



The Dispatch

Spring 2023



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

- Report on a recent delegation to Palo Alto from our Swedish Sister City, Linköping. Pictured above at the March 5 welcome reception are, from left to right, Linköping VP Ed Fike, who hosted the event; Palo Alto Mayor Lydia Kou; Neighbors Abroad President Sarah Burgess; and Linköping Mayor Mikael Sanfridson.
- Pay tribute to two members of the Neighbors Abroad family who recently passed away, Iraida Busó Espinosa and Betty Gerard.
- Invite you to mark your calendars for several upcoming events and community gatherings, including a lively brass band concert by musicians from our Swedish Sister City on April 7. This free concert will be dedicated to the late Barbara Evans, on whose passing we reported in the last edition of *The Dispatch*.
- Offer an update on our continued fundraising efforts for vulnerable children in Ukraine.
- Let you know about the next phase in our award-winning, life-changing Yaxe Rainwater Capture project.
- Introduce Chris Cummings, who will represent Palo Alto in the upcoming Lake Kamusigaura Marathon near our Japanese Sister City, Tsuchiura.
- Provide a recap of the first installment in the Civil Discourse Discussion Series between Palo Alto and our Sibling City, Bloomington, Indiana.

- Share some musings and memories from Bob Wenzlau, who, after an impactful eight years at the helm, recently stepped down as Neighbors Abroad's President. We also hear from Sarah Burgess, who picked up the leadership reins in January.
- Share an array of photos and fun news tidbits, including pictures from our holiday party and a not-so-terrible poem about Sister Cities "written" by the artificial intelligence app, ChatGPT.

Welcome Linköping!

Linköping Visit Focuses on Business Networking and Creation of Climate-Neutral Cities

In early March, a delegation from our Swedish Sister City, Linköping, embarked on a weeklong visit to Palo Alto. Led by Mayor Mikael Sanfridson, the Swedes participated in a number of local business networking events, including the annual [Bifrost Summit](#). Bifrost brings together entrepreneurs from the Nordic region to share ideas and best practices for succeeding in Silicon Valley.

The visit began with a festive welcome event held at the home of Neighbors Abroad board member Ed Fike and his husband Bill Jeffrey. The living room was bathed in bright blue and yellow light in honor of the colors of the Swedish flag. Palo Alto Mayor Lydia Kou was on hand to pay tribute to the cities' relationship, which is now in its 36th year. Newly-minted NA president Sarah Burgess also addressed the crowd and presented gifts to the delegates. Mayor Sanfridson expressed his gratitude for the enduring tie between the two cities and invited attendees to visit lovely Linköping. Guests enjoyed mushroom quesadillas and pasta with chicken apple sausage, courtesy of Hobee's California Restaurants. Board member Jeannet Kiessling provided her famous raspberry-almond-cream cake, always a highlight of any Neighbors Abroad gathering.



Later in the week, Neighbors Abroad teamed up with the City of Palo Alto and the [Nordic Innovation House](#) to sponsor a special event: Creating Climate Neutral Cities. The sister cities collaborated for several months to produce the ambitious program which featured speakers and panelists from both Sweden and Silicon Valley. The agenda focused on the roles of leadership, policymaking, technology and cross-collaboration in creating a modern climate neutral city. Over 100 guests attended the free presentation at Palo Alto City Hall council chambers,



which was followed by a lively reception in the city's Community Room.

Prior to the afternoon event, Mayor Kou welcomed Mayor Sanfridson to her City Hall office for a robust discussion on the future of the Palo Alto-Linköping partnership.

As their time in Palo Alto came to a close, members of the Linköping delegation voiced satisfaction and enthusiasm for all they had accomplished. As grateful guests, they now look forward to reciprocating by warmly welcoming the next group of Palo Altans to their hometown sometime next year.



Bing Wei of Neighbors Abroad and Stina Berglund of the Nordic Innovation House



Ed Fike and Bill Jeffrey (with Neighbors Abroad mascot Sydney!)

In Memoriam



[Iraida Busó Espinosa](#)

Former Neighbors Abroad President Iraida Busó Espinosa passed away in her Los Altos home on January 5, 2023, a month shy of her 105th



[Betty Watkins Gerard](#)

Betty Watkins Gerard died peacefully at her home of 61 years in Palo Alto on November 16, 2022, at age 97. Betty was the communications lead for

birthday. Read more [here](#) and scroll down to the "Upcoming Events" section for information about a Neighbors Abroad event on Sunday, March 12, honoring Iraida.

Neighbors Abroad for many years. Read more [here](#).

To honor Iraida, Betty, and other Neighbors Abroad leaders who have passed away, we have established an [In Memoriam page](#) on the Neighbors Abroad website.



Upcoming Events

Classy, Sassy, and Brassy! Neighbors Abroad is pleased to present the Linköping Brass Band – from Palo Alto's Swedish Sister City – in a special joint performance with the Foothill

Symphonic Winds Brass Ensemble. Join us for an evening of rousing, toe-tapping selections performed by two acclaimed brass instrumental groups. The free concert will be held at 7:30 p.m. Friday, April 7, at Cubberley Theatre, 4000 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto. The event is dedicated to past president and longtime Neighbors Abroad member, Barbara Evans, who passed away in September 2022.

Also in Honor of Barbara, on Friday, April 7, we will hold a tree planting ceremony at 1 p.m. at Seale Park, 3100 Stockton Pl., Palo Alto. For more information, please email hgheubach@sbcglobal.net



Reception in Honor of Iraida Espinosa: On Sunday, March 12, Neighbors Abroad's Palo Committee will host a reception in honor of the late Iraida Espinosa, a former Neighbors Abroad President and impactful driver of our relationship with Palo, Leyte, the Philippines. The event will be in a board member's home in Palo Alto from 4-7 p.m. For more information, please email nodelyn1@comcast.net

Help Vulnerable Children in Ukraine

When Russia invaded Ukraine a year ago, Neighbors Abroad quickly moved into action alongside [kleine herzen](#), an organization helping Ukrainian orphans and street children from our German sister



city, Heidelberg. Thanks to generous donations from Palo Alto and the greater Silicon Valley community, we were able to bring more than 200 children and their guardians to safe places in Europe. We are deeply grateful for the outpouring of support we have received!

Unfortunately our support is still desperately needed.

Because many children continue to flee the war zone on short notice, often leaving everything behind, kleine herzen is now providing children with backpacks that contain all the essentials needed in a rescue situation. An idea of the Ukrainian non-profit Save Ukraine, a kleine herzen partner, the backpacks include a warm blanket, a flashlight, food for a few days and a little stuffed animal as a sign of hope and comfort. Please consider making a tax-deductible contribution to our Ukrainian Relief Fund by clicking on the button below. According to Neighbors Abroad VP for Heidelberg, Jeannet Kiessling, who is spearheading our Ukraine efforts, a donation of just \$50 provides a child with a rescue backpack. Of course we welcome donations of any amount.

Donate to our Ukrainian Relief Fund

Phase 2 of Yaxe Rainwater Capture Project Launches



Over the last several years, Neighbors Abroad has partnered with other non-profits on an ambitious, award-winning project in San Nicolás Yaxe, Oaxaca, an indigenous community near our Mexican Sister City. Yaxe lacks piped-in water and the region is susceptible to drought, though summer rainfall is usually plentiful. Villagers have traditionally had to trek long distances for water or rely on small amounts that they could save themselves. Working with [Vidas y Sueños](#), the Stanford Global Well for Life Project, [Isla Urbana](#), Fundacion Moises Itzkowich, Kiwanis of Palo Alto and the Rotary Club of North Hunterdon, N.J., we leveraged

\$32,000 in donated funds and participated in a massive on-the-ground effort to install 50 water tanks throughout the village to capture summer rainwater that would otherwise go to waste. The results have been transformative for the village of 3,000 people, who can now grow extra crops and enjoy safer and more plentiful drinking water.

We are excited to announce Phase 2 of this life-changing initiative.

Our partner, Isla Urbana, already has secured a 60/40 match for donations that come from Neighbors Abroad. This means 30 more homes in Yaxe will receive life-changing, 5,000-liter rainwater capture tanks, instructions, and equipment.

With the mayor of Yaxe and other government officials, our partners Vidas y Suenos and Isla Urbana have selected the homes will receive the tanks and are ready to begin installation by May 1. The tanks have already arrived in Yaxe!

We are actively fundraising to meet the \$25,000 we have guaranteed for this project. Click the button below to help these families get crucial access to water for daily living as well as agriculture. Please note on the donation form that your tax-deductible gift is for the Yaxe project.

[Donate to our Yaxe Rainwater Project](#)



[Meet Chris Cummings!](#)

Local Runner Will Represent Palo Alto in Lake Kamusigaura Marathon

Neighbors Abroad has had the honor of sending several runners to an annual marathon held in Japan near our Sister City, Tsuchiura. This year, local runner Chris Cummings will be covering the 26.2 miles in the Lake Kamusigaura Marathon. Like other Palo Alto runners before him (including our own Ed Fike), he will meet

many of our key contacts in Tsuchiura, further solidifying the people-to-people bonds between our Sister Cities.

Chris, pictured above after a recent rainy-day run, is using the marathon as an opportunity to raise funds for local non-profit [LifeMoves](#), an organization he has long supported that is committed to eradicating homelessness on the Peninsula. And Chris has a bold goal: he hopes to raise \$26,200 for the non-profit, or \$1,000 per marathon mile. That amount would be enough to fund three homeless families into stable housing through LifeMoves, Chris tells us.

Chris, a lifelong Bay Area resident, advises local technology companies and also serves as a Senior Lecturer in Northwestern University's Kellogg MBA Program in its Bay Area immersion program which is located in San Francisco.

Learn more about Chris and donate [here!](#)

News from our Friends at Sibling Cities USA

Palo Alto and Bloomington Kick off Civil Discourse Series

[Sibling Cities USA](#), our partner organization in connection with the Palo Alto-Bloomington relationship, recently launched a Civil Discourse series designed to improve how individuals in both cities can connect with respect and curiosity across the miles.



Done in partnership with the non-profit [Living Room Conversations](#), the Feb. 11 Zoom event featured a number of participants from both cities, including Palo Alto Mayor Lydia Kou and Bloomington Mayor John Hamilton. Living Room Conversations works to "heal society by connecting people across divides - politics, age, gender, race, nationality, and more - through guided conversations proven to build understanding and transform communities."

Click [here](#) to hear from some of the very enthusiastic participants, including members of the Palo Alto Rotary Club and Sibling Cities USA founder Vicki Veenker. The Civil Discourse Series held a follow-up event on March 4 and will hold more "Living Room Conversations" in the coming months. For more information, please send an email to admin@siblingcitiesusa.org

Photo above courtesy of the Living Room Conversations website.

Andie Reed Honored for Service to Sibling City Initiative

The Sibling City USA Steering Committee honored volunteer Andie Reed at its January meeting. Andie devoted considerable effort to building connections between Palo Alto and Bloomington after the first-of-its-kind Sibling City program launched early last year. Once the relationship between the two cities was well established, Andie stepped down from the role to spend more time with her family. Andie was a frequent participant in Neighbors Abroad meetings and activities. We thank Andie for her dedication and lasting contributions to our Sister and Sibling City network.



Andie Reed

Two Parties and a Torch Passing

Linköping VP Ed Fike and his husband Bill Jeffrey opened their home for the 2022 Neighbors Abroad holiday party on December 11. Approximately 50 members and guests, including then-Mayor Pat Burt and City Council member and Sibling Cities USA founder Vicki Veenker, made connections and celebrated the season. Bob Wenzlau used the occasion to welcome Sarah Burgess to the presidency with the traditional passing of a painting by Oaxacan artist Rodolfo Morales. A huge thanks to California Avenue hotspot Terún for providing a generous wine donation and to Hobe's for a delightful array of food. It was a warm and convivial evening.

By the way, all active Neighbors Abroad members receive an invitation to our annual holiday party, widely recognized as Palo Alto's social event of the season (at least we think so). You can join Neighbors Abroad [here!](#)



Bob Wenzlau and Sarah Burgess



Vicki Veenker and Ed Fike



From left to right, Larbi Arbaoui, Pat Burt, Barb Mackraz, Bob Wenzlau



From left to right, Matteo Campilongo, Ellen Valentine, Zenaida Perlas, Betty Duran, Perla Novotny

During a January 18 dinner at the always-festive [Terún](#), we celebrated Bob Wenzlau's many accomplishments as President. The dinner coincided with 60th anniversary of the the Palo Alto City Council's signing of the charter to establish Neighbors Abroad. We were honored to have Palo Alto City Council Member and former Mayor Pat Burt join us.



Bob Wenzlau and Pat Burt



Sarah Burgess



Welcome Nodelyn Lago Smith

We are delighted to welcome Nodelyn Lago Smith to the Neighbors Abroad board as our co-VP for Palo, Leyte, the Philippines. Nodelyn already has participated in a delegation to Palo and has been working hard on many fronts since then to further the life-changing initiatives Neighbors Abroad has sponsored in Palo for decades. Read more about Nodelyn [here](#).

Neighbors Abroad Blog

We recently launched a blog on the Neighbors Abroad website where board members and others with whom we partner will post occasional ruminations on the work we do here in Palo Alto and abroad. To kick things off, Bob Wenzlau [penned a retrospective](#) on the evolution of Neighbors Abroad during his years of leadership. Our new President Sarah Burgess will follow Bob's post with her own take on our mission and mandates.

'ChatGPT, Write a Poem About Sister Cities'



When Sister Cities International was founded in 1956, who could have dreamed that one day we could ask an artificial intelligence program to "write a poem about Sister Cities" and within eight seconds, several not-so-bad stanzas would appear on our screen. Yes, we could do better than the robots that apparently live inside our computers, but certainly not in eight seconds. Enjoy:

*Sister Cities, intertwined, across oceans, mountains, and vine,
Brought together by a common goal, to build bridges, break down walls.*

*With a handshake and a smile, two cities are now linked by miles,
A bond forged, a friendship bright, a shining example of what is right.*

*Cultural exchanges, educational ties, business ventures, beneath open skies
Together they work, towards a common end, building a future,
that will never bend.*

*In each city, a piece of the other remains, A bond that will never rust, never
wanes, Sister Cities, forever one,
Together, their friendship has just begun.*

Neighbors Abroad

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