.

Hobee's Palo Alto, 4224 El Camino Real in South Palo Alto

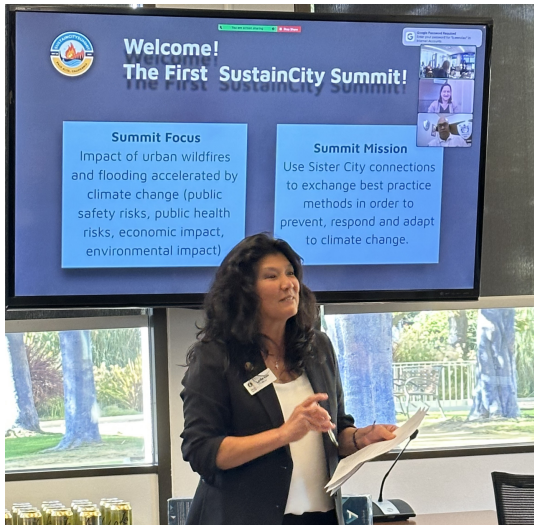
To RSVP (or if you are a member, but didn't receive an Evite), please email eglike@gmail.com



A First-Ever Event!

SustainCity Summit
Brings Together Sister
City Delegates for Idea-
Sharing on Climate,
Sustainability

With so many of our Sister City friends in town for our 60th anniversary festivities, we leveraged the opportunity to launch the first Neighbors Abroad SustainCity Summit in partnership with the City of Palo Alto. The roundtable discussion at City Hall gave our visiting Sister City representatives the chance to exchange ideas around sustainability and climate change mitigation efforts, not only with each other but with a number of Palo Alto officials and staff members. Our [60th anniversary web page](#) includes some photos of the event. Many people on the Neighbors Abroad board deserve recognition for putting together this inaugural summit, with special thanks to Jeannet Kiessling, Sarah Burgess, Ed Fike and Bob Wenzlau (pictured above). As always, Palo Alto Mayor Lydia Kou (pictured below) was enormously generous with her time and expertise, as were many other members of the city staff and members of the city government, including Fire Chief Geo Blackshire, pictured below.



A Deluge of Delegates



We were delighted to be inundated with delegates during the last week of October as representatives from four of our Sister Cities (Heidelberg, Tsuchiura, Enschede, and Palo) journeyed to Palo Alto for our anniversary festivities. In addition to attending our October 27 party and the SustainCity Summit (covered in articles above) each group of delegates undertook a number of meetings with Palo Alto officials and staff, learned about various collaboration opportunities, did a little sight-seeing, and

otherwise made the most of their time in Palo Alto.

Staying in Palo Alto for two days, the delegation from Heidelberg, led by Vice-Mayor Jürgen Odszuck (pictured above with Mayor Kou), had a jam-packed schedule. Since the establishment of the Sister City relationship in 2017, educational programs have been a top priority. The BEAM (Business, Entrepreneurship, and Math) initiative, created by former Neighbors Abroad Board Member Christina Cismas Florea at Gunn High School, is now a well-established program in four Heidelberg high schools.

The delegation visited the BEAM program at Gunn in preparation for an student exchange early next year. Neighbors Abroad VP Jeannet Kiessling also facilitated connections for delegation members with the Bronco Accelerator at Santa Clara University and the Leadership Garage at Stanford University, where initial meetings were held to explore potential collaborations.

Similarly, our groups from Tsuchiura (Keiko Seido, Atsuko Utsugi, and Yuko Fujita), Enschede (Cor Bouwhuis, Benjamin Groenewolt, and Marc Teutelink) and Palo (Marge de la Cruz) were on the move around town and across the Bay Area. Their activities included a visit by the Tsuchiura delegation to a Japanese language classrooms at Palo Alto middle schools (pictured below is the group at JLS), meetings for the Dutch group with city councilmembers and staff on bicycle policy (see photo of Ben Groenewolt with city council member Pat Burt), and a first-ever American football game, at UC Berkeley, for our Palo delegate, Margarita de la Cruz, who also met with Stanford and Berkeley professors about matters relating to the preservation of coastal ecosystems. Our gallery of images tells some of the stories [here](#).



Albi, France

Bienvenue a Palo Alto!

In late September, we were delighted to welcome a delegation of city officials and staff from Albi, France, Palo Alto's Sister City since 1994. It had been a number of years since our French friends had come to Palo Alto and so our Albi VP, Monica Schreiber, put together a robust five-day program that had them making connections and forging relationships at



the municipal, cultural, business, and personal levels. Highlights included a delightful dinner at the home of founding Albi VP Carol Stevens and her husband Noel (see photo), meetings with Palo Alto sustainability leaders, Stanford University connections relating to hydrogen policy and art, and a pilgrimage to the Carmel Mission, which one of Albi's most famous native sons visited in the late 1700s. We look forward to celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Sister City relationship next year! Pictured below: The delegation members (Julie-Anne Petrilli, Jean-Luc Dargein-Vidal, and Serge Labordere) with Palo Alto Mayor Lydia Kou (second from left) and Neighbors Abroad President Sarah Burgess (center). (Don't miss photobombers Jeannet Kiessling and Bob Wenzlau in the back.) Read more about the impactful visit [here](#).

A big thanks to a number of local businesses that helped make the delegation's time in Palo Alto memorable, including: [The Cowper Inn](#), [Douce France](#) and the [Town and Country Shopping Center](#), as well as California Avenue hot spots [La Boheme](#) and [Terun!](#)



[Ukrainian Children's Relief Fund](#)

Thank you to the Palo Alto Rotary Club

The Rotary Club of Palo Alto made a generous donation to the [Neighbors Abroad Ukrainian Children Emergency Relief Fund](#), which partners with non-profit *kleine herzen* in our German Sister City, Heidelberg to help vulnerable children in Ukraine, as well as those who have been evacuated to other European countries. In cooperation with [HelpBucha.org](#), *kleine herzen* has helped initiate an English language training program for children in Bucha, Ukraine. Communicating in English has proven to be vital for Ukrainians in partnering with the West, and this is especially important for the younger generation. The program teaches up to 40 students ages 8-16. For more information see <https://swe.buchahelp.org.ua>. Continued kudos to Jeannet Kiessling for spearheading this lifesaving effort.



In Memoriam

Longtime Board Member and Champion of Oaxaca Programs, Jim Newton



Longtime Neighbors Abroad board member Jim Newton passed away on September 13, 2023 at the age of 88. Jim served a lengthy term as treasurer and had a special affinity for Mexico, where he and his wife, Barbara, resided for several years. Neighbors Abroad's activities in Oaxaca provided him the opportunity to indulge his love of Mexican culture and to extend a helping hand to those in need. Jim was a great supporter of the Neighbors Abroad-supported Albergue Josefino, which cares for vulnerable children in the region.

"Jim was always a happy presence at our board meetings, and presented information with a twinkle in his eye and a ready joke," said NA President Sarah Burgess. Past president Bob Wenzlau added that Jim was "a sheer delight" and praised Jim's efforts as treasurer during difficult transition years for the organization. Board member Ed Fike gave a stirring speech at Jim's funeral service, attended by many from Neighbors Abroad. Jim's full obituary is [here](#). At the request of Jim's family, Neighbors Abroad has established a scholarship fund in his name for our projects in Oaxaca. Donations can be made in Jim's memory [here](#).

Former President and Longtime Neighbors Abroad Supporter, Joseph Evans

Joseph Evans recently passed away. For nine years in the early 2000s, Joe co-led Neighbors Abroad with his beloved wife, Barbara, who passed away in 2022. He also served as the group's longtime membership chair. Neighbors Abroad President Sarah Burgess remembers Joe as having a great sense of humor and a quick wit. "He and Barbara were both extremely active and came up with a lot of Neighbors Abroad's most popular and impactful activities," Sarah remembers. "We are so glad he was able to attend the performance last year of the Linköping Brass Band, which Barbara had helped organize before her passing."



Volunteer of the Year!

Congratulations to Jeannet Kiessling, Winner of Sister City International's Volunteer of the Year Award

We are so proud of our own Jeannet Kiessling! Neighbors Abroad's Heidelberg VP recently received Sister Cities International's annual award for Volunteer of the Year, a nationwide honor that goes to just one Sister City volunteer "who has shown exemplary leadership and talent that benefits local sister city programs and the larger sister city network."



The committee selected Jeannet based on her exceptional leadership in several recent Neighbors Abroad initiatives, most notably the Ukrainian Emergency Children's Relief Fund which has raised more than \$125,000 (and counting) for Ukrainian orphans and other vulnerable children. Jeannet also conceptualized a cross-border student essay contest inspired by the heroic deeds of Leendert Overduin, a pastor from Palo Alto's Dutch city of Enschede who saved hundreds of Jewish lives during World War II, and spearheaded last August's International Festival at Palo Alto City Hall.

Sister Cities International is the is a nonpartisan nonprofit which serves as the national membership organization for individual sister cities, counties, and states across the United States.

Sibling Cities USA

Lend Your Voice: Sibling Cities' Next Town Hall on Climate Action

Over the last three months, our partner organization, Sibling Cities USA, founded and run by Palo Alto City Councilmember Vicki Veenker, has been hosting a series of Town Halls between citizens of Palo

Alto and our Sibling City, Bloomington, Indiana. This project has connected our cities on a singular community topic each time. In September, the discussion focused on "Bridging Divides." In November, the topic was "Race and Belonging." Now, coming up on Sunday, December 3: "Climate Action." All Town Halls are held in the Mitchell Park Community Center in the El Palo Alto Room, where the group connects over Zoom with their counterparts in Bloomington. Learn more about how to lend your voice [here](#).



Oaxaca, Mexico

Oaxaca Contingent Comes to Palo Alto to Accept Garbage Truck

One person's garbage (truck) is another person's treasure.

That old maxim took on poignant meaning on September 26 when a delegation from Oaxaca came to Palo Alto to accept a donated refuse truck. The truck, which is still in good shape can offer Oaxaca many years of service, otherwise would have been retired from Palo Alto's fleet, per legal requirements. The donation means that for the first time, the city of Oaxaca will own its own garbage truck. Confronted with mounting solid waste disposal difficulties, Oaxaca has implemented a recycling program and is seeking to deal with waste in a more sustainable manner.

Those from Oaxaca who attended the donation ceremony in front of Palo Alto City Hall included: Bernarda Gonzalez Rivas, honorary President of the DIF/Desarrollo Integral de la Familia, who accepted the truck on behalf of Oaxaca City President Francisco Martinez Neri; Frida Leyla Garcia, head of Oaxaca's International Relations Unit; and Shantal Bello, private secretary of International Relations.

Representing the City of Palo Alto: Mayor Lydia Kou (pictured at right), Deputy City Manager Chantal Cotton Gaines, City of Palo Alto Director of Public Works Brad Eggleston, City of PA Solid Waste Manager Paula Borges, GreenWaste General Manager Eric Cissna, and GreenWaste Assistant General Manager Leah Venegas.

The group was honored to welcome Mexican Consul General Alejandra Bologna Zubikarai

and consul representative Rodrigo Navarro Garcia.

Following the donation ceremony, the group moved on to the Palo Alto Art Center where they enjoyed the Boom Oaxaca art exhibit that will be up until December 10 (check it out!).

Thanks to Neighbors Abroad board members Sarah Burgess, Flor Sanchez, Ed Fike, and Evelyn Shimazaki for planning and joining the day's events.



A New Annual Event

Backyard BBQ Brings Together Alums of Neighbors Abroad Exchange Programs

Exchange students past and present gathered at the home of Nodelyn Smith and her husband Doug on August 7 to share memories, reconnect with old friends, and make new ones. Several Palo Alto teachers also joined the backyard event, which followed a Palo Alto City Council meeting during which the Council honored the students who had recently returned from the annual exchange with our Japanese Sister City. Neighbors Abroad intends to make this an annual event.

Local students and teachers interested in learning more about Neighbors Abroad's exchange programs can contact Nodelyn Smith, our VP of Education, [at nodelyn.smith@neighborsabroad.org](mailto:nodelyn.smith@neighborsabroad.org).



Neighbors Abroad

355 Alma Street, Palo Alto
CA 94301 United States



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