



Around Our World

ROANOKE VALLEY SISTER CITIES, INC.

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Delegation makes vital contacts during successful trip

By Bill Modica
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In October, I joined the leaders of Richmond, Va.-based Support Aid Ministry on their visit to Kisumu, Kenya. (Support Aid Ministry is a registered nonprofit dedicated to improving the lives of vulnerable children near Kisumu.) The purpose of the trip was to visit the school where improvements are being made with financial support from our Sister Cities group. Barb Adams led our delegation and is working to add new features to the school and to provide ongoing support for teachers and students.

While in Kisumu, I met with the director of the City of Kisumu Urban Area Association, a business-development group, and with their chairman, Mr. Samba Nixon. Together we visited the Kisumu city manager and her staff and discussed pending improvements. I invited the city manager to return the visit and come to Roanoke in the near future.

I was also able to visit the Kisumu International Airport and the shore of nearby Lake Victoria, an area ripe for recreational development. Issues such as pollution and invasive weeds were

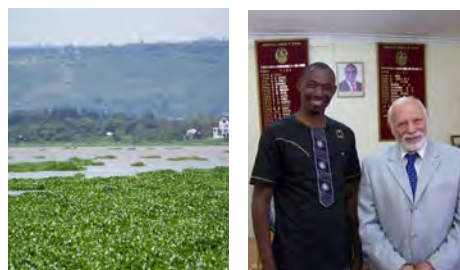
evident during the visit, but the lakefront has great potential for improvement. Kisumu is a city of 450,000 and has experienced rapid growth as a regional center for commerce and industry. I and my contacts also discussed future tourism opportunities.

Finally, I met with Kenyatta University Professor Makori Moronge in Nairobi for a few days of sightseeing and even got to visit a national park nearby where I saw wildlife up close and ate regional foods in the local style.

I hope to make additional trips to Kenya in the coming year and will explore new ventures for our Sister Cities program. Your support is vital, so please send donations and suggestions to the Roanoke Sister City Kisumu program (see the form on the last page of this newsletter, or visit www.rvsci.us). If you want to be on our email list and keep up with future programs and join the Kisumu group, email me at modicabill2@aol.com.



God's Little Angels School in Kisumu received financial support from the Roanoke-Kisumu group to support teachers. Students are orphaned or otherwise vulnerable children.



Left: Parts of Lake Victoria appear choked by weeds. Right: Samba Nixon, chairman of the City of Kisumu Urban Area Association, poses with Bill.



In Kenya, Roanoke-Kisumu chairman Bill Modica (second from left) is shown with (from left) Cosmas Akeyo, Kisumu County District Gov. Peter Nyong'o, Barb Adams and Joseph Akeyo.

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President's Report

Raising awareness, making connections at home and abroad



By Mary Jo Fassie
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Roanoke Valley Sister Cities' mission is to connect the Roanoke Valley with not only our seven sister cities abroad but to engage the residents of our area in the culture of these countries with activities here in the valley. The RVSCI executive board and city committees play a key role in making this mission a reality. Over the past six months, we have helped raise awareness of the cultural diversity here in the Roanoke Valley and connected residents with our partners on four continents.

During the summer, the Kisumu committee held a program at the Williamson Road Library about Support Aid Ministry in Kisumu and raised significant funds for this group to aid the fight against extreme poverty and HIV/AIDS and to educate marginalized girls by empowering them with education and life skills. In July, the St-Lô committee brought together RVSCI members to celebrate at a Bastille Day Picnic and to hear about intern Paige Garner's experiences in St-Lô and the wonderful news that she was offered a staff position for the school year at the high school in St-Lô. St-Lô also sent an intern, Thomas Morice, to work with the City of Roanoke engineers and Roanoke City Schools. In addition, Wroclaw Medical University near Opole, Poland, sent two medical students to the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine to do the overseas rotation, and St-Lô



Paige Garner



Mei Li Foy at the RVSCI cookie booth at Olde Salem Days.

artist Cornelia Marin conducted three workshops in Roanoke.

In September, RVSCI members volunteered to make and sell home-made cookies at our International Cookie Booth at Olde Salem Days. People were delighted to taste so many treats, including French Madeleines and Chinese delights prepared by the Lijiang committee members. Any leftover items were donated to the Roanoke Rescue Mission. I gave a presentation about RVSCI to the William Fleming Golden Colonels group at the Salem Civic Center. So many people were unaware of our seven sister cities and all the many exchanges and programs that we sponsor. Korean language classes were once again offered by the RVSCI Wonju committee this fall at Roanoke College with Kwon Woori as instructor.

In October, St-Lô Vice Chairwoman Siobhan Scro held an informational meeting for the June 2019 trip to St-Lô, presenting an organized trip not only to St-Lô but Paris, other Normandy sites and the chateaux of the Loire valley. She also explained that some people may like to just attend the events on the last weekend of June in St-Lô. Florianópolis Co-chairwoman Linda Harrison attended a meeting with Partners for America, which also is active in Brazil. Opole Chairwoman Kris Slowikowski set up a

display for Kościuszko Day at the South County Public Library.

In November, Lijiang Co-chairwoman Mei Li Foy met Roanoke Vice Mayor Joe Cobb in China, receiving a wonderful reception in our sister city of Lijiang and attending the Chinese International Friendship Cities Conference. Kisumu Chairman Bill Modica journeyed to Kisumu, Kenya, and made connections with the leaders of Support Aid Ministry, City of Kisumu Urban Area Association, City of Kisumu city manager and a university professor to discuss future projects with Kisumu. Locally, RVSCI was present at the Roanoke College



This summer, the Kisumu committee sponsored a program about Support Aid Ministry at the Williamson Road Library.

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Internship Fair, where interested students gathered information about our programs and how they could serve as an intern here or abroad.

As we said goodbye to 2018, Florianópolis and St-Lô held holiday celebrations featuring the holiday customs and historical connections in their respective cities.



Since the spring, scenic photos of St-Lô have filled the shadow box at the RVSCI display at the Municipal Building in downtown Roanoke.

Meet our new intern for credit

Welcome to Hannah Furrow, senior at Roanoke College and an intern for credit with RVSCI for spring semester 2019. Hannah is an international-relations major and graduate of Cave Spring High School. She has extensive national and community service experience, having worked with AmeriCorps and FEMA Corps. Since 2017, Hannah has volunteered with the Roanoke Refugee Partnership and in the past with Big Brothers Big Sisters and Habitat for Humanity. Joining intern Grace Dupré from Roanoke College, Hannah will be completing a variety of tasks for the RVSCI Executive Board, including helping with the spring high school art showcase, Lunar New Year celebration, Polka Fest, developing flyers, connecting with social media, attending executive board meetings and completing research for future projects.



Hannah Furrow

Grace Dupré

Save the date!

January

- **16 - 31:** St-Lô Intern Elise Dubuis, Taubman Museum of Art
- **12:** Roanoke-Wonju committee meets at Community High School, 1:00 p.m.
- **21 - 31:** Two medical students from Wonju in rotation, VTCSOM

February

- **1 - 15:** Two medical students from Wonju in rotation, VTCSOM
- **1 - 28:** St-Lô Intern Elise Dubuis, Taubman Museum of Art
- **2 - September 8:** "Colette Fu: We Are Tiger Dragon People," Taubman Museum of Art
- **5:** RVSCI board meeting, 5:30 p.m., Center in the Square
- **9:** Roanoke-Lijiang's Lunar New Year celebration, Taubman Museum of Art

March

- **1 - 15:** St-Lô Intern Elise Dubuis, Taubman Museum of Art
- **1:** Deadline for submissions to RVSCI Young Artists/Photographers Showcase
- **12:** RVSCI presentation, Newcomers Club of the Roanoke Valley

April

- **2:** RVSCI board meeting, 5:30 p.m., Center in the Square
- **5:** Chardon Polka Band, Taubman Museum of Art

May

- **18:** Local Colors, 11 a.m.-5 p.m., Elmwood Park
- **30:** RVSCI Annual Dinner at Roanoke College

June

- **22 - July 9:** Trip to St-Lô, Paris, Normandy, Versailles, Loire Valley Chateaux
- **28 - 30:** Roanoke/St-Lô 20th anniversary celebration weekend in St-Lô

Opole, Poland

Looking forward to new liaisons, new partnerships

By Kris Bulas-Slowikowski
Roanoke-Opole committee chairwoman
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We have had a full several months of Polish happenings.

In the summer, Roanoke Valley Sister Cities Opole committee and VTCSOM hosted two lovely medical students from the Medical University of Wroclaw, thus successfully completing our inaugural year of medical exchanges between Roanoke and Poland. We are grateful to the Kościuszko Foundation for contributing stipends, which were used to pay for the Polish students' housing and groceries during their month-long stay in the Roanoke Valley. The medical experience was at the level of a medical intern – which allowed each student to participate in rounds with physicians, examining patients, lectures and discussions with medical and surgical residents and physician assistant students. In April 2019, VTCSOM will send two fourth-year medical students to Wroclaw for a month-long rotation, and we expect to host a new group of students from Wroclaw in the summer of 2019.

Here, Anna Fulek, a 6th-year medical student at the Medical University of Wroclaw, summarizes her Roanoke experience:

"When I found out I had been accepted to this international traineeship I was eager and thrilled! I cannot imagine a better way to gain new medical experience. It was an amazing opportunity to come to the USA and



In the summer, Anna Fulek and Agata Krach, students from the Medical University of Wroclaw, did month-long rotations at the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine with financial assistance from the Kościuszko Foundation.

learn from the doctors there. During the month I had spent there, I had a chance to accompany doctors from ER and Pediatric department in their daily work, observe their actions and finally see patients on my own under their supervision – it is a great way to learn responsibility and independence in hospital. It was very practical and teaching time. What is more, I frequented lectures and workshops with other medical and PA students, which allowed me to meet many other people and made me feel like one of them. Everybody was very nice and ready to help me in every situation. Every day I was excited to go to the Carilion Clinic and see incredible cases that are hardly possible to see in Poland.

"The most interesting for me were my pediatric rotations, the time that I had spent there helped me to make up my mind to choose it as my specialization. It was very interesting to notice differences between approaches and ways of treatment in Poland and the USA.

"Besides improving English skills, time spent in Roanoke resulted in meeting new friends and exploring amazing spots in Virginia. The best thing in Roanoke – so many places to hike and admire beautiful views.

"It definitely broadened my mind and also influenced my technique of examining and interviewing patients. It was all possible thanks to Kościuszko foundation, without their stipend it would not be feasible. It was an extraordinary time which I will always



Piotr Wilczek (center), Polish ambassador to the USA, addresses the crowd at the Kościuszko Day event at the Virginia War Memorial in Richmond.

remember and appreciate."

On Oct. 15 Virginia celebrated the first annual Kościuszko Day celebration. An official gathering of Polish and American officials gathered at the Virginia War Memorial in Richmond for celebratory messages from the Polish Ambassador to the USA, Piotr Wilczek, Polish senator Maria Anders, honorary Polish consul for the state of Virginia Robert Joskowiak, the Polish deputy minister of health with a 30-person delegation from Poland and Virginia state government officials -- state delegate Nick Freitas among others and members of the Alliance for Innovation, a Polish-American foundation. Dr. Cynda Johnson joined the group at the Medical Society of Virginia meeting to help promote further of partnership between Southwest Virginia and Virginia Tech Carilion and the biotechnical and medical industry in Poland. We look forward to new liaisons and partnerships between Virginia and Poland.

In Roanoke we also celebrated Kościuszko Day with an exhibit of informational materials and archival photographs that were researched and sent to us by the municipal library of Opole. We look forward to further cooperation between our libraries and thank the Roanoke South County library for hosting this exhibit.

Save April 5 on your calendar for Polka dancing and the return of the Chardon Polka Band to the Taubman Museum of Art. Come with your dancing shoes on. Get ready to tap your feet, dance and join in the fun!



In October, Kościuszko Day was celebrated at the Roanoke South County Library with an exhibit of materials that were researched and sent to us by the municipal library of Opole. Here is South County librarian Darlene Smithwick with the exhibit.

Lijiang, China

Strengthening ties based on new friendships, experiences

By Mei Li Foy
Roanoke-Lijiang co-chairwoman
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The Roanoke-Lijiang committee has been hard at work both in the local community and in building our relationship with our sister city.

Led by Rebecca Chang and me, the Lijiang committee contributed to the Olde Salem Days bake sale in September. Members of the Lijiang committee came together to bake Chinese macaroons, which were sold (and then sold out!) to raise funds for RVSCI.

In the fall, I had the incredible opportunity to accompany Roanoke Vice Mayor Joe Cobb to China for a sister city visit to Lijiang, hosted by Acting Vice President of the Lijiang People's Association, Liwei Zhang. Like the United States, China is a large country made up of various regions with cultural customs and practices unique to each region. During this trip, we were able to observe and even participate in these customs and practices. The visit built new friendships and strengthened the relationship between sister cities. (Vice Mayor Cobb's report is included in this newsletter on Page 6)

Joe and I had the distinct opportunity to participate in the celebration of a local Naxi wedding. The Naxi people are an ethnic minority in Lijiang and are a warm and close-knit community. Wedding guests typically include family, friends and neighbors of the couple as well as the relatives of the aforementioned guests. The whole village comes together to contribute to the celebration of the couple -- women cook and men wait on and bus tables -- for both lunch and dinner meals. The newly married couple must stand by the entrance to both greet and send off the steady stream of guests. The feast consists of specialty dishes that are required for wedding celebrations, and food is prepared fresh for each table that is seated. Leftovers from each table are fed to the family's pigs.

The two sister cities have had ongoing

discussions about an art exchange program. As part of this visit, Liwei brought Joe and me to a woodworking workshop, and everyone discovered new excitement about this project. Artists were present to explain the concepts and iconography behind their works of art, which ranged from modern and abstract to traditional; there were even sculptures carved from century-old trees. If anyone is interested in learning more about the art or participating in the art exchange program, please reach out to me.

Co-chairwoman Rebecca Chang reports that she received the finalized and signed twinning agreement from Lijiang in the middle of November. She also took conference calls with the secretary of Roanoke Mayor Sherman Lea as well as Vice Mayor Cobb to help him prepare for the trip. She and Joe Cobb also met and discussed the details of the projects that we have been working on. Rebecca reported that she will send the copy of the agreement to Mary Jo, who will ensure that Roanoke city government officials have a copy.

Please join us for our annual Chinese Lunar New Year celebration at the Taubman Museum on Feb. 9. If you would like to participate, please reach out to Rebecca or me.



A snapshot of the delicacies that are served at a Naxi wedding ceremony.



A large group of Lijiang committee members gathered to bake Chinese macaroons for Olde Salem Days.



Caleb Wang and his mother, Sherry Yin Wang



In Lijiang, Mei Li and Joe visited a woodworking workshop.



Mei Li and Joe were able to participate in a Naxi wedding.

Roanoke's vice mayor in China

谢谢 (Thank you), Lijiang!

*By the Honorable Joe Cobb
Vice Mayor, City of Roanoke
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On our ride from the airport to our hotel in Wuhan, China, I leaned over and asked Roanoke-Lijiang co-chairwoman Mei Li Foy how to say “thank you” in Chinese. She whispered back, “xiexie.” These words, more than any other, embody my recent experience in China.

The first part of the journey began in Wuhan, host to the 2018 Chinese International Friendship Cities Conference. This high-level, diplomatic event featured more than 700 delegates from around the world celebrating innovative ways to create and sustain win-win cooperation and relationships. We heard from the Vice President of the People's Republic of China, the former Prime Minister of Japan, and presidents of the CIFCC and USA Sister Cities organizations, along with a variety of panel conversations on how to strengthen partnerships around the world. When not in meetings, Mei Li and I visited the famous Yellow Crane Tower, original Yangtze Bridge, and walked through the Eastlake Greenway, home to biking and pedestrian paths, a new eco-wetland complete with a public art project, and electric bus shuttles to various parts of the lake. With more than 11 million citizens, Wuhan is well known as a leading design city and is currently experiencing more than 10,000 construction projects throughout the city.

Following the conference, Mr. Liwei, our wonderful host from the Office of Foreign Affairs in Lijiang, joined me and Meili on our flight to Lijiang, and then provided a fantastic experience for us in the ancient and contemporary city. The first afternoon we spent several hours with Mr. Mu, an extraordinary artist from the Naxi ethnic minority people (one of twenty-six in the Yunnan province and



Mr. Mu and Ajun, Lijiang artists with Mei Li Foy and Joe Cobb

the largest in Lijiang). He is a sculptor and story teller, and works primarily as a woodcrafter, bringing together the ancient mystical relationship of nature and humanity with roots in the Dongba religion and Naxi stories. Along with his wife, Ajun, we toured their warehouse workshop and heard stories of history and inspiration.

Mr. Mu and his beloved took us into their warehouse workshop where he revealed extraordinary wood carving from ancient trees that have died or been discarded from the land, due to both neglect by humanity and real estate development.

He took us first to a stand of trees, vibrant in the color of red, and shimmering with what appeared to be glints of light. As he began to tell the story of these ancient trees, he sought to bring new life, even while acknowledging the deep pain felt by the trees in the violence enacted upon them. To symbolize this pain, he filled each tree

with intricate designs made by flat top nails. Each nail represents a scream of the trees, while also symbolizing a new pattern of hope in restoring the harmony and balance of nature and humanity.

With the growing impact of arts and culture in Roanoke, I couldn't help but wonder at the possibility of bringing Mr. Mu and Ajun (and perhaps even their daughter, who is also a budding artist) for a residency as part of an arts and culture exchange. They recently did one in Quebec.

The first evening we shared a wonderful welcome meal with the staff of the Office of Foreign Affairs, including Mr. Li, the director, Liwei and Helen He (who recently helped solidify the internship program with Rebecca Chang, our Lijiang Sister City Co-Chair) through Virginia Tech and Roanoke College.

The next day we attended a country wedding of the Naxi tradition and were

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fully welcomed by the couple and the many people gathered. It was such a beautiful experience of local celebration and traditional food!

On the next day, Meili had to return home, and I visited the Lijiang Teachers College, where I met the Dean of the college, and had very good conversations with Professor Tang, who leads the International Tourism Education Program. I was able to talk with faculty and students, explored expanding our new teacher/student internship program, and discussed hopes of expanding our exchange to include an English teacher from the U.S./Roanoke who would like to teach for a year in Lijiang!

The students were excited to know about our connection with Lijiang through the historic relationship with Pearl Fu's grandfather serving as the governor of the Yunnan Province, and a now renowned visionary leader. Following Pearl's passion for connecting students here and there, I was happy to introduce her and share her and our vision for what can be.

Then, I visited a high school and met with a class of students who were very kind, very excited to meet someone from the United States, and eager to practice their English and learn about some of our customs. They even asked me to sing, so I sang a favorite song, and then their teacher, affectionately known by his American name "Bruce" sang his favorite Naxi song. I then had the honor of meeting with the Principal/Headmaster and we discussed several creative proposals about a potential high school teacher/student exchange. At the close of my visit to the school, they presented me with a beautiful hand-painted scroll, with the following inscription:

*"My Modest Room"
The depth of a pool
Depends on a dragon in it
And a shabby and modest room
Depends on the person who
Lives in it.
-- Liu Yuxi
Poet, Tang Dynasty*

The evening brought a thoughtful and encouraging conversation with the Vice Mayor of Lijiang, Mme. Jin, regarding the important relationship between our cities. I re-iterated my belief that even in difficult times globally and politically, our people -- through our abiding belief in friendship -- can overcome any obstacle as a way of growing our relationships with one another.

My last full day was spent touring the sacred Snow Mountain and Lijiang's old towns. A beautiful city and beautiful friendship.

We look forward to all the ways in which we can grow our friendship exchange with Lijiang through education, the arts and health.

Xiexie, Lijiang! I am grateful for your kindness and look forward to the growth of our friendship.



Stand of trees with heart



With Lijiang High School headmaster and tapestry



With Helen He, faculty member, Mr. Liwei, Dean of College and Professor Tang

Wonju, South Korea

Grateful to all who made our programs successful

By Brian Counihan
Roanoke-Wonju committee chairman
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Best wishes to all our members from the Roanoke Valley Sister cities Wonju Committee.

We are excited to announce that two medical students from Wonju will visit the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine this winter for a four-week rotation. The students, Jiwon Lee and Sewhan Na, will be the most recent medical students from Wonju to partake in what has become an annual exchange, thanks to the spirit of friendship and commitment of VTCSOM. We are very grateful for the efforts of Dr. Daniel Harrington and his team at the medical school and especially thank Dr. Cynda Johnson for including Wonju in her plans during her exceptional tenure as dean at VTCSOM. We plan to host several events for the students during their visit, Jan. 21-Feb. 15, and if you would like to meet the students or join us for a meal, please contact us and we will be sure to include you in our plans.

Dr. Eunyoung Lee, coordinator of

the Family Nurse Practitioner Program at Radford University's School of Nursing, is also preparing for an annual exchange with Wonju. Her program hosted four students from Yonsei University in Wonju last February and will send students from Radford to Korea this spring. We wish them luck on their travels and send our best wishes to the nursing students in Wonju. We will look forward to another visit from the Yonsei students in 2020.

A special holiday thank you to everyone at Roanoke College's Foreign Language Department who were so generous in allowing our Korean language classes to be held on their campus this fall. Kwon Woori has been a tremendous teacher and has worked tirelessly despite a full schedule as a graduate student, pastor's wife and full-time mom. She will be taking time over the holidays to consider whether she can continue to teach next semester. It is our hope that we can continue to



Dr. Eunyoung Lee

offer Korean language classes for free to anyone interested in Korean culture. Please contact RVSCI/ Wonju to get an update on classes for 2019.

As you may have noticed, our plans for a fundraiser celebrating Korean Alphabet day in October fell through because it conflicted with Go Festival. Anyone who might be interested in helping with a fundraiser for Korean Alphabet Day is encouraged to contact us. We would be glad of ideas and help!

Everyone is welcome to attend a Wonju committee meeting at Community High School on Saturday, Jan. 12, at 1 p.m. Please RSVP if you plan to attend to be sure we have a room to accommodate.

Finally, I would like to thank Ed Harriman of the Parrotheads of the Blue Ridge who requested a speaker for their group from Sister Cities to talk about our organization, and Wonju in particular. The Parrotheads are a fun-loving group who enjoy providing volunteer hours and funds for local organizations. They have supported many charities over the years and do a great deal for the Roanoke Valley through their efforts.

즐거운 연휴 되세요!

Happy Holidays!

Saint-Lô, France

Our 20th anniversary fêtes continue here and abroad

By Sherrie Henshaw
Roanoke-St-Lô committee board member
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During this celebratory year, Roanoke and Saint-Lô continued our 20-year traditions of hosting delegations and sponsoring student interns. Thomas Morice, an engineering student at INSA-Rennes in Brittany, had to return to France before our annual Bastille Day picnic on July 15, but he left a report about his month-long stay in Roanoke this summer. I read the letter aloud at the picnic, and it is reprinted Page 10 in this newsletter. Thomas was hosted by the Grider family -- Doug, Frances and their four sons -- of Roanoke County. He interned with Jeff Shawver, the chief of physical plants for Roanoke City Schools, and with Roanoke City Engineer Luke Pugh.

Virginia Western student Paige Garner was on hand at the picnic to tell us about her experience as an English teacher at the Institut Saint-Lô. Paige enjoyed teaching middle school and high school students as well helping teach ULIS, a separate class for students with learning disabilities. The feeling must have been mutual because she was offered a yearlong teaching position for the 2018-19 school year. Disappointingly, the Visa for her stay did not go through. But what a great honor for Paige to have been asked, and we are so proud to have had her represent us.

During the summer, Paige stayed her "Saint-Lô family." As often happens during exchange visits, special relationships are formed. In 2014, Paige and her family hosted Institut students Emma Brunet and Chloe Eliard. Then in 2016, as part of a high school delegation from Roanoke, Paige stayed with the Brunet family in Saint Lô. The Brunets welcomed Paige again this summer. Paige also stayed in the home of Delphine Jouenne, a fellow teacher at



About 30 folks turned out for our annual Bastille Day picnic at Longwood Park in Salem.



Thomas Morice (center) poses with his summer internship bosses, Luke Pugh (left) and Jeff Shawver.



Artist Cornelia Marin (right) returned to Roanoke for her fourth visit and was graciously housed once again by Roanoke-St-Lô member Brenda Barksdale (left).

the Institut.

It was a stormy summer day, but the picnic went on with about 30 people in attendance. We avoided the rain, and everyone left with full tummies, dry and in fine spirits.

In August, we were delighted to have Saint-Lô artist Cornelia Marin return to Roanoke for her fourth visit. She was hosted and sponsored by member Brenda Barksdale. Cornelia did three art workshops for children and adults at the Taubman, exhibited her work and led an interactive community demonstration.

In December, we held our Dîner de Noël at Montano's restaurant with approximately 30 folks in attendance. Hayden Furrow of Salem, a World War II veteran and recipient of the Legion of Honor award, was our speaker. Mr.

Furrow, a Roanoke native, entered France by way of Omaha Beach, just days after D-day, and fought as part of the 8th infantry across France and Luxembourg. He was an engaging speaker. He spoke about his experiences as a young private, of fighting in miserable conditions, being wounded and then coming home on the Queen Mary, a hospital ship at the time, and then arriving back home in Roanoke on V-J Day.

Because Thomas Morice's internship this summer was such a success, the human resources recruiter for the City of Roanoke has reached out to Mary Jo about future internship collaborations with RVSCI. The city is able to offer internships in the fields of Criminal Justice, Parks and Rec, Information

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Saint-Lô, France

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Technology, Finance, Planning, Human Resources, Accounting and Human/Social Services. In January, we expect Elise Dubuis of Agneaux to arrive for a 2-month internship at the Taubman Museum of Art. In the midst of a gap year just after earning her master's degree in art history (with honors) from the Sorbonne, Elise is presently working at the Museum of Fine Arts of Saint-Lô. We are currently seeking at least 2 host families for Elise.

Plans are underway for visits to Normandy in 2019 as we continue our celebratory year. As part the 75th anniversary of D-Day, Jeff Sandborg and the Roanoke College Choir will attend the festivities in Saint-Lô in early June. Our regular, biennial adult-student trip to Saint-Lô will take place in late June. In addition to our 20th anniversary, the Saint-Lois will be celebrating the 40th anniversary of their twinning with Aalen, Germany.

On a final note, Cammie Williams heard from former intern Inès Yahy, who reports that she has not only graduated from law school but has found a job in a law firm. Congratulations, Inès!



The guest speaker at our Christmas dinner at Montano's was World War II veteran Hayden Furrow of Salem.



Andy Muelenaer chats with Hayden Furrow after his talk.

A young Norman's impressions of the U.S. and us

"Welcome to America!"

That sentence is the one I heard the most when I arrived here.

Welcome to America!

Everybody said it to me when I met them, even people I saw only once.

I have to confess that I was a little nervous before my entrance on this huge country, totally new for me.

Will my host family be nice? Will people accept me here? Do Americans like French people?

All these questions were jostled in my head as I was descending the stairs of the Roanoke's train station.

But all my little fears were actually unfounded.

And I quickly saw that. Every person I met was smiling at me and they all said that one sentence: "Welcome to America!"

We hear a lot about America back in France, in our media. Sometimes in good, sometimes in bad, sometimes in very good, sometimes in very bad. But the best way to know if all of this is true is to really live it, to be part of that American way life we hear so much about. And that's what I did during four weeks, following the rhythm of an American family, which is absolutely wonderful by the way and I thank them so much for that.

The first thing that surprised me was the size of everything. The houses, the cars, the roads. Everything's bigger here. Except for the price of the gas, unfortunately for us. The second thing was the multiplicity of the accents inside only one city. I understood some of them ... and smiled in a polite way to the others. The third thing that surprised me, and the most important one, was the kindness of everyone. Absolutely no one hasn't been nice with me. And that is something you can be proud of,

Americans.

There was also a few cliches about America in my head. But my main fear was something I had been told a lot by people who already had been in America: "Be aware, there is a lot of racism." And I got to say, even if I saw a little bit of that, I have seen way less racism than what I expected.

And finally, the last point that surprised me was to see how much religious this state is. I personally don't believe in God, even though I live in a Christian family. But I respect all religions of course, and it's nice to see people sharing values.

To put it in a nutshell, I have spent a really nice time here and thank everybody I met for that. I have learned a lot of things and will come back to France the eyes full of wonders.

May your day be the best possible and to the next guy who will come, like me, in the United States:

"Welcome to America!"

-- Thomas Morice



Thomas (left) and one of his host brothers, Caleb Grider.

Florianópolis, Brazil

Meet Joslaine, business owner and community volunteer

*By Joslaine Austin
Roanoke-Florianópolis board member
joslaineinterpreter@gmail.com)*

I am a native of Brazil and a resident of Roanoke as well as a member of the Partners of the Americas. I am a professional interpreter with over 20 years of experience with fluency in English, French, Portuguese and Spanish. I am the owner and founder of Arara Language Solutions, LLC, which offers translating and interpreting in more than 60 languages. Visit <http://araralanguagesolutions.com/>

Passionate about languages from childhood, I attended Conversational English College classes at age 13 at the Catholic University of São Paulo.

My other passion, chocolate, was what made me fall in love with interpreting at my first assignment with Godiva Chocolate. It was love at first sight!

Once a Business Administration student myself, I can now apply what I learned to help our community grow economically while aiding communication. I'm a very active community volunteer who takes to heart my ability to communicate with those with limited English proficiency.

Over the holidays, I will travel to Brazil to visit family and hope to make a connection with a school to establish a pen-pal exchange with Roanoke and Brazilian students.

On Dec. 6, Linda Harrison, Roanoke-Florianópolis co-chair, and I hosted our Christmas luncheon at Carlos Brazilian International Cuisine. As ever, the menu featured several Brazilian favorites, such as Chicken *Jardiniero* and *Feijoado*. Mary

Jo Fassié, president of Roanoke Valley Sister Cities, prepared a trivia game with prizes about Brazil followed by a presentation on how Christmas and the New Year are celebrated in Brazil. It was a fun time with friends from some of the other Roanoke Valley Sister Cities groups, and from different countries, including Argentina, Brazil, China, Czech Republic, France and the Philippines.



Joslaine (center) with VTCSOM's Dr. Cynda Johnson (left) and Dr. Helena Carvalho.



Joslaine interpreting at the Challenger Learning Center in New York.



Joslaine interpreted for Dr. Gustavo Pinto (seated) of Florianópolis during a visit with Dr. David Trinkle and Roanoke Mayor Sherman Lea.



All smiles at the Roanoke-Florianópolis luncheon at Carlos.



An international group of folks prepares to enjoy lunch.

Russian Christmas, New Year's holidays are steeped in tradition

Compiled by Mary Jo Fassié

Babushka's Christmas



Babushka (grandmother) is a traditional Christmas figure who distributes presents to children.

In Russia and many of Eastern European countries, Christmas and the New Year's holidays last from Dec. 31 to Jan. 10, with Christmas falling on Jan. 7 in the old Julian calendar. New Year's Day, Jan. 1, precedes the Russian Christmas and is often celebrated as the more important holiday. Public trees, such as the Christmas tree in Moscow's Red Square, also serve as a symbol of the New Year.

In most cases Christmas is a quiet family day, while New Year remains the big party, with lots of eating and drinking, and fireworks. On New Year's Eve, Dec. 31, dinner usually starts late. Traditional meals include Russian salads, herring and sparkling wine. A Russian New Year's Eve feast is unthinkable without traditional holiday salads, *Olivier* and *Shuba*. Olivier resembles potato salad but with more ingredients, such as carrots, eggs, pickles, sweet peas, ham sausage or chicken. Shuba is a herring salad with lots of shredded veggies smeared with mayo and arranged like a layered cake. Russians also feast on pickled vegetables, meat and potatoes (baked in the oven or fried), petite

sandwiches with butter and red caviar, *pelmeni* (meat dumplings), *vinaigrette* (beet salad), *kholodets* (jellied meat), and wash it all down with copious amounts of sparkling wine and/or vodka.

Due to the suppression of religion during the Soviet regime, St. Nicholas was replaced by *Ded Moroz* or Grandfather Frost, the Russian Spirit of Winter who brought gifts on New Year's. He is accompanied by *Snyegurochka*, the Snowmaiden, who helps distribute the gifts. The Christmas tree (*Yolka*) is yet another tradition banned during the Soviet era. To keep the custom alive, people decorated New Year's trees, instead. Because ornaments were either very costly or unavailable, family trees were trimmed with homemade decorations and fruit.

Some families in Russia exchange gifts at Christmas, though some choose to continue the tradition of doing so on New Year's Day instead. Like in much of Europe, Christmas fairs and markets invite residents and visitors to take part in fun winter activities and shopping.

Babushka is a traditional Christmas figure who distributes presents to children. Her name means "grandmother," and the legend is that she declined to go with the Wise Men to see Jesus because of the cold weather. However, she regretted not going and set off to try and catch up, filling her basket with presents. She never found Jesus, and that is why she visits each house, leaving toys for good children.

In the Eastern Orthodox Church, it is customary to fast on Jan. 6, Christmas Eve, until after the first church service. A manger scene is often re-created. Christmas Eve is marked with a special dinner, which frequently features 12 dishes to represent the 12 Apostles. And feasting is sumptuous on Christmas Day itself. Popular Christmas Eve foods include, beetroot soup (*borsch*),

individual vegetable pies, sauerkraut, porridge dishes such as buckwheat, mushroom soup, roast cod or fish, parsley potatoes, kidney beans and Lenten bread. Christmas dessert may be fruit pies, gingerbread or honeybread cookies and fresh and dried fruit and more nuts. *Vzvar* (boil-up), often served to end the meal, is a sweet drink made from dried fruit and honey boiled in water. It is traditionally served at the birth of a child, so at Christmas it symbolizes the birth of the baby Jesus.

Schastlivogo Novogo goda! –

Have a Happy New Year!

Vesyolykh prazdnika! – Happy holidays!

Schastlivogo Rozhdestva! –

Merry Christmas!



Shuba is a traditional holiday salad made with herring and shredded veggies.



Olivier is another traditional salad, similar to a fancy potato salad.

RVSCI Young Artists & Photographers Showcase 2019



Artwork by 2018 Showcase finalist Jessica Clermont of Delray Beach, FL.

This year's theme is "Global Citizens: Resilient Communities." Resilience refers to how well an individual or community meets adversity or challenges. Students are encouraged to draw inspiration from their experience with travel, exchange, international friendships and the many ways that people cultivate relationships across cultures.

Artwork: All media are encouraged. Artists must be between 13-18 years old as of the application deadline.

- Each artist may submit one (1)

piece of art with an entry form.

- Art must be two dimensional, unframed and no larger than 24 inches by 36 inches.
- Media of all types are encouraged, including pencil, ink, paint, prints, collage and mixed media.
- Art that does not meet the above criteria will be ineligible and returned to the artist.

The deadline for all entries is March 1, 2019.

Awards: \$200 will be awarded to 1st in the show; \$100 to 2nd place; \$50 to 3rd place. \$25 will be awarded to each honorable mention.

The first-place winning entry will be sent to the 2019 Sister Cities International Young Artist Competition, which chooses 5 finalists and one Grand Prize winner (\$1,000).

For more information, email roanokevalleysistercities@gmail.com or phone 540-798-3788.

"We are Tiger People"

Colette Fu exhibit opens at Taubman in February

Sparked by curiosity and the desire to explore her roots, artist Colette Fu began traveling to China's Yunnan Province where 25 of the nation's 55 minority tribes live. While there, she was able to experience and document the customs of many groups, including the Black Nuosu Yi tribe of which her mother, Roanoke resident (and founder of the Roanoke-Lijiang committee) Pearl Fu is a member. The artist's long immersion in the unique cultures of Yunnan culminated in a spectacular collection of intricate pop-up books and photo collages called "We Are Tiger Dragon People."

This exhibition not only follows Fu's work in China, but also showcases earlier artworks inspired by unique destinations around the United States, demonstrating Fu's process from photography to meticulously composed collages brought to life through lightboxes and three-dimensional structures. Fu's centerpiece of the exhibition is the world's largest pop-up book, "Tao Hua Yuan Ji," which measures 13.8 x 21 feet when open. This massive paper structure, inspired by a Jin Dynasty poem about a secret utopian valley, depicts a cave ensconced in giant peach blossoms that Fu visited in 2008. Standing nearly 5-feet tall at its apex, the paper cave is large enough to crawl inside.

Colette Fu received her MFA in fine art photography from the Rochester Institute of Technology in 2003, and soon after began devising complex compositions that incorporate photography with pop-up paper engineering. She has designed for award-winning stop-motion animation commercials and free-lanced for clients including Vogue China, Canon Asia, Moët Hennessy, Louis Vuitton and the Delaware Disaster Research Center. Fu's numerous awards include a Fulbright

Research Fellowship to China and grants from the Independence Foundation, Leeway Foundation, En Foco, Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, CFEVA (Center for Emerging Visual Artists,) New York Foundation for the Arts, Virginia Commission for the Arts, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Puffin Foundation and Society for Photographic Education.

A passionate educator, Fu also teaches art-making as a way to give voice to communities through pop-up paper engineered projects. She teaches pop-up courses and community workshops

to marginalized populations at art centers, universities and institutions internationally.

"Colette Fu: We Are Tiger Dragon People" is curated by Eva Thornton, assistant curator for the Taubman Museum of Art, and will be on display Feb. 2 – Sept. 8, 2019, in the Medical Facilities of America Gallery and Temporary Exhibition Gallery.

– *Courtesy of the Taubman Museum of Art*



Yi Costume Festival (detail), 2014, pop-up book, 33" x 23". Courtesy of the artist and the Taubman Museum of Art.

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Contact us at: roanokevalleysistercities@gmail.com



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