



The Dispatch

June 2022



Welcome!

Welcome to *The Dispatch*, Neighbors Abroad's regular round-up of our projects around the world and within our community.

In this edition:

- Mark your calendars for August 27: Neighbors Abroad's first-ever International Festival and our annual membership meeting
- Thanks to our donors, we have raised more than \$100,000 for Ukrainian children
- Delegations on the Move: Palo Alto representatives head to Oaxaca and Enschede comes to Palo Alto--along with its German Sister City
- Meet our U.S. Overduin Essay Contest winners!
- Palo Alto and Bloomington are busy sharing ideas and projects.
- Tsuchiura International Association Celebrates 30 Years and honors exchange program founder.
- Letter from Linköping: **Kerstin Reimstad**, our longtime counterpart in our Swedish Sister City, is retiring. Read her heartfelt letter to the Palo Alto community.
- Palo, Leyte re-opens Children's Library and prepares for Palo Alto delegation.
- New board members, a groundbreaking carbon offset project and other news.

Join Us For an International Festival!



To coincide with the Palo Alto Chamber of Commerce's always-lively [Festival of the Arts](#), Neighbors Abroad is hosting an International Festival on Saturday, August 27, starting around noon. The family-friendly event in front of Palo Alto City Hall will celebrate our eight international Sister Cities and our new domestic Sibling City. In addition to food, entertainment and activities for children, the event will offer opportunities for visitors to learn about--and get involved in--our impactful programs around the world.

As the Neighbors Abroad festival winds down in the afternoon, we will pivot to holding our annual membership meeting on King Plaza (more details, including the precise start time coming soon). If you're not already a Neighbors Abroad member, you can join [here](#). During the membership meeting, we will unveil a new Sister/Sibling City sign and will be joined by Palo Alto **Mayor Pat Burt** and Bloomington, Indiana **Mayor John Hamilton**, as well as other special guests.

Mark your calendars and please stay tuned for more details. For more information about the festival or the membership meeting (including if you would like to join our fun group of festival volunteers!) please email jeannet.kiessling@gmail.com or sburgval@aol.com.



Ukraine

Neighbors Abroad Continues to Make an Impact in Ukraine

Our [Ukrainian Children's Relief Fund](#) has passed the \$100,000 mark since we started fundraising in the days following Russia's invasion. We are immensely grateful for the generous donations from the Palo Alto community. These funds have been transferred to our partner, [Kleine Herzen](#), a non-profit with operations in Palo Alto's

Sister City Heidelberg, Germany. Kleine Herzen has an excellent track record for helping Ukrainian orphans and has used the funds raised so far to bring close to 200 orphans and their caregivers, along with their families, from war-ravaged parts of Ukraine into Austria. Our continued support of Kleine Herzen's on-the-ground efforts means we also are able to help those children who were not able to flee Ukraine.

Our efforts have caught the attention of the San Francisco Chamber Orchestra, which is now raising money for the Children's Fund and even [played the Ukrainian national anthem](#) during a recent concert.

Oaxaca, Mexico

Delegation Makes Trip to Oaxaca; Supporter Offers to Match Donations

In April, representatives of Neighbors Abroad, the City of Palo Alto and our non-profit partner, Vidas y Sueños, made a long-awaited visit to Oaxaca and surrounding areas.



The group followed up on past projects in our Mexican Sister City, visited organizations that Neighbors Abroad supports, made new connections, and launched the [Art & Sustainability](#) initiative in Yaxe, the indigenous village where the idea for the cross-border art exhibit took root.

The group was treated to a welcome breakfast at [Crecemos](#), a non-profit, supported by Neighbors Abroad that provides educational, music, and sports programs for young people. Dancers from El Centro Calpulli, another youth-focused group Neighbors Abroad has championed, provided entertainment.



At Oaxaca City Hall, the group met with city officials and installed banners featuring the Art & Sustainability artists and their works. Other stops on the busy itinerary included a tour of the mountaintop observatory Palo Alto established for Oaxaca almost 50 years ago, as well as a photo opportunity with a fleet of fire trucks Palo Alto donated to Oaxaca.

A highlight of the trip was the group's return to the village Yaxe, where Neighbors Abroad, in partnership with other nonprofits, [helped install 50 rainwater capture tanks](#) a few years ago. In a region that has little in the way of piped-in water, these

life-changing tanks capture summer rainwater that would otherwise go to waste. The delegation reported that the results have been transformative for the village of 3,000, where residents previously had to rely on small amounts of water they could store themselves. Now they are able to grow additional crops and avoid long trips to a river for drinking and bathing water.

During the trip, an unexpected encounter delighted our VP for Oaxaca, **Sarah Burgess**, who was an exchange student in Oaxaca in 1975. She had a surprise reunion with her host mother from all those decades ago--evidence of the enduring connections Neighbors Abroad endeavors to create across countries and decades.

Please Help Us Continue Our Life-Changing Initiatives in Oaxaca

Oaxaca faces the economic, healthcare and other challenges typical of developing countries. The City of Palo Alto and Neighbors Abroad have [been at Oaxaca's side for almost 60 years](#), partnering on confronting these challenges while benefiting from a close, mutually beneficial relationship.

Our ability to make a difference in our Mexican Sister City--including support of educational and nutrition programs for vulnerable children--is made possible through donations to Neighbors Abroad's Oaxaca Fund. Through August 2022, an anonymous supporter has offered to match all donations up to \$5,000. If your employer matches your donation, our donor will match the entire amount. Please consider making a tax-deductible donation today to keep these programs alive and inspire new initiatives where the needs are greatest.

[Donate here](#)

Enschede

Enschede Delegation Visits Palo Alto; Essay Contest Winners Announced

In late May, Neighbors Abroad welcomed a delegation from Enschede, the



Netherlands, along with a contingent from Enschede's German Sister City, Münster. The three-way, four-day visit focused on sustainability initiatives in and around Palo Alto and brought numerous opportunities for cross-border connections.

Among many other stops on a busy itinerary, the group met with Palo Alto city officials to discuss the city's [Sustainability/Climate Action Plan \(S/CAP\)](#), toured a "smart home," visited Stanford University's [Precourt Institute of Energy](#) and, of course, enjoyed various meals and networking opportunities, including a Mexican-themed evening at the home of Neighbors Abroad President **Bob Wenzlau** and a welcome breakfast at iconic Palo Alto restaurant [Hobee's](#).

A centerpiece of the delegations' time in Palo Alto was the announcement of the winners of the cross-border [Overduin Essay Contest](#), honoring Enschede's Pastor Leendert Overduin, a hero of World War II who quietly saved hundreds of Jewish children and others from the occupying Nazis in and around Enschede.

At an evening reception at Palo Alto's Gamble Garden, local resident **Uri Elzur** spoke poignantly about how Pastor Overduin saved the life of a young girl--who grew up to be Uri's mother--by finding a safehouse for her near Enschede.

Palo Alto **Mayor Pat Burt**, Enschede **Mayor Roelof Bleker**, and Münster **Mayor Markus Lewe** announced the essay contest winners from their respective cities. Master of ceremonies and Neighbors Abroad board member **Edward Fike** announced the winners from our Sibling City, Bloomington, Indiana, some of whom watched the program via livestream. The high schoolers in each city wrote a 500- to 800-word essay about what it means to be a force for good in the world without expectation of recognition. First- and second-place winners from Palo Alto and Bloomington are invited to visit Enschede in summer 2023!

Our winners from Palo Alto are:



First place, Abigail Karel, 9th grade, Palo Alto High School



Second place, Sydney Ernest, 9th grade, Kehillah Jewish High School



Third place, Devanshi Chand, 9th grade, Kehillah Jewish High School

Our winners from Bloomington are:



First place, Ailuen Liu, 9th Grade, Bloomington High School North



Second place, Jack Steiner, 11th grade, Bloomington High School North



Third place, Rena Cohen, 10th grade, Bloomington High School North

Read more about the Overduin contest in [this article](#) in the *Jewish News of Northern California*.

Bloomington

Bloomington Relationship is Blooming

Sibling Cities Palo Alto and [Bloomington, Indiana](#) have been collaborating on a host of projects over the last several months in addition to the Overduin Essay Contest:

Bloomington held its annual Celebration of Innovation awards in April and included representatives of Palo Alto in the online event. [Sibling Cities USA](#) founder **Vicki Veenker** and Sibling City Coordinators **Andie Reed** (Palo Alto) and **Karen Howe Fernandez** (Bloomington) were recognized as Innovators for the Future in connection with their work building bridges between the two cities. Congratulations to all three, who are busy on many fronts finding opportunities for idea-sharing and collaboration.



*Andie Reed, Palo Alto
City Coordinator*



*Vicki Veenker, Founder of
Sibling Cities USA*



*Karen Howe Fernandez,
Bloomington City
Coordinator*

Meanwhile, Neighbors Abroad's [Art & Sustainability](#) program is finding synergies with Bloomington. Neighbors Abroad President **Bob Wenzlau** and Bloomington's Office of Economics and Sustainability Director **Alex Crowley** are discussing ways to collaborate on the project, designed to harness the transformative power of art to bring attention to sustainability programs in Palo Alto and its Sister and Sibling Cities.

Members of Rotary of Palo Alto traveled to Bloomington at the end of May to get to know their Rotary Club counterparts. The group met with Bloomington **Mayor John Hamilton** and toured various points of interest in and around the city, including Indiana University and City Hall. We look forward to hosting Bloomington's Rotary delegation later this year.



Tsuchiura, Japan

Tsuchiura Honors Longtime Champion of Palo Alto-Tsuchiura Relationship

The Tsuchiura International Association—Neighbors Abroad's counterpart volunteer organization in Tsuchiura, Japan—recently celebrated its 30th anniversary. Palo Alto Mayor Pat Burt, Neighbors Abroad President **Bob Wenzlau**, and Tsuchiura VP **Jennifer Buenrostro** contributed letters congratulating the Association and acknowledging the close connections the groups have forged over the years.

The Association recently honored **Keiko Nakajima** and her husband **Yasuo Kishimoto** with Certificates of Gratitude for their generous donation last year of \$100,000 to help further the Sister City relationship and to expand on the highly successful exchange program between the two cities.

Keiko, a former Palo Alto Unified School District Japanese teacher, has been a driving force behind the Palo Alto-Tsuchiura relationship for more than a decade. She was a founder of the student exchange program and served as Neighbors Abroad's VP for Tsuchiura while she and Yasuo lived in Menlo Park. Yasuo is a retired neuroscience researcher who worked at Johns Hopkins and University of California, San Diego. The couple returned to Japan in 2019. Their \$100,000 donation (reported on in more detail in [the August 2021 edition](#) of *The Dispatch*) is being shared by Neighbors Abroad and the Tsuchiura International Association for the cities' mutually beneficial programs.

With COVID having up-ended exchange programs over the last several years, Japanese teachers at Jordan Middle School and Greene Middle School, along with their counterparts in Tsuchiura, have been valiantly engaging in Zoom "exchanges" between their students, overcoming the hurdles of time zones and masked classrooms. Organizers are looking to relaunch the long-running, in-person exchange program in 2023.

Pictured above: *Tsuchiura Mayor Mariko Ando (far left) and Tsuchiura International Association President Yuko Fujita (far right), present Keiko Nakajima and her husband Yasuo Kishimoto with a Certificate of Gratitude in recognition of their generous donation of \$100,000 to further the relationship between Palo Alto and Tsuchiura, including the cities' long-running exchange program.*



Palo, Leyte Philippines

Palo, Leyte Emerging from COVID; Preparing for Delegation

With COVID restrictions starting to lift in the Philippines, students in Palo, Leyte, our oldest Sister City, are finally able to again take advantage of the Children's Library that Neighbors Abroad has supported for many decades. Another student-focused group supported by Neighbors Abroad, the Eastern Visayas Science Centrum, has received hands-on science materials thanks to donations from our Palo Committee.

Meanwhile, we offer our warmest congratulations to Palo's newly elected Mayor, **Remedios "Matin" Petilla**. We look forward to working on projects with "Mayor Matin" and soon will have the opportunity to meet her and others in the new municipal government. A delegation from Palo Alto is exploring a visit to Palo in October to coincide with the 71st anniversary of the landing by General Douglas MacArthur at Leyte Gulf during World War II.



Linköping

Letter from Linköping: 'I Left My Heart in Palo Alto'

Our longtime friend and Sister City collaborator, **Kerstin Reimstad**, is retiring from her position as Head of International Affairs for Linköping. She penned this heartfelt goodbye letter to Palo Alto and her friends at Neighbors Abroad:

You all know the song "I Left My Heart in San Francisco." I think a new song should be written: "I Left My Heart in Palo Alto."

This is how I feel about Palo Alto and all the wonderful people I have met when I have visited your fantastic city. As I begin my retirement, I would like to send greetings to all of you.

Linköping is very proud to have Palo Alto as a Sister City. Linköping's partnership with Palo Alto is one of our most prioritized international collaborations.

Neighbors Abroad and the City of Palo Alto have taken a very positive initiative recently to establish the European Committee. The collaboration between Palo Alto, Enschede, Heidelberg, Albi, and Linköping has been developed in a very productive and efficient way. The network covers many areas such as circular economy, art and sustainability, economic development, business and innovation, and education.

Bob Wenzlau, Jeannet Kiessling, Chantal Gaines, among others, are doing great work keeping us on track. I see the big potential for the future as Neighbors Abroad's European Committee continues working with the different projects. I will miss being part of that journey.

An important factor for our joint collaboration is that Linköping has had and is still having such fantastic representatives from Neighbors Abroad who "take care of us."

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For many years, Barbara and Joe Evans were in charge. I stayed at their home

several times, once with my husband, Henry.



Former Palo Alto Economic Development Director Tommy Fehrenbach, former Palo Alto Mayor Le Levy and Neighbors Abroad's Barbara Evans.

Their hospitality was outstanding. I remember many interesting discussions with a lot of humor.

I have gotten to know our "new" person from Neighbors Abroad in charge of the relationship with Linköping, Edward Fike. Even though Ed and I have not known each other for a long time, we have discussed many ideas for collaboration.

Thank you so much, Barbara, Joe, and Ed for your support!

My first visit to Palo Alto was in 1998. At that time I did not work for the city of Linköping. During a business trip to the U.S. over Easter, I joined Linköping's Temptation Jazz Band while they were on tour. While in Palo Alto, all of us stayed with different families and we were thrown a wonderful welcoming party by Neighbors Abroad.

The next visit was in 2012 and Linköping sent quite a big delegation. As always, we had a wonderful visit in Palo Alto. All of you are fantastic hosts.

The 30th anniversary of our sister city relationship was celebrated in Linköping in October 2017 when a delegation from Palo Alto visited Linköping, led by then-Mayor Greg Scharff. The celebration in Palo Alto took place in January the following year. The Mayor of Linköping, Helena Balhammar, was the leader of a delegation. The City of Palo Alto and Neighbors Abroad had organized and planned an outstanding program for us.

I can see a number of similarities between our two cities: Palo Alto and Linköping are both innovative, forward thinking and keen to go beyond the expected. We can learn from each other and share experiences. The situation in the world has changed very rapidly in the last months and I don't know what things will look like in the future.

That makes it even more important to have good and trustful collaborations with cities in other countries.

I would like to wish you all good luck. I am convinced that our successful Sister City relationship will be even more useful to our cities in the future. To all of you, I am very grateful for all the hospitality and kindness I have experienced during my visits to Palo Alto. I promise, I will be back to Palo Alto. And of course, you're most welcome to Linköping!

With my warmest regards,

Kerstin,

In Additional News

Welcome to our newest board members

A warm welcome to [Ellen Valentine](#) who has joined the board as our co-VP for Palo, Leyte, Philippines and will also serve as Neighbors Abroad's Treasurer. We thank outgoing Treasurer **Vinay Gupta** for his years of service. We also recently welcomed [Monica Schreiber](#) to the board as the VP for Albi, France. Monica also is co-leading our communications initiatives and working on projects under our European Committee umbrella.

Vidas y Sueños Celebrates Children

Neighbors Abroad's partner organization in Mexico, Vidas y Sueños, has been busy spreading the word about healthy eating to children in communities around Mexico. Almost 1,000 youngsters attended a Children's Festival across eight communities at which they were entertained with puppet shows and other festivities and received donated toys, clothing, and seeds to plant their own gardens. Representatives of Vidas y Sueños also joined the Neighbors Abroad delegation to Oaxaca and visited the community of Yaxe to see how the [donated rainwater capture tanks](#) have changed people's lives in that indigenous area.

Groundbreaking Carbon Offset Program Seeks to Expand

Several years ago, Palo Alto entered into an agreement to purchase carbon offsets from a forestry project within Oaxaca with the goal of offsetting carbon dioxide emissions associated with natural gas use in the Palo Alto community.

This was the first forestry-based carbon offset transaction between the United States and Mexico and Neighbors Abroad played a key role in getting the deal off the ground. Now, the program is poised to expand across our Sister City family. Learn more [here](#).



Fireside Chat

On April 28, Heidelberg **Mayor Eckart Würzner** and Palo Alto **Mayor Pat Burt** engaged in a virtual fireside chat organized by the Heidelberg-Palo Alto Club. The two mayors talked about their five-year Sister City relationship and the projects on which the two cities plan to focus in the future. Mayor Burt will travel to Heidelberg this summer to intensify cooperation efforts, especially in the sustainability area.

May Fete Parade Festivities

With Palo Alto's beloved May Fete children's parade finally able to be held this year after a two-year, COVID-related hiatus, representatives of Neighbors Abroad and Sibling Cities USA joined forces at an information table at the parade. Representatives of each group shared information about our collaborative efforts and major projects.

[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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