The Dispatch brings monthly news from Neighbors Abroad of Palo Alto. We rely on your generosity to support student exchange and support to children's programs. This July we are running on "summer" time so are a tad late.

News and Events

We have two anniversary celebrations on opposite sides of the globe. City officials and Neighbors Abroad will travel and celebrate in Albi France and Tsuchiura Japan. Palo Alto native Matt Sheehan will present his new book on innovation between California and China moderated by Neighbors Abroad's Bing Wei, and Shanghai students visited Palo Alto with an eye on sustainability. Learn about Kiwanis International partnership in international engagement, and we close with thoughts on Neighbors Abroad together with City of Palo Alto Utilities supporting sustainable development in Oaxaca, a collaboration just recognized with a national award from Sister Cities International.

25 Year Anniversary Celebration in Albi, France in September

On September 2 through 4, a delegation from Palo Alto will visit Albi to commemorate 25 years as sister cities.

10 Year Anniversary Celebration in Tsuchiura, Japan in October

Tsuchiura is anticipating the attendance of Palo Alto's mayor as well as a delegation of Neighbors Abroad
Council member Liz Kniss has galvanized our Albi relationship. The visit will focus on cultural and civic connections.

The picture above of Aurora Singers of Palo Alto joined by the Albi choir. This is the sixth exchange in eighteen years. As Palo Altans travel to Albi in September, a visit with the choir is planned. Neighbors Abroad knows the Aurora Singers have anchored our relationship to Albi for many years, and through the anniversary celebration our goal is to even further the relationship. Support for both the choirs visit and the upcoming delegation has been lead by Neighbors Abroad VP Lee Merkle-Raymond.

China, California and Innovation - A book presentation by Palo Alto's Matt Sheenan August 19

Please join a Neighbors Abroad presentation in the City Hall Community Room on August 19 at 6 PM. Matt attended Palo Alto schools, and then his life path spun towards China. Palo Alto members and council members. Yes, there will be fireworks - Tsuchiura is famous for them. Tsuchiura sees Palo Alto as a strong and supportive community embracing her students. The attending delegation will include Palo Alto Mayor Eric Filseth. This is Mayor Filseth's second visit, on his first he ran the Tsuchiura marathon. Mayor Filseth reminds us that Tsuchiura is drawn to Palo Alto as a diverse family community valuing education and not as much for our culture of innovation. Jennifer Buenrostro is taking the lead coordinating this delegation.

Shanghai Students Visit Palo Alto

Fourteen middle and high school students from Shanghai came to Palo Alto to join a global citizen summer camp from July 2 to July 14. Our sister city Yangpu District is just one suburb of Shanghai. During the first week the students got oriented visiting Stanford,
is all the better for the insights Matt can share on the interrelations between two innovative cultures. Innovation has been a core to Palo Alto's relation to Yangpu District of Shanghai. Neighbors Abroad VP Bing Wei will moderate a discussion with Matt as he introduces his first book - The Transpacific Experiment. Matt is a Fellow at The Paulson Institute's think tank, MacroPolo, and the former China correspondent for The WorldPost. His research focuses on the Chinese and American innovation ecosystems, specifically in artificial intelligence. Matt has lived between China and the San Francisco Bay Area for the past decade, and is fluent in Mandarin Chinese. In 2018, he was shortlisted for the Young China Watcher of the Year Award.
Partnering with the Kiwanis International Committee

The Kiwanis Club of Palo Alto (KCPA) maintains an active interest in the affairs of Neighbors Abroad through the KCPA’s International Committee, and is one of Neighbors Abroad’s key partners. The majority of the committee’s membership are also members of Neighbors Abroad: Bert Torres, Hank Heubach, Pat Sanders, Pat Farris, Jim Phillips, Alan Stivers, Marty Deggeller, and Nancy Shepherd (not shown).

In recent years the KCPA has contributed to funding the transportation of surplus fire vehicles from Palo Alto to Oaxaca, funds for earthquake relief in the State of Oaxaca, and substantial grants to the Ceres Foundation for funding the work of the Calpulli Center in Oaxaca. The funds have been passed through Neighbors Abroad. The KCPA maintains ongoing funding for Neighbors Abroad’s children’s projects – a donation of $1,000 will be made this June.

KCPA has a broader reach than just Neighbors Abroad. Other organizations that the KCPA helps fund on the recommendation of the International Committee are the Tapulao Elementary School in the Philippines, the Karat School Project (KSP), and the Ravenswood Family Health Center (RFHC), and One Dollar for Life (ODFL). It should be noted that the KCPA’s international grants amount to about 14% of its total grants. The other 86% goes to programs supporting children, teens, seniors, and services in the greater Palo Alto community. Copies of the KCPA’s annual report for the 2017-2018 fiscal year are available upon request.

This year the KCPA will give to ODFL to support expenses and its Girls’ Equality Project, which provides reusable sanitary pads to girls in developing countries in order to keep them from dropping out of school. ODFL builds schools, medical clinics and other projects in developing countries and just finished its 110th project, a new classroom in Kenya. (The founder and CEO of ODFL, Robert Freeman, is a member of the KCPA’s International Committee).

Thirteen years ago Bert Torres, wanting to help the Tapulao Elementary School in Orani, Bataan, the Philippines, got the KCPA’s Board of Directors to set up a dedicated account for funding projects at the school. Bert made a $20,000 donation to that account and continues to fund projects. This year the KCPA is funding the construction of outdoor latrines. Over the years the KCPA’s funding has brought books and dental hygiene products to the school children, paid for dental care, built a replacement water tower and associated plumbing, set up a breakfast program for undernourished children, constructed a school library room and a computer/study...
room, provided books and educational toys for preschoolers, and began a tutoring program for students reading well below grade level.

The Karat School Project was founded recently by Evelyne Keomian to get children begging on the streets in her hometown in the Ivory Coast off the streets and into a regular school. Recent projects have included bringing electricity and water to a local classroom. The children now can read in the evening due to the new lights. The two projects were addressed by ODFL and funded in part by donations of several or more thousand dollars from members of the KCPA’s international committee. Evelyne lives in Palo Alto now and will become a member of the KCPA’s International Committee when she returns from the Ivory Coast this September. Neighbors Abroad worked with City of Palo Alto to donate four computers to her project.

The contribution to the RHFC was approved by the KCPA to help the international community living in the southern Bay Area. The RHFC has a budget of 35 million dollars, but that funding is directed to healthcare and not community outreach. The KCPA contribution will help inaugurate a Centering-Parenting outreach program that will serve the immigrant community, and will cover such things as notebooks, snacks, centering-leader kits, medical supplies, space and furnishing at the facility, child minding, and counselor training. Vice President Hank Heubach has coordinated the relationship between Kiwanis International and Neighbors Abroad.

Bob Wenzlau, President

Catalyzing Economic Growth in Oaxaca through Climate Work

The work in Oaxaca has been an incredible inspiration, and Neighbors Abroad has been a catalyst for social and environmental impact. The work has been a focus of mine while serving as President. The City of Palo Alto Utilities department became the first organization in the United States to procure carbon offsets from Mexico as reported in this link. Approximately 17,000 tons of offsets were procured with the creation of numerous new jobs in the rural community to enhance sequestration in the forest. We applied a protocol created by the Climate Action Reserve that produces verified carbon credits that are applied by Palo Alto to offset all the carbon emissions from our natural gas utility. This picture shows me in the forests near San Juan Lachoa, Oaxaca joined by John Nickerson and Amy Kessler of Climate Action Reserve (CAR), and Alberto Ramírez of ANCE.
Our work was just recognized through the Sister Cities International 2019 Innovation Award for Business and Trade. From the press release "Neighbors Abroad of Palo Alto, California facilitated the first forestry-based carbon offset transaction between the United States and Mexico, and the first to apply the Mexican forest carbon sequestration protocol. The transaction generated significant social, environmental and economic benefits in Oaxaca, while allowing the City of Palo Alto to satisfy obligations as a municipally owned gas utility to offset all greenhouse gas emissions." This reveals to other sister city new ways of engagement.

While the first project focused on one community, San Juan Lachao, the next agreement will focus on five more rural communities. Palo Alto Utilities is evaluating an investment of $160,000 to support development of community plans that would generate 97,000 tons of carbons offsets across five years. The investment is paid back through the sale of discounted carbon credits. As investment of this type is scarce in Oaxaca, our collaboration brings development that would otherwise not happen while still maintaining strict compliance with protocols for carbon sequestration.

The opportunity for impact is enormous. A forest that is optimized for carbon is thinned to allow for selected trees to grow. There is a chance that the projects will support new micro mills that would bring small furniture manufacturing to these villages. There also is a connection to mezcal. My son, local Palo Altan's including Peter Forgie and David Camner who instructed glass at Palo Alto High have created a mezcal call Huxal Mezcal that strives to bring benefit to the fire fighters of Oaxaca. Mezcal is a major industry in Oaxaca, and the agaves have become scarce through use in manufacturing mezcal. We are exploring how these projects, many in Oaxaca's cloud forests, can be a nursery to agaves, and bring another element of economic development. As the projects grow, we are supporting the development of environmental scientists in Oaxaca. While Palo Alto is getting high quality and high value carbon offsets, we are now creating many new opportunities in Oaxaca to bring a stronger economy as well as their leadership in Mexico in sustainability.

In closing, Neighbors Abroad is a membership organization. We need to bolster our membership. The annual fees are low. We also benefit from donations that go generally to children in our sister cities to support education and well being. We also use these donations to support student exchange when there is a financial burden to participation. We are able to support corporate matching. Your interest in joining and donating is encouraged. I always welcome your feedback and ideas by email.
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