



The Dispatch

March 2022



Welcome!

Welcome to *The Dispatch*, Neighbors Abroad's round-up of our projects around the world and within our community. An especially warm welcome to the many of you who are new to Neighbors Abroad via our fundraising initiative on behalf of Ukrainian children. We are deeply grateful for your generosity and inspired by the outpouring of support.

[In this edition:](#)

- Ukrainian Emergency Children's Relief Fund: What we have accomplished with your help and the next steps.
- Phase II of the Yaxe Rainwater Capture Project: Another opportunity for our generous community to make a difference in the world.
- The Leendert Overduin Civil Courage Essay Contest: An international high school essay contest launched in partnership with Enschede, our Sister City in the Netherlands.
- The Palo Alto-Bloomington Sibling City Relationship: We are officially launched!
- Art and Sustainability: We are ramping up on an art exhibit exchange that highlights how artists in several of our Sister Cities are using creative expression to comment on the most important environmental issues of the day.
- News Roundup: What is happening in some of our Sister Cities, including a Mayoral exchange of greetings for Chinese New Year and the publication of a new children's book, proceeds from which will support the Children's Library in Palo, the Philippines.

[Help the Children in Ukraine](#)

Thank You to our Donors:
Ukrainian Emergency

Children's Relief Fund

Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Neighbors Abroad quickly moved into action to partner on a fund-raising campaign with the non-profit *Kleine Herzen* (Little Hearts), which has operations in our German Sister City, Heidelberg. For many years, the group has cared for orphaned and otherwise vulnerable Ukrainian children and already has a long track record of impactful humanitarian work in the country. *Kleine Herzen* is using the funds we are raising to transport vulnerable children out of the country, as well as for other critical needs, including providing food, clothing and shelter.



Thanks to the extraordinary generosity of citizens of Palo Alto and surrounding communities, the Ukrainian Emergency Children's Relief Fund brought in almost \$24,000 in the first 72 hours and by *Dispatch* press time we had reached more than \$50,000 from 275+ donors.

Neighbors Abroad board member Jeannet Kiessling, a native of Heidelberg and a key driver of the fund-raising project, said: "All of us at Neighbors Abroad and *Kleine Herzen* are deeply moved by the outpouring of support from the Palo Alto community. So many people feel helpless in the face of such monumental and upsetting events on the world stage. This project is one way to make a difference."

Please click [here](#) to read the report from *Kleine Herzen's* on-the-ground partner (choose English option), explaining how our community's donations are being put to work to save lives. [This video](#), on the *Kleine Herzen* website, focuses on the plight of Ukrainian orphans and the work being done by Ukraine's Children's Rights Commissioner, Mykola Kuleba, whose work we are supporting through *Kleine Herzen*.

We will continue to raise funds alongside *Kleine Herzen* as this global tragedy unfolds. In upcoming editions of *The Dispatch* and on social media, we will keep you updated as to how the money is being used in Ukraine.

Click [here](#) to read news coverage of the fundraiser in the *Palo Alto Weekly* and [here](#) for an article in *Patch*. For more information and to donate, please visit [our donation page](#).

[Thank you J. McLaughlin!](#)

Sip, Shop and Raise Money for Ukraine

A huge thank you to Palo Alto's J. McLaughlin, a women's clothing store at the Town & Country Village in Palo Alto. The store will host a Sip, Shop & Celebrate Spring event on Saturday, March 26, from noon to 5 p.m., with 15 percent of proceeds from purchases



that day going to Neighbors Abroad's fundraising drive for Ukraine. Drop by to meet our VP of Europe Jeannet Kiessling, pick out some trendy new items for Spring and help our Ukraine efforts at the same time.

Oaxaca, Mexico

Rainwater Capture Project in Yaxe: Gearing Up for the Next Phase

We have previously reported on one of Neighbors Abroad's most ambitious humanitarian and environmentally sustainable projects: a rainwater capture project in [San Nicolás Yaxe, Oaxaca](#), an indigenous community near our Mexican Sister City, which is prone to drought. Though summer rainfall is usually plentiful, the residents of Yaxe lacked a system to capture and store this source. Partnering with other nonprofits, we leveraged \$32,000 in donated funds and participated in a massive on-the-ground effort to install 50 water tanks in homes throughout the village to capture and store rainwater.



The results have been transformative for the village of 3,000 people. Now we are looking ahead to Phase II, which will involve installing substantial capture tanks for at least 50 more homes, as well as five schools in the Yaxe region.

We hope you will join us in this effort.

We are seeking to raise at least \$35,000 for the next phase (to match \$35,000 already donated to the project) in order to continue this life-changing, environmentally impactful work. In addition to exploring grant funding, we appreciate individual donations to support water resilience in this developing region near our Mexican Sister City. If you have questions or would like to get involved, please email: sburgess@neighborsabroad.org

[Learn More](#)

[Enschede, Netherlands](#)

Palo Alto and Enschede



Launch Cross-Border Essay Contest

Palo Alto and Enschede, our Sister City in the Netherlands, have joined forces to launch the [Leendert Overduin Civil Courage Essay Contest](#), open to high school students in Palo Alto and neighboring cities, as well as their Sister City peers and our new friends in our Sibling City, Bloomington, Indiana.

The cross-border contest offers cash prizes and an opportunity for the winners to visit Enschede as Sister City ambassadors. The story of Pastor Leendert Overduin's life-risking humanitarian efforts during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands is just starting to be unearthed in his native Enschede, which sits near the German border. Overduin's life and legacy are the subject of the 2020 Dutch documentary "The Conscience of a City," produced by Enschede resident Willy Berends and [available on YouTube](#).

Outside Enschede, however, the Protestant pastor's quiet legacy is barely a historical footnote. "This innovative contest aims to change that," said Neighbors Abroad President Bob Wenzlau.

A member of the Dutch resistance, Overduin saved hundreds of Jewish children through an underground network of safehouses in the Dutch countryside. After the war, he provided aid to the orphaned children of Dutch collaborators. His dramatic story—multiple arrests by the Nazis, hundreds of lives saved—invites comparisons to Germany's Oskar Schindler, subject of Steven Spielberg's 1993 film, *Schindler's List*.

Uri Elzer, a board member at Palo Alto's Kol Emeth, who helped launch the contest, has a profound and personal connection to Pastor Overduin: he is the son of one of the children Overduin saved. "It astounds me that Pastor Overduin, to whom I owe my very existence, is virtually unknown," Elzur said.

Palo Alto Mayor Patrick Burt said: "The City of Palo Alto is honored to partner with Enschede in this essay contest as a means for current generations to recognize how the courage of an individual can have a lasting impact on countless lives while inspiring us to love and care for each other. It offers our young citizens an opportunity to reflect on Pastor Overduin's legacy and to reflect on how his actions relate directly to today's important need to live up to our equity and social justice values."

For additional information, including the contest parameters and rules, please see the essay contest web page [here](#).



Its Official: Bloomington and Palo Alto are Sibling Cities

In the last edition of *The Dispatch*, we reported on the groundbreaking new relationship between Palo Alto and Bloomington, Indiana—the first two cities in the United States to be paired as “Sibling Cities” as part of a new [Sibling Cities USA](#) initiative.

Now, the relationship is officially signed and our two university towns are off and running. We are at the forefront of a new vision for how cities within the United States can build bridges across our country's regional and political divides. In a Zoom ceremony on February 15, 2022, officials from both cities were joined by public figures [Cornell William Brooks](#), a Harvard professor and the former president of the NAACP, and Stanford women's basketball coach [Tara Vanderveer](#), a native of Bloomington and the all-time winningest coach in women's college basketball. You can watch the kick-off ceremony [here](#).

Bloomington has indicated its interest in participating in the [Overduin Essay Contest](#), underscoring a perhaps unexpected benefit of the Sibling City relationship—the opportunity to also forge ties with each other's international *Sister Cities*.

Sibling Cities USA is the brainchild of Palo Alto attorney and Bloomington native Vicki Veenker, who launched the non-profit in an effort to build a bold new framework for building bridges across our country's regional and political divides.

For more information, please see Neighbors Abroad's [Bloomington web page](#) or contact Palo Alto City Coordinator Andie Reed: PaloAlto@siblingcitiesusa.org.

Art & Sustainability Project Moving Forward

At the heart of all of our Sister City relationships is shared appreciation for art and a deep commitment to promoting environmentally-friendly projects. Neighbors Abroad's new [Art & Sustainability](#) project seeks to bring together these shared values with a Sister City art exchange. To date, Heidelberg, Germany; Oaxaca, Mexico; and Palo, the Philippines are on board to participate in the project, with likely participation from Linköping, Sweden and Yangpu District, China. Other Sister Cities may be joining in the coming months.



This initiative grew out of our rainwater capture project in Yaxe, Oaxaca, where creations by local artists will adorn water tanks in the village (see article above). Residents will be provided not only with much-needed drinking water, but also will see their community enriched by a colorful outdoor gallery celebrating water conservation and other environmental themes.

Stay tuned for more information about this project, as well as our ongoing work on Phase II of the Yaxe rainwater project.



Sister Cities International Presents Young Artists and Authors Contest

Sister Cities International, the national non-profit that serves as the umbrella membership organization for individual sister cities, counties, and states across the United States, is again sponsoring its Young Artists and Authors Showcase. This annual art and writing competition encourages young people aged 13-18 to express the mission of Sister Cities International through original artwork, writing, photography, and music. The theme this year is "Generation Rescue: Sustainable Water for All," a topic that dovetails with Neighbors Abroad's Art & Sustainability initiative and our rainwater capture project in Oaxaca. The competition has six categories: Classic Art, Digital Art, Photography, Essay, Poetry, and Musical Composition. Grand Prize Winners in each category will win \$1,000, second place winners will win \$250 and third prize winners will be awarded \$100. Winners' artwork will be displayed on the Sister Cities website. The deadline for submissions is April 1, 2022. For additional information and the contest rules click [here](#).



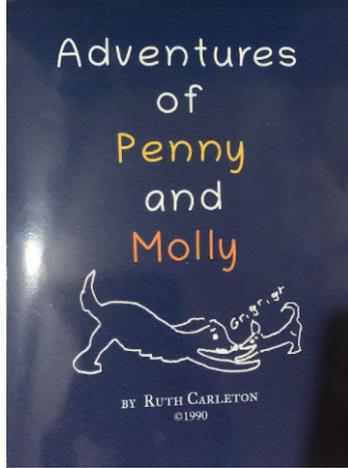
[Yangpu District, China](#)

Palo Alto and Yangpu Mayors Exchange Chinese New Year Greetings

On February 24, the Bay Area Council hosted a virtual Chinese New Year celebration and Global Leadership award ceremony, during which Palo Alto Mayor Pat Burt and Yangpu District Mayor Kan Sue exchanged greetings, during which Mayor Burt drew on his prior studies of Mandarin.

The Bay Area Council partnered closely with Palo Alto and Neighbors Abroad in establishing Palo Alto's Sister City relationship with Yangpu in 2017. The 12th annual celebration also served as the grand opening of the new Bay Area Council Yangpu office, further solidifying ties between Sister Cities Palo Alto and the Yangpu District of Shanghai. Remarks focused on the importance of subnational partnerships in helping promote more cooperative relations at the national level, with Mayor Burt outlining a plan for cooperation through the Sister City relationship. Watch the full program [here](#).

[Palo, Leyte, Philippines](#)



Proceeds from Children's Book to Support Children's Library in Palo

One of Neighbors Abroad's longest-running projects is the Children's Library in Palo, the Philippines, our first Sister City, established in 1963. Ruth Carleton, the former Neighbor's Abroad VP for Palo and now a Neighbors Abroad board member at large, was instrumental in establishing and supporting the Children's Library for many years.

With assistance from friends in the Philippines, Ruth recently published a children's book titled *Adventures of Penny and Molly*, a fantasy-adventure story about Ruth's two dogs who accompanied her to Palo Verde Elementary School when she taught first grade.

"While I was a mostly first grade teacher for over 30 years in the Palo Alto Unified School District, I wrote 22 consecutive little books about the two dogs who accompanied me to school daily," Ruth said. "I often heard students and teachers say how much they would like them in a chapter book. I hand-made each six-page book and placed all 22 of them in a Trader Joe's cereal box and gave many sets away to friends. I gave a set to Betty Duran, now VP for our Sister City in Palo. Unbeknownst to me she gave it to a Filipino friend whose son is in publishing. He laid it out, typeset it and sent it to Amazon for publishing. My daughter, an editor, helped with revisions and now it is finally available."

Adventures of Penny and Molly is [for sale on Amazon](#) and all proceeds go to the Children's Library in Palo. Several copies will be sent to the Children's Library in Palo, which has recently announced it is easing COVID restrictions and will soon be bustling again with school children, storytelling, arts and crafts, and singing.

[Heidelberg, Germany](#)

Mayors to Have 'Fireside Chat'

On April 28 at 10:30 a.m., Palo Alto Mayor Pat Burt will have a virtual conversation with Heidelberg Mayor Eckar Würzner. The Zoom meeting will address projects the Sister Cities have started since the launch of the relationship five years ago. If you're interested in viewing the meeting, please email [Jeannet Kiessling](#).

[Linköping, Sweden](#)

Our Linköping Link

Kerstin Reimstad, who has served as Head of International Relations for the City of Linköping since 2006, will be retiring at the end of May. On March 4, Kerstin hosted an introductory meeting between



Linköping Vice President Edward Fike and her successors: EU Development Officer Daniel Stendahl and Lise-Lotte Wallberg-Järvinen, University Relations Officer. During the meeting, participants reviewed current initiatives and ideas for future collaboration and travel. The group also discussed the February virtual summit between Palo Alto Mayor Pat Burt and Linköping Mayor Lars Vikinge. Kerstin, who participated in the meeting, reported that the genial mayoral conversation featured topics of mutual interest to both cities such as climate change and economic development.



Linköping officials are particularly excited about the recent roll out of IndX2022, a unique collaboration between four of the largest global industrial companies in East Sweden - Saab, Siemens Energy, Toyota Material Handling, and Väderstad - and the Linköping Science Park to connect with

new talents from world-wide Industry 4.0 startups Through the program, startups will get the chance to pitch their ideas. Successful candidates will then be invited to co-create future ideas together with R&D personnel from the partner companies. The most promising concepts will be granted funding for real Proof of Concept projects in close collaboration with one or more of the partner companies.

Start up companies can apply whenever they like throughout the entire year. Applications are reviewed every month. During 2022, there will be four Pitch Days: in April, June, September and December. Silicon Valley startups focusing on sustainability, autonomy and connectivity are encouraged to apply. For more information on this opportunity, click [here](#).

Share Innovative Educational Programs with Us

Education is critical to shaping better societies globally. Neighbors Abroad's Education Division is seeking groundbreaking ideas in education from around the world that will prepare students for the 21st century workforce. Our program, ReImagine Education, is designed to create a platform for sharing, growth and collaboration. We are passionate about finding the best practices in modern education and would love your input. Let us know if you are aware of an innovative education program that meets two or more of the following criteria: project-based learning, collaborative leadership, effective communication, design thinking, real-world application, immersive learning, critical thinking, and integrated learning. If you know of an existing program that meets the criteria listed above, please refer program founders to our website www.neighborsabroad.org/education where they can share their program with us by clicking on the corresponding button. Interested parties may contact either Masha Maslova (mariammaslova@gmail.com) or Cristina Florea (ciflorea@gmail.com) with questions.

Coming This Summer: A Sister and Sibling City Festival!

Planning is still in the early stages, but Neighbors Abroad is delighted to announce that we anticipate holding a Sister and Sibling City Festival to coincide with the Chamber of Commerce's Festival of the Arts, set for August 27 and 28 in downtown Palo Alto. The family-friendly event will be held in front of Palo Alto City Hall and will feature entertainment, food and exhibits from our eight international Sister Cities and new Sibling City. We welcome Neighbors Abroad members and others in the community who want to join in the planning effort. Please email [Jeannet Kiessling](mailto:Jeannet.Kiessling).

[Join Neighbors Abroad!](#)

We Appreciate Your Support

Thanks to the support of our community, we are able to engage in transformative projects, in partnership with our international Sister Cities, Sibling Cities USA and other non-profits that improve and enrich the lives of our Sister City friends and our own community. We hope you will join us on this journey and thank you for your donations and membership.

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