



Around Our World

ROANOKE VALLEY SISTER CITIES, INC.

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Multifaceted St-Lô internship results in opportunities, friendships

By Liesl Greider

Liesl Greider is a Roanoke College junior studying history and French



Visiting the D-Day celebrations in Sainte-Mère-Église, where WWII equipment was everywhere we looked! (My first host family, the Loops, took me here.)



With my first host family (the Loops), I participated in a race for breast cancer called "Le Quatorze Mille" (The 14,000).

National D-Day Memorial in Bedford. What I learned then served as invaluable background information for my time in Normandy.

The next two weeks of my internship allowed me to serve as an English-teaching assistant at the Institut Saint-Lô, where I taught students who ranged from 18-year-old EMS students to shy 6th graders. I had a whole classroom to myself where I spent hour-long class periods telling my students about the

U.S. and sharing the joy of the English language through fun, interactive speaking games.

Finally, for the last week of my internship, I helped out at two of the museums in town: the Bocage-Normand museum (*bocage* means farmland) and the Fine Arts museum. For the former, we taught students about the butter industry in Normandy through a lesson in which we made butter manually, the old-fashioned way.



Standing beside Saint-Lô 44-Roanoke volunteer Cécile Léveillé at the D-Day commemoration in the heart of Saint-Lô.

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In June 2019, I was blessed to have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to do a month-long internship in Saint-Lô. Excited by the chance to take my French to the next level while furthering my career goals, I dove into this experience head first. My internship was multifaceted, so I was able to take part in three very different jobs, all of which had an important common denominator: the French language.

For my first week I helped Jeanine Vérove, president of Saint-Lô's sister cities chapter, with guiding and translating for the American groups that were visiting for the D-Day 75th anniversary commemorations. Just prior to this internship, I devoted the month of May to taking an intensive course all about D-Day, in which I analyzed the

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Une Américaine en stage à Saint-Lô

Liesl Greider, originaire de Virginie, est en stage à Saint-Lô

"À Roanoke, il y a un comité de jumelage. Mon professeur de français m'a dit que c'était une opportunité à saisir." Liesl Greider, 20 ans, originaire de Roanoke en Virginie, est étudiante en Histoire et en Français. "Je voulais saisir une occasion de voyager et d'améliorer mon français. C'est pourquoi j'ai proposé ma candidature et passé un entretien. Tout est allé très vite. Je suis déjà venue dans le Sud de la France mais je n'avais pas trop aimé la mentalité. En venant en Normandie, je voulais non seulement apprendre la langue mais aussi parler un peu plus avec des Français. Je suis ainsi arrivée à

structures de la ville. J'ai travaillé en tant qu'assistante au lycée Institut de Saint-Lô, j'ai également travaillé au Musée des Beaux-Arts et à la Chapelle de la Madeleine. Actuellement je suis au Musée du Bocage Normand et nous sommes venus faire une démonstration de fabrication de beurre sur le marché d'été qui ouvre ce jeudi."

Tourisme

"En venant en Normandie en juin, j'ai pu assister aux nombreuses cérémonies du 75^e anniversaire du débarquement des alliés en 1944. J'ai participé aux cérémonies des 6 et 7 juin dernier. J'ai également pu être présente à la cérémonie à l'hôpital mémorial où le prince Albert II de Monaco était l'invité d'honneur. J'ai aussi pu visiter la ville de Saint-Lô en vélo. J'adore beaucoup les remparts. J'ai visité les différents monuments emblématiques de la



Liesl Greider était présente au marché d'été pour une démonstration de fabrication de beurre avec l'animatrice Sonia Sedouki du Musée du Bocage Normand.

allée à la fête de la musique, que j'ai bien aimée. J'aime bien Saint-Lô car la ville n'est ni trop grande prochain, nous fêterons les vingt ans du jumelage de Roanoke avec la ville de Saint-Lô. Puis viendra ville de Bordeaux, que je n'ai jamais vue. Je prendrai ensuite l'avion. Je garderai un bon souvenir de mon

On the last day of my internship at the museum in Saint-Lô, I helped make butter at a local festival. While I was helping, a journalist for La Manche Libre interviewed me and wrote this article for the paper.

Aside from my multipart internship, in which I had ample opportunities to practice my French professionally, I enjoyed many cultural activities that made me to fall in love with French culture even more. I had two main host families during my stay: the Loops for the first half and the Davids for the second. With these families, I was able to encounter different ways of French life: one within walking distance of anywhere in the city, and the other a short drive out into the countryside with 150 Norman cows roaming around

the house. I loved getting to know my host families who were so generous of their time and energy -- they took every chance possible to take me to cool places all around the Manche region.

Just before my time in Saint-Lô came to an end, I participated in the activities for the 20th anniversary of twinning with Roanoke. This was certainly a highlight of my trip as I was able to mingle among my American friends and my new French friends, all of whom welcomed me with open arms and helped me to fully realize the mission of Sister Cities International.

Although I am now back home in the United States, I plan to continue the global relationships that I built through this organization. In fact, when a group of Saint-Lô high school students, including one of my French host sisters, was passing through Washington, D.C., recently, I had dinner with them all and was reminded of the joy of global friendships.



My second host family, the Davids, took me all over the region in the brief two week period I had with them. I am seen here with my two host sisters, Octavie and Angèle, at Saint-Vaast-la-Hougue.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

January/February

- **January 13-February 7:** Wonju Medical students at VTCSoM
- **January 22:** Photos of Kisumu Children at 2 p.m., Noel C. Taylor Municipal Building w/Barb Adams from Support Aid Ministry
- **February 1:** Lunar New Year, Taubman Museum (snow date, Feb. 8)
- **February 19:** Roanoke College Internship Fair
- **February 19-28:** Roanoke College International Film Festival (various venues)
- **February 25:** RVSCI Executive Board meeting, 5:30 p.m., CITS

March

- **March 6:** Deadline for submissions to RVSCI Young Artists Showcase

May

- **May 5:** International Medical Experience Forum, VTCSoM
- **May 16:** Local Colors

April

- **April 3:** 3rd annual Polka Party with Chardon Polka Band, Taubman Museum
- **April 7:** RVSCI Executive Board meeting, 5:30 p.m., CITS
- **April 23:** RVSCI Annual Dinner, Roanoke College

Second half of 2019 has been a season of new initiatives



By Mary Jo Fassié
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Over the past six months, RVSCI has continued to be present in the community and abroad and has taken some new initiatives (signified by * below). Because of planned family vacations, I missed attending several events, including the St-Lô Bastille Day pique-nique in July and the Chinese Autumn Festival Dinner in September. Here are just some of the activities that I enjoyed doing in my endeavor to keep our organization visible in the Roanoke Valley and to ensure that we communicate our seven sister cities' cultures with the local community and continue to keep in touch with our cities and friends abroad as we pursue our mission, "one individual, one community at a time."

During the summer, I attended the 20th anniversary celebration in St-Lô, France, from June 25-July 1. What a



During the 20th anniversary celebration in St-Lô, France, members of our delegation posed with some Norman friends and officials during a ceremony in City Hall. The newspaper headline reads: "Saint-Lô strengthens its ties with its twins."

wonderful event! 1999 seemed like yesterday as we renewed old friendships and made new ones. Upon my return to Roanoke in August (my family and I visited relatives in France and England in July), I placed new items in the St-Lô display case and took the anniversary certificate to be framed. I also conferenced with Shaleen Powell, executive director of the Roanoke Cultural Endowment* and learned more about this wonderful endeavor to aid all the nonprofits in the Valley. Kris and Jacek Slowikowski organized a barbecue in honor of the two medical students from Poland who were so complimentary



At nearly 9 months old, Mary Jo's granddaughter, Josie, pictured here with her parents, Nathalie Fassié and Stan Sagalovskiy, was the youngest member of the anniversary delegation to St-Lô. The cutest, too.

about their experiences at VTCSOM.

In September, I presided over the RVSCI board meeting and arranged the RVSCI presence at Roanoke Catholic's Elmwood Park fundraiser* because my family and I were at the beach that week. Thanks to Patty Suppes, Linda Harrison, Bill Modica and RVSCI intern Paige Stewart for helping out that day! I also met volunteer Eric Hayslett at the Roanoke City Library who later joined us at the Taubman in October to help out at that event. I was able to attend the opening art exhibit at VTCSOM and again arranged for the RVSCI presence at the Roanoke College Internship Fair. Thanks to John Makay, Linda Harrison and Paige Stewart for helping out. At the end of the month, I communicated to all the Roanoke Valley high school art teachers the 2020 theme for the Sister Cities Young Artists Showcase: "One World: Out Of Many We Are One." The deadline for entries is March 6.

October began with the Korean Festival* at the Taubman Museum, which was a wonderful event and drew more than one hundred young people to celebrate Korean culture and K-pop dance. I met there and later in her office a prospective RVSCI board member, Dr. Ramona Kirsch, from Hollins University.* As the St-Lô group welcomed a delegation of more than 25 students and teachers, Pierre and I attended the St-Lô



In June, Bill Bestpitch and Mary Jo were given a tour of the Centre Hospitalier Mémorial France États-Unis de Saint-Lô.

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Roanoke College student Paige Stewart was a volunteer intern (an excellent one!) for RVSCI this semester. Here she is seen working the RVSCI information booth at the Korean Festival of Letters at the Taubman Museum in October.

potluck dinner for the Norman visitors at St. John's Lutheran Church. The next week, Bill Modica and I helped Support Aid Ministry's Barb Adams set up the Kisumu photo display in the shadowbox in the Roanoke Municipal Building.* Many of the photos were taken by children at the GLAC school with cameras provided by Linda Harrison. I was glad to attend a Wonju committee meeting at Community High School to discuss the Korean festival on Oct. 5 and to get recommendations about future activities. Before Dr. Patty Suppes' departure for Russia, I gave her RVSCI items to take to Pskov and spoke with her about her upcoming trip. Later in the month, I met with Hollins University art museum staff and Dr. Kris Slowikowski about the Polish artist exchange for 2020* for the 25th anniversary of the Opole/Roanoke twinning. I was happy to attend a house party at Roanoke Vice Mayor Joe Cobb's home for the Roanoke Cultural Endowment Fund and to have the pleasure of seeing two of my former William Fleming students, Tommy Page and Alexis Amos.

In November, I presided over the RVSCI board meeting and met with Lisa Spencer, new executive director of Local Colors, to discuss partnering with RVSCI and invited her to be our speaker at our Annual Dinner set for April 23. As we do on a yearly basis, I prepared and filed the RVSCI Virginia Agricultural and Consumer Report (for all nonprofits), along with Wayne Firebaugh, former

treasurer. At Roanoke College, I had the pleasure of meeting with a new member, Samuel McKnight, and discussing his interest in RVSCI, and I interviewed Katherine Webb as a prospective spring intern. Later in the month, I met with Olin Gallery Director Talia Logan, and Roanoke-Florianópolis Co-chairwoman Linda Harrison to discuss bringing a Florianópolis artist to Olin Gallery in 2021* as part of the 25th anniversary of the Brazilian-Roanoke connection. Along with Jean Broyles, I also accepted sister city artwork and pottery from former RVSCI Executive Director Jack Tompkins. Thanks, Jack, for all the treasures!

As I write this report, December has just begun, and Pierre and I were happy to attend the Roanoke/St-Lô Dîner de Noël at Montano's. I delivered a Power Point introduction for Bill Bestpitch, who showed slides and spoke about the trip to St-Lô last summer. In his remarks, he talked about the importance of not only celebrating the 20th anniversary of our cities but of reconnecting with the mayor of St-Lô, whom he hosted in 2018, and of making friends with his St-Lô host family, Irène and Patrick Duval, whom he and Sheri hope will visit us soon!



At the Dîner de Noël at Montano's, Mary Jo provided a Power Point presentation on the background of the sister city relationship between Roanoke and St-Lô.

Tribute to RVSCI's Pearl Fu

Pearl's motto: 'Many are called, but Fu is chosen!'

By Bill Bestpitch
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Pearl Fu's indomitable spirit led her to start the Roanoke-Lijiang sister city committee and to transform Local Colors into the popular celebration of diversity that it is today. -- Photo courtesy of Dan Smith

In 1986, Pearl Fu found herself in a completely unfamiliar city when her husband's job transfer brought them to Roanoke. While looking for a house, a Realtor told her to avoid South Roanoke, as people there might not welcome Asians.

Anyone who knows Pearl knows that left her with only one choice: find a place in South Roanoke. She and C.C. bought a lovely home on Avenham Avenue, and Pearl began introducing herself to her new neighbors by taking them homemade Chinese baked goods. Of course, the Fuses shortly became treasured neighbors and remained so for more than 30 years.

Pearl's passion is bringing people together, especially those of different nationalities and backgrounds. She quickly became known as the go-to person for anyone who arrived in Roanoke from another country, struggling with language and cultural challenges. She made it her mission to find connections with the resources needed to resolve any problem, advocating for newcomer and minority assistance, promoting foreign-business networks, and locating translation services.

She jumped at the chance to represent

China in the first Local Color (as it was then known) celebration and found that only three other countries were featured. She began reaching out to immigrants and descendants of immigrants to encourage them to showcase their ethnic heritages. At last count, she had identified more than 100 nationalities within the Roanoke Valley. Her tireless volunteer work transformed Local Colors into one of Roanoke's largest and most popular annual festivals.

Although the Roanoke Valley Convention and Visitors Bureau (now Visit Virginia's Blue Ridge) named her "Capital of the Blue Ridge Ambassador" in 1992, people were telling her the title was not "official" a decade later. Roanoke City Council eliminated any doubt by approving a resolution declaring her the city's Honorary Goodwill Ambassador at Large.

Beginning in 1987, Pearl shared a pew at South Roanoke United Methodist Church with Dr. R. F. Roth, who served as President of the Board for Roanoke Valley Sister Cities. Late in 1995 she insisted, "Dr. Roth, Roanoke needs a Chinese sister city!" His reply: "Pearl, we have five sister cities already, and the Board just passed a resolution: a new sister city first requires 25 dedicated members, with a raised fund of \$2,500!" Two weeks later in the same pew, "Dr. Roth, I have 50 members and \$3,000. I want to have a sister city in Yunnan Province. My family home is



At Local Colors one year, Pearl, then executive director of the festival, dressed as the Statue of Liberty. --Photo courtesy of Dan Smith



Who else but Pearl could get a Viking (Jeff Rigdon) to cart her and a young friend around Local Colors? --Photo courtesy of Dan Smith

there." Dr. Roth, amazed, "OK, Pearl! You win."

In fact, her grandfather, General Long Yun, had served as governor of Yunnan, recruiting 20,000 troops to construct the famous Burma Road and help the Flying Tigers defeat the Japanese during World War II. Pearl chose Lijiang as Roanoke's sixth Sister City due to a number of similarities: Both cities are in agricultural areas that produce many vegetables, fruits, herbs, and flowers; both support the arts, museums, and other cultural institutions; both have beautiful riverfront scenery with historic downtowns; and both have very hospitable residents.

In January 1996, she returned from China with confirmation of Roanoke's new sister, Lijiang. A great shock occurred the following month; a massive 7.0 earthquake demolished much of the city. The brand-new Lijiang Sister City Committee raised \$1,000 for Red Cross relief, further establishing a solid kinship.

After Linda Harrison returned from a trip to China in 1998, she was advised to visit Pearl, who encouraged her to join the Lijiang Sister City committee. Linda accompanied her to Sister Cities International conventions and other fundraisers and remembers that Pearl was always enthusiastically sharing her story and asking others to donate and become members of Roanoke Valley

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Tribute to RVSCI's Pearl Fu

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Pearl, dressed in Yi ethnic minority attire, poses with dancers at the Chinese New Year celebration at the Taubman Museum. --Photo courtesy of Dan Smith



Pearl loves to wear the attire of other ethnic groups. Here she is with Roanoke-Kisumu president Bill Modica. --Photo courtesy of Bill Modica



Pearl will always be a star in the Star City. --Photo courtesy of Dan Smith

Sister Cities. Pearl started the very popular and ongoing Chinese New Year festival at the Taubman Museum. The free event has often included dancers, musicians, and martial-arts demonstrations by the Shaolin Dragons.

Well-known for her beautiful Chinese wardrobe, Pearl also loved to wear the attire of other ethnic groups. She asked Linda to dress in Chinese clothes on multiple occasions, overlooking the fact that Linda is a 6-foot-tall Caucasian. Linda provided transportation to concerts and other events after Pearl gave up her driver's license.

Bill Modica recruited Pearl and her friend, TV personality Greta Evans, to support a group he founded called the Roanoke Valley Cultural Exchange. Its primary purpose was to prevent demolition of the old Strand Theater (also known as the Ebony Club and Lincoln Theater, among other names). Their efforts succeeded in convincing the Roanoke Higher Education Center to acquire the building for use in a culinary school, now called the Claude Moore Center.

Bill joined the board of Local Colors, helped them secure 501(c)(3) tax status, and suggested that Pearl be named executive director in 2005. He worked with Pearl for several years to help organize many events, including the annual festival. Pearl later added a Taste of Cultures program, which allowed local ethnic groups to feature their native foods and music in a series of lunchtime events held downtown near the City Market Building.

Former Roanoke Mayor David Bowers recalls the time several years ago when Pearl served as "Chief of Protocol" and interpreter for a Chinese delegation visiting him in City Hall. During a discussion of mutual trade and cultural exchanges, the fire alarm went off, and the intercom ordered everyone to leave the building. At once, Pearl announced, "Wow, it's a Chinese fire drill!" Bowers grinned and immediately ushered the guests down the stairway to Church Avenue, just as the fire engines and police were arriving, with horns and sirens blaring, red and blue emergency lights flashing.

Employees were streaming out in droves; the media quickly arrived, creating quite an exciting scene. Fortunately, there was no fire nor other emergency and, within a short time, everyone returned to the Mayor's office. The Chinese guests were smiling, chattering, and shaking his hand, but he did not understand that they were asking Pearl about all the commotion. She explained that she had told them that the Mayor had arranged this unexpected and thoroughly enjoyable demonstration of Roanoke's modern, prompt and very professional emergency response system just for them. How could he possibly disagree with her wisdom and grace under pressure?

Pearl's delightful sense of humor also came through when she told people about her experiences with telemarketers. When they asked her name, of course she replied, "Pearl Fu." The caller would then say, "OK, that's

P-E-A-R-L, and how do you spell the last name?" Her answer, "F-U," always triggered an abrupt termination of the call.

Almost no one has ever been able to decline Pearl's requests to join her in helping others and themselves through connections that bridge ethnic and cultural gaps, benefitting everyone. In addition to Local Colors and the Taste of Culture series, Pearl has enlisted volunteers to assist her in organizing and presenting educational and cultural lectures, storytelling and entertainment events, fashion shows, and cooking demonstrations.

Due to her declining health, Pearl and C.C. recently moved to Philadelphia to be closer to the youngest of their three daughters, pop-up artist Colette. (She was succeeded at the helm of Roanoke-Lijiang by Rebecca Chang and Meili Foy.) Pearl's legacy will continue to enrich the lives of Roanoke Valley residents for many years through greater appreciation of diversity, friendship, and peace among people all "Around Our World."

P.S. (courtesy of Dr. Roth): A decade or more ago, Colette was in Yunnan doing research on her family history and the culture of the Yi minority. Whenever she tried to call home collect, she faced a battle with the operators: "What is your name?" Colette: "Colette." Operator: "Yes, I know you are calling collect, but what is your name?" Colette: "Colette!" Operator: "Yes, I understand you want a collect call, but what is your name?" Yeesh!

Two trans-Atlantic visits within 4 months kept us joyfully busy

By Ann Hackworth
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Roanoke's youngest sister city relationship has officially hit the two-decade mark.

To continue the anniversary celebrations that began in May 2018 in Roanoke, this June we sent a delegation to St-Lô for what became a jam-packed and memorable visit. I'm happy to report that the town, our friends and our twinning relationship are all thriving.

This June, several of us were veterans of the 1999 delegation that helped make our twinning official. Returnees included Regina and Larry Rackow, Pierre and Mary Jo Fassié, Nathalie Fassié and me. (Peggy Wells would have been another veteran, but at the last moment, she and Hugh had to cancel their trip. They later rallied and made their own excursion in September.) Completing our anniversary delegation were Siobhan Scro, Bill and Sheri Bestpitch, Carla and Sadie Crouse, Hannah Hill, Debra Boulé, Judy Kniskern, John Makay, Bill Modica, Linda Harrison, Bill Hackworth, and Stan and Josie Sagalovskiy, Nathalie's husband and baby daughter.

I must start by thanking Mary Jo and Siobhan for working with Jeanine Vérove and her team on details months in advance. Siobhan also led a core group of our delegation who spent a week in Paris and the Loire Valley after St-Lô. She overcame some hitches, including a frustrating last-minute date change, courtesy of EF, the group travel company. To make matters worse, it was weeks before Siobhan's luggage arrived home. ... Travel is an adventure.

Keep in mind that our twinning counterparts, Jeanine and company, had just concluded lots of responsibilities and activities surrounding the 75th anniversary of D-Day a couple of weeks before our arrival. I like to think, however, that we helped lighten their load by sending them our outstanding Roanoke

College intern, Liesl Greider, in early June. Please take time to read her enthusiastic account of her *stage* (internship) on this issue's cover.

It was gratifying to meet the volunteers who helped Jeanine bring this visit to fruition. Several of them are teachers at the Institut St-Lô: Sophie Pradat, Louis Blondeau and Florence Cahu. Nurse Cécile Léveillé was another active recruit. They were our tour guides, our drivers and shepherds, and each of them was lovely and unflappable. Because our hosts provided us with such an amazing itinerary, it's difficult to convey only a few of the highlights of our visit in a short space. But here goes:

On the group's first morning in town, we were greeted by dear friend Richard Catherine, the original president of Saint-Lô 44 – Roanoke, at the *Musée (museum) des Beaux Arts de Saint-Lô*. He introduced the group to some of the museum's medieval treasures, including the oversized tapestries. Richard and his wife, Isabelle, were the host family for me and Bill, and they completely spoiled

us. Bill took photos of Isabelle's beautiful meals as if he were on Instagram. *#délicieux!*

Richard and Isabelle hosted me during part of my internship at Ouest-France (a regional newspaper) in 2000, and they have been like family to me ever since. I know that the Fassiés feel the same way about Jeanine. Bill Bestpitch said that he and Sheri found instant friendships this June with their hosts, Irène and Patrick. As Siobhan said, "It is always so gratifying to witness the bond of friendship between Roanoke and St-Lô residents take root, time and time again, trip after trip."

Here is a French vocabulary word we all know now: *canicule*. It means "heatwave." On June 28 and 29, Normandy was gripped by heat and humidity well-known in Roanoke but

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On Day 1 of our trip in Normandy, our anniversary delegation met Richard Catherine at the *Musée (museum) des Beaux Arts de Saint-Lô*.



We are all smiles in the middle of our trek across the Bay of Mont Saint-Michel.



Bill Bestpitch (right) came home from Normandy with a copy of the document that he and Mayor Brière (left) and Jeanine (center) signed reaffirming our twinning relationship. Mary Jo had it nicely framed, and we have hung it in the Roanoke municipal building across from our original twinning document from 1999.



An unofficial part of our visit was an evening with Cornelia Marin, the St-Lô artist who has come to work and teach in Roanoke several times in the last few years. Cornelia (left, with friend Andrée Breton) hosted a convivial potluck supper at her art studios.

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not in normally mild La Manche. We couldn't even retreat indoors for relief because air-conditioning is unnecessary and almost unknown *là-bas* (over there).

So, naturally, the 28th is when we were scheduled to hike over the shallows of the Bay of Mont Saint-Michel to the world-famous abbey. We hardy barefoot hikers, about 15 Roanokers and *Saint-Lois* (our hosts), accompanied by a skilled and bilingual guide, conquered the 4.5-mile trek (a pilgrimage for the faithful) in the sweltering sun. What surprised me is that not one of us slipped and fell in the slimy sand, which was strewn with jellyfish. The abbey's concessions surely did the business on water, beer, etc., that day.

The first official segment of our visit was a reception in St-Lô's city hall downtown on Saturday, June 29. The event was to celebrate our 20th anniversary as well as the 40th anniversary of St-Lô's twinning with Aalen, Germany. As Bill, Richard and I walked over to city hall, we saw a small band of *gilets jaunes* ("yellow vests") marching and chanting with bullhorns in the street. You'll recall that these populist protests had turned violent in Paris in fall 2018. In Saint-Lô, though, the 20 or so middle-aged-plus demonstrators appeared to be anything but threatening. Richard thought they seemed silly. They made enough of a racket, though, that officials had to close the 2nd floor windows of city hall during our reception. The heatwave was in full blast, and the room was filled to capacity without AC. *Quel horreur!* (OMG!)

The speeches from St-Lô Mayor François Brière and officials from Aalen and from St-Lô's other sister cities of Christchurch, England, and Saint-Ghislain, Belgium, were heartfelt and uplifting. And, well, long. Luckily, though, when it came time for them to speak, our delegation's leaders, Mary Jo (representing RVSCI) and Bill Bestpitch (representing the city of Roanoke), were assuredly pragmatic. Mary Jo considerably shortened her translation of Mayor Brière's comments, and Bill (in a dark business suit and tie) simply told the crowd with brevity and wit why coming to Roanoke is experiencing the "real America." *Quel soulagement!* (What a relief!)



On Saturday evening after the farewell banquet, several of us walked over to the Place Sainte-Croix for a fantastic big-band concert. The 3 singers on the left looked and sounded like USO performers, except they sang in French. Bill and I tried dancing, but it was all but impossible on the cobblestones.

Then there were photos to be taken, official documents to sign and Champagne to sip! *Hourra!* (Yes!)

This is a good time to note how Mary Jo and Pierre and Siobhan were called upon for expert translating -- often on the spot. *Nous vous remercions beaucoup!* (Thanks, y'all!)

Here are some reflections from other members of our delegation:

Bill Modica: Linda and I enjoyed meeting the Sister City group so much. From the initial get-together and picnic at a local artist studio to the final formal dinner, we were given good food, excellent wine and fantastic sightseeing opportunities. Our host family made us feel welcome and went out of their way to get us where we were supposed to be. The whole experience was exceptional. I hope we can return the favor when they visit Roanoke.

Regina Rackow: Each visit we get to see our friends. Being able to see their children grow up and now seeing their grandchildren grow up is a special joy. Plus, this time we got to walk to Mont St. Michael, which was a special treat.

Siobhan: The warmth of the people of St-Lô consistently lives up to the hype. ...The founders of our sister city partnership had the foresight to incorporate the love and respect our two cities have for one another. *Vive l'amitié franco-américain!*

A fire that broke out overnight on July 11-12 destroyed part of the historic French National Stud of St-Lô (*Haras*

National de Saint-Lô). All 22 horses in the block were evacuated safely, with vets reporting no injuries from the blaze. Our committee donated 100 euros to *La Fondation du patrimoine* (heritage) *de Normandie* for restoration efforts. The fire hasn't interfered with activities at the *haras*. The popular Normandy Horse Show took place, as scheduled, in August.

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In October, we hosted a potluck dinner at St. John Lutheran Church for our Norman visitors.



We held our Dîner de Noël at Montano's once again Dec. 3. In attendance were (from left, looking at the camera) Pierre and Mary Jo Fassié, Sheri Bestpitch, keynote speaker Bill Bestpitch, Margarita Cubas and David Bowers.

From Oct. 12-20, we hosted a delegation of 25 students and 3 teachers (the aforementioned Sophie, Louis and Florence) from the Institut Saint-Lô. All of the students were housed with families of Roanoke Valley students, and the teachers stayed with Roanoke/St-Lô members. Highlights of the group's activities were a day in their host student's school, a tour of downtown Roanoke, an evening potluck/reception at St. John Lutheran Church, an excursion to Monticello and the D-Day Memorial and a picnic at Carvins Cove. Our thanks to Sherrie and Tim Henshaw and their family for doing the groundwork (set-up to clean-up!) on the potluck.

Our Dîner de Noël was Tuesday, Dec. 3, at Montano's. We had 30 people. Mary Jo provided a Power Point presentation on the background of our sister city relationship to introduce keynote speaker Bill Bestpitch, who reflected on the anniversary trip to Saint-Lô.



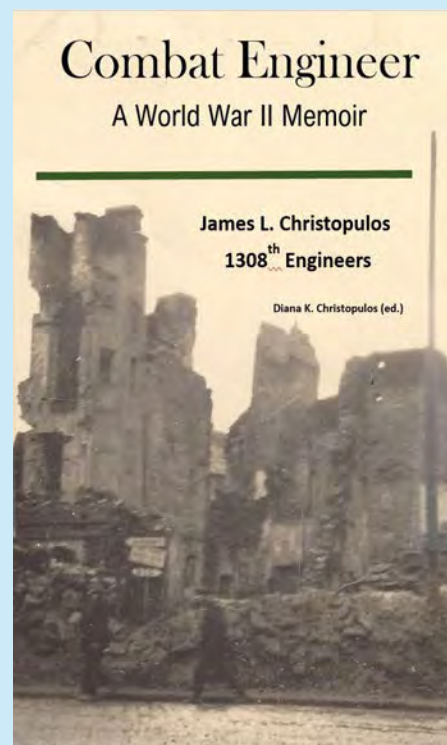
Institut St-Lô teachers Louis Blondeau and Sophie Pradat prepare to board the train for Washington, D.C., at the end of their Roanoke visit in October.

Daughter edits, publishes soldier's WWII memoir

Diana Christopulos of Salem has recently had her father's WWII memoir published. "Combat Engineer: A World War II Memoir" is James Christopulos' recollections from his time in the U.S. Army 1308th. He was with the unit from its formation in Fort Sutton, N.C., through training in England, the Normandy invasion, the liberation of St-Lô, the Battle of the Bulge and a lengthy voyage through the Panama Canal to the Pacific Front.

During the editing process, several years ago, Diana spoke about her father's wartime experience to several Roanoke/St-Lô members and friends at our Dîner de Noël.

John D. Long, director of education at the National D-Day Memorial in Bedford, commends the book: "Some of the most important WWII memoirs in recent years aren't from commanding generals and heads of state. They come from the perspective of the 'little guy,' the participant not mentioned in the broader history books. James Christopulos was one of these — only one combat engineer in a massive war. But his insightful and perceptive recollections of WWII, in both Europe and the Pacific, add a needed voice to



the historical record — one to which we should listen."

The book is 117 pages, costs \$10 and is available via Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/Combat-Engineer-World-War-Memoir/dp/1710632712/>



We had about 25 people at our annual Bastille Day pique-nique, which was actually held on le quatorze juillet (July 14). The potluck fare was delicious, as always, but a standout was Penny Muelenaer's French flag ice cream cake.



In four short weeks, a life-changing experience

By Anna Sliwa
Wroclaw (Poland) Medical University student

I still remember the day when I got a phone call informing me about being accepted to the medical rotations in the USA. I was overjoyed and excited for the opportunity to work in an American hospital where I could have hands-on contact with patients. This has been my dream since the beginning of medical school.

The medical rotation in Carilion Roanoke Memorial Hospital definitely broadened my horizons. During those 4 weeks I got a chance to work the same hours as an actual doctor. I had lots of responsibility and most importantly I had a lot of contact with patients.

Furthermore, during my General Surgery rotation I had a chance to work with the best specialists in the country. I was on the colorectal service where I actively participated in different surgeries. I could see the same procedure performed hands-on with the use of the DaVinci robot or by laparoscopy, which allowed me to inquire about the pros and cons of each method. The fact that I could scrub in for various procedures was essential for me. Thanks to that, I have improved my suturing skills, learned a lot about bariatric surgery, deepened my medical knowledge, and I

got to see really interesting and complex cases. All of the doctors were extremely helpful and always willing to answer my questions.

Thanks to additional hours that I spent with anesthesiologists, I learned how to intubate, administer medications and perform nerve blocks. Hence, during the two weeks in General Surgery not only did I expand my medical knowledge, but I also learned more about myself. I have developed many practical skills, learned about the differences in treatment and surgical techniques between Polish and American doctors and most importantly I realized I want to choose a specialty that involves surgery.

Additionally, on the ER rotation I had an opportunity to find out how the American ER works. I familiarized myself with all of the ER departments, trauma bay and most of the doctors. I had direct contact with each patient coming into the hospital. I performed a lot of physical exams after which I had to report the state of the patient to the doctor, suggest a potential diagnosis, point out the necessary lab tests, diagnostic imaging, and plan the treatment. This was extremely helpful, and it improved my examination and interview technique.

Apart from deepening my medical knowledge, I also had time to explore Virginia and meet wonderful people with

whom I will definitely remain in touch. My biggest dream was to hike on the Appalachian Trail and see the famous McAfee Knob, and I did both.

This experience wouldn't be possible without the help of the Kościuszko Foundation and their scholarship. I appreciate their help as the stay in Roanoke was a life-changing experience for me.



Polish medical students Anna Sliwa (right) and Alex Brutkowska, pictured here at Mill Mountain, spent 4 weeks on rotation this summer at the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine. Anna describes her experience here, and in the sidebar Alex expresses her thanks to the Kościuszko Foundation for funding the students' exchange program.

A heartfelt thanks with a promise to pay it forward

By Aleksandra Brutkowska
Wroclaw (Poland) Medical University student

The following is an excerpt from a thank-you note from Polish medical student Aleksandra Brutkowska to Marek Skulimowski, president of the Kościuszko Foundation, a charitable foundation based in New York City. It funds programs that promote Polish-American intellectual and artistic exchange and provided Brutkowska the means to spend a month in rotation at the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine.

(Continued on Page 11)



At Kris and Jacek Slowikowski's cookout in August, Polish medical students Alex Brutkowska (holding sign on right) and Anna Sliwa express their thanks to the American-based foundation that provided scholarship money for their Roanoke rotations. In the photo from left are RVSCI President Mary Jo Fassié, Dr. Bruce Johnson, Anna, Dr. Jacek Slowikowski, Alex, Dr. Cynda Johnson and Dr. Kris Slowikowski.

Aug. 31, 2019

Dear Mr. Marek Skulimowski,

My name is Aleksandra Brutkowska, and I am one of two students from Wroclaw Medical University (WMU) who had the opportunity for an elective offered through Carilion Roanoke Memorial Hospital this month.

I am writing to express my sincerest gratitude to the Kościuszko Foundation for making this exchange possible. The grant alleviated some of the financial burden that was involved with this opportunity, and it allowed me to concentrate more on my studies instead.

I am a 5th-year medical student in WMU, and plan to graduate in 2021. I would like to become a pediatrician. The field of pediatrics captured my heart. I am intrigued in the differences found in development; for example, how children do not respond to illness and medical treatment the same way an adult would. I feel that when a child is sick, the whole family is sick, and so all are in need of compassionate help. It is a privilege to be entrusted with the health of another person's child.

This exchange offered 4 weeks in

a variety of clinics. It would have never occurred if not for our coordinator, WMU alumna Dr. Kris Bulas-Slowikowski, who has put in much of her private time and initiated these exchanges.

My first week, I started in the inpatient pediatric ward under the care of Dr. Finkler. I had the opportunity to engage in many morning and afternoon rounds with patients, as well as be part of meaningful assessments for diagnosing and providing treatment. The second week on the nursery was delightful, supervised by Dr. Hayes, where I had the chance to perform newborn physical exams, learn about lactation, and assisted in many circumcisions. I also experienced for the first time a vaginal birth in obstetrics.

The third and fourth week I was with the following attendings: Dr. Collins, Dr. Wattsman, and Dr. Safford, who are all brilliant and very experienced pediatric surgeons. I had a wonderful time on this part of the rotation, since every day presented with a new case...

The most eye-opening lesson for me was the medical education that American students receive, and how different it is from mine. I appreciate their system, where students ultimately

have the role of physician and are an integral part of the medical team but have fewer responsibilities and more freedom to make mistakes.

My experience in Roanoke has been extremely pleasant. During our stay we had visited a large part of Roanoke's highlights. These include the breathtaking hike up the Appalachian Trail to McAfee Knob, Mill Mountain with its light-up star, weekends filled with the farmers market, as well as many downtown evenings for patio dinners and the opportunity to make new lifelong friends.

There are few things that I wish to implement after this experience. One of them is to make it possible to co-work with VTCSOM students on research and clinical cases, and expand the affiliation between our schools. Another is to increase the number of students who can benefit from exchanges to Roanoke.

I thank you for your generosity. It contributed to the success of this exchange as well as my academic success, and permitted new relationships to form between our schools. I will pay it forward someday.



The Chardon Polka Band from Cleveland, Ohio, returns to the Taubman Museum of Art for the third straight year on the evening of Friday, April 3. The band, which plays everything from "polka-punk" to swing to Lawrence Welk-type favorites, has a faithful fan base, ranging from senior citizens to small children, teens, and twenty-somethings.

Mid-Autumn Festival means celebration, appreciation and goodwill

*By Rebecca Chang, Ph.D.
Co-chairwoman, Roanoke-Lijiang committee
salemki@aol.com*

The fall season of 2019 is coming to a close. Now that we have enjoyed the beautiful colors and cool temperatures of autumn, let us highlight some of the activities of the Sister Cities Lijiang committee.

On Saturday, Sept. 14, the Roanoke-Lijiang Committee and the Roanoke Chinese Hiking Club celebrated their second annual Mid-Autumn Festival with more than 120 guests at the Faith Alliance Church in Roanoke. Also known as the Moon Festival, the Mid-Autumn Festival is the second most-celebrated holiday in Chinese communities around the world. It traditionally falls on the 15th day of the eighth month in the Chinese lunar calendar, which usually corresponds to September or early October in the Gregorian calendar. It is a time for families and friends to celebrate the rewards of the fall harvest after their hard work earlier in the year.

Many people from different Asian nationalities came to celebrate on Sept. 14. Besides various delicious homemade foods brought by each family, one of the most popular items was mooncakes. A group of volunteers led by Roanoke-Lijiang Co-chairwoman Mrs. Meili Foy prepared more than 300 mooncakes the day before the celebration. Other volunteers included Mr. Qiu Ping, Mrs. Shijie Huang, Ms. Chang Ying, Ms. Caihong Xu, Mrs. Liming Ren, Mrs. Jane Wang, Mrs. Haipei, Ms. Amy Driver, and Mrs. Fei Wang. They worked together for hours following a time-honored recipe to make these treats from scratch. The fruits of their efforts were very much appreciated by festival attendees. Besides food, other festival events included a performance of traditional Chinese tunes by Mrs. Jane Wang's students, a choral performance by a

Chinese women's singing group, and various games for attendants of all ages.

On a separate note, Pearl Fu, the founder of the Roanoke-Lijiang committee, has recently moved away from Roanoke. She has been a mentor and a dear friend to many of us, and her absence at the Mid-Autumn Festival was felt by everyone. While we will miss her at our future celebrations and events, we wish her all the best in her new home.

Last but not least, we thank the Faith Alliance Church for hosting the celebration this year. We appreciate your welcome and support! Thank you as well to all the volunteers for their contributions and hard work. The Roanoke-Lijiang committee would like to wish everyone a joyful holiday season and a happy new year!



Volunteers led by Roanoke-Lijiang Co-chairwoman Meili Foy (right) prepared more than 300 mooncakes the day before the celebration. -- Photo courtesy of Derick Chapman



Volunteers worked together for hours following a time-honored recipe for mooncakes. -- Photo courtesy of Derick Chapman



Roanoke-Lijiang extends thanks to the Faith Alliance Church for hosting the celebration this year. -- Photo courtesy of Derick Chapman



Students performed a concert of traditional Chinese tunes. -- Photo courtesy of Derick Chapman



Our second annual Mid-Autumn Festival turned out more than 120 guests at the Faith Alliance Church in Roanoke. -- Photo courtesy of Derick Chapman

Photos are glimpses of world through eyes of Kenyan kids

By Bill Modica
Roanoke-Kisumu chairman
modicabill2@aol.com

The Roanoke-Kisumu committee has long been helping support the God's Little Angels Children's (GLAC) Community School near Kisumu. But recently the schoolchildren turned the tables on us. Using 21 disposable cameras paid for by our member Linda Harrison, students at the GLAC school were asked to take photos of their community and family. The idea was that the kids could each take a camera and shoot pictures of things that mattered to them in their world. Then they returned the cameras to Barb Adams with the Richmond-based Support Aid Ministry, who took them back to

the U.S. for developing. Some of the best photos were selected and, with help from donors in Richmond, mounted into a display. Barb even added a few of her own! The kids also made a mural with hand prints to identify themselves. They blessed us with their creativity.

On Oct. 9, I met with Mary Jo Fassié, our fearless RVSCI leader, and Barb to install the photo exhibit in the hallway at the Roanoke Municipal Building. The display has been a hit with city staffers and visitors. It will stay up through the end of the year and is open to the public. We hope to have a promotional program sometime after the holidays.

Fund-raising to help meet the needs of the private school continues. Most of the children

are from families with health needs and/or disadvantaged homes. They are not charged to attend the school but must pay for uniforms and books. Two meals a day are provided, and the teachers are paid a small wage. The local community also volunteers and helps with projects. Cosmas and Joseph Akeyo with the Civil, Mechanical & Electrical contractor Comacon Ltd. have been ongoing supporters of the school, which was started by their late mother. The school gets no government funds. If you would like to make a donation, please send a check to The Kisumu Committee of Roanoke Valley Sister Cities at the address on this newsletter and mark it: GLAC school donation. Thank you and Happy Holidays.



Bill Modica and Barb Adams with the photo mural inside the Roanoke Municipal Building.



A photo from the display shows the GLAC students experimenting with their cameras.



Not surprisingly, a photo of the GLAC school building is included in the display.



Students created a mural with their hand prints.

Alphabet Day celebrated with dance party at the Taubman



The Hangul Nal celebration at the Taubman Museum included energetic dancing and K-pop Zumba.

On Oct. 5, the Roanoke-Wonju committee partnered with the Taubman Museum of Art to celebrate *Hangul Nal*, which commemorates the creation of the modern Korean alphabet system. Fifteenth-century Korean King Sejong declared that a simplified alphabet would be created in order to afford all people the opportunity to read and write. Prior to 1446, Chinese *hanja* was used, and only the scholars were able to read and write. Hangul Nal is celebrated every year in South Korea.

This was the first year for Roanoke-Wonju to celebrate Hangul Nal, and we had a wonderful turnout. Visitors were introduced to Hangul as well as some aspects of Korean culture, from Korean dramas to Korean pop (K-pop) to K-pop trivia. People could have their names written in Hangul, and members of the local chapter of BTS ARMY, a fan club, were present. Several area K-pop dance groups danced to favorite K-pop tunes, and everyone was encouraged to participate in K-pop Zumba!

The afternoon began with Zumba lessons led by Cherry Bell. Dance performances continued



You were in the right place if you wanted to know more about K-drama.

throughout the afternoon, featuring group performances by students from Virginia Western Community College, led by Lauren Estep, and from Virginia Tech, led by Megan Peterson. Hannah Hanes from HKP Dance performed a solo as well. The performances were interspersed with trivia questions, and prizes were awarded. Students in attendance came from local high schools as well as from Hollins University and Ferrum College. The event ended with a K-pop random dance.

Adding to the Roanoke Festival of Korean Letters and Culture were cookies with a Korean theme prepared by Morning Brew Coffee, a video that featured Wonju, South Korea, Roanoke's first sister city, and a video greeting from Roanoke Mayor Sherman Lea who was unable to attend the event. He was represented by Roanoke City Councilman Bill Bestpitch.

Many thanks go to Ken Kilinski who served as MC for the afternoon and who was the video maker. His daughter, Kami, a senior at William Byrd High School, was central to making this event happen.



Morning Brew Coffee prepared these sweets with a Korean alphabet theme.



Members of a local fan club dedicated to BTS turned out with a variety of paraphernalia. BTS is a seven-member South Korean boy band formed in Seoul in 2013.



Ferrum College professor (and Roanoke-Pskov chairwoman) Patty Suppes (right) attended with some of her students.



Attendance was wonderful, so we plan to do it again next year!

Visitors were surveyed as to what they liked about this year's event and what they would like to see in the future. We have some great ideas for next year!

-- The Roanoke-Wonju committee

Whirlwind trip helps refresh connections in Russia

*By Patricia Sagasti Suppes, Ph.D.
Roanoke-Pskov chairwoman
psuppes@ferrum.edu*

In October, I went to Moscow to represent RVSC in the Russia-U.S. Municipal Forum and was able to travel to our sister city of Pskov. The trip lasted six days and helped me to refresh our connections with leaders in Pskov. The following is my itinerary:

- On my first day I arrived in Moscow, and since I had several hours before the overnight train to Pskov, I walked a bit around Red Square and enjoyed the Fall Festival.

- On the second day I was picked up at the train station in Pskov by Olga, one of my former students at Ferrum College. She had spent a year in Ferrum with our exchange program. I then got a walking tour of the city with a wonderful explanation of its history, led by another former Ferrum exchange student, Katya. That afternoon I met with the director of international programs at Pskov State University, who talked to me about their newest programs and their continuing interest in working with Ferrum College. That evening I had dinner with Olga and had a chance to get caught up with her.

- The second day in Pskov included meetings with the acting mayor and other city officials. I was able to deliver gifts from us and from Roanoke Mayor Lea, and had official photos taken. Afterward, I had a meeting with administrators of the university, in which we talked about future collaborations and a possible renewal of our exchange agreement. I then spoke with a group of about 60 students who



Dr. Patty Suppes talks to students at Pskov University about the opportunity to study at Ferrum College.



In Pskov Children's Park, Patty rubs the iconic horseshoe for good luck.

were very interested in coming to Ferrum. After the meetings, I had dinner with the director of the program, and we discussed specifics and student interest. At the end of that day, Olga saw me off at the train station.

- The next morning I arrived in Moscow and then with the Sister Cities International group. We spent this rainy day indoors, meeting at the Russian Foreign Ministry and at the U.S. embassy. Both were interesting, and we were able to learn about the perspectives that each nation has on U.S. and Russian relations. We then attended presentations at a youth forum for U.S. and Russian students, in which there were speeches about the future of international cooperation, before a group dinner at the hotel.

- The following day was the Russia and U.S. Municipal Forum. It was an all-day affair that included speeches by representatives of cities in both countries. I made a brief speech about the importance



Katya (at left with Patty), a former Ferrum exchange student, turned out to be the best guide in the city of Pskov.



Patty takes a meeting with the acting mayor of Pskov and other officials.

of international education. At the end of the day we watched the final presentations by the youth forum, and then had a farewell reception during which we were able to relax and interact with our Russian counterparts.

- On my last day I was able to explore a little bit around Red Square with a few of the members of the Sister Cities group.

I came home with a gift for Mayor Lea and some things to refresh our display in City Hall. I hope to deliver both of those things in the next month. I am also looking forward to meeting with our newly re-formed Pskov committee and begin planning events for the next year.



An evening near Red Square in Moscow.

Commentary: People before politics

By Samuel McKnight

Samuel McKnight, a new member of the Roanoke-Pskov sister cities committee, is a senior International Relations major at Roanoke College. He speaks Russian and lived in Russia for 6 months. He is originally from Charlotte, N.C. This commentary was first published in the Dec. 6, 2019, issue of The Roanoke Times.

Sitting in a kitchen in a small, semi-rural city, I dined over fried pork and potatoes with two middle-age locals in their green kitchen with the quiet banter of news emanating from a small television. Norms of acceptable dinner conversation topics notwithstanding, we turned to politics.

"The president has really messed up this time," the male host declared. "What's happening in the south, for instance, is simply unacceptable. The way he's handling this, the way he acts around the world — it's unhelpful, an empty waste of money and manpower." He spoke with a quiet force, adding that "he isn't representing who we are."

His wife nodded her head in agreement. I probed further, hoping to hear more: "People don't really understand...," I said. "Right," the wife began, eyeing me. "You see, folks don't know how to separate between politics and people. You need to remember that politics are here" — she held her hand high above the table — "and people are here" — holding it toward the floor. "There's a big difference." American dialogue about foreign affairs tends to create archetypes of people in other countries according to common political narratives.

But the people rarely match such models. America, for instance, has been for years now ferociously divided in the age of Donald Trump. Most of the pressing foreign policy issues of his term — the detainment of children at the border, the U.S. exit from major international treaties and agreements, his apparent isolationist ideas — have been buried in a heap of bitter, partisan vitriol. The president's recent decision to pull U.S. troops from Syria garnered similar contempt. But let's take a step back. Much of America supports the



Historic Velikiy Novgorod, a typical Russian small city, is near Pskov. This photo was shot from the top of a tower. -- Photo courtesy of Samuel McKnight

president fervently, and many oppose him. To build an archetype to fit all Americans would be impossible and likely impertinent.

With that said, let us return for a moment to fried pork and potatoes. My old acquaintances are Russians. The meal we shared was in a small, semi-rural Russian city I visited during the six months I lived in the country. The president to whom they referred is Vladimir Putin, and the problems in the south were his conquests in eastern Ukraine. My friends are average, middle-class working professionals, discontent with the death toll and money wasted by the conflict. No doubt there is widespread regret about Russia's complicity in the Turkish offensive against the Kurds, just as there is great sadness in America that we have decided to no longer assist this important and highly-targeted minority. The on-looking world is hard-pressed to find a guiltless actor.

Let us turn our dialogue toward people before politics. Russians and Americans are large groups of ordinary people with extraordinary senses of national excellence. It is clear that our national identities can be erroneously associated with the misdeeds of the governments above us, and that our internal divisions about foreign policy preclude any notion that we are all the same.

America is too diverse to fit into a single archetype; Russia, too, boasts more than one hundred ethnic groups, a variety of political persuasions, and a territory so immense geographers have trouble classifying it. We are aggregates of individual people. Indeed, Americans, Russians, Turks, Syrians, and all those who have the rich pleasure of calling this Earth home are people, as I am a person, living in the countries of our births and under our respective politicians. As my host that evening so wisely stated, there's a big difference between politics and people.



Samuel McKnight is shown in the Caucasus Mountains near the city of Sochi, Russia. -- Photo courtesy of Samuel McKnight

Roanoke-Florianópolis report

Remembering a treasured member; celebrating a small business award



Alton Ray Mayberry
Feb. 8, 1929 – Dec. 14, 2018

The Roanoke-Florianópolis committee would like to honor the memory of the late Alton Ray Mayberry, M.D., and his connection with our sister city of Florianópolis, Brazil. He was a psychiatrist and served on the faculty of UNC, UVA, and Vanderbilt Medical Schools. Ray's love of missions led him to volunteer, teach and serve in many areas of the world through the United Methodist Church, UM World Evangelism Institute, the Episcopal Church, Christian Medical and Dental Society and Project Hope. He was a member of the Roanoke Valley Academy of Medicine, Roanoke Valley Sister Cities (Florianópolis) and Friendship Force. He also served in the United States Army. A memorial service was held December 18, 2018, at Second Presbyterian Church in Roanoke.

In 2001, Ray and his wife, Carole, visited Florianópolis via Rio de Janeiro where they



After the annual awards ceremony, the Roanoke Regional Chamber tweeted: "Offering interpreting and translation services in over 60 languages, @AraraLS is focused on breaking all language barriers. We were proud to name them our 2019 Micro Small Business of the Year." Joslaine Austin (second from left), president and founder of Arara Language Solutions, is pictured with Chamber President and CEO Joyce Waugh (left), Melissa Martinez and Rachael Su.

worked with Dr. Wilson Bonfim, a Rio surgeon who retired from a busy city practice to treat, via a mobile medical unit, some of the underserved population of Rio. In Florianópolis they spent several days with Edith Schisler, a United Methodist missionary formerly of Roanoke, at the Living Center for the Aging that she and her UM minister husband developed. Ray, psychiatrist, and Carole, a PhD clinical psychologist, consulted and gave psychiatry/psychology lectures at the UM Living Center for the Aging and other Florianópolis community agencies. One day they visited Love's Little Nest, an agency that serves children, ages birth to 16, who have AIDS. They spent an afternoon with the mayor discussing the cities of Florianópolis and Roanoke and their sister city connection. Each day a Florianópolis Sister City member hosted or took us to see something of interest. On their

last evening in Florianópolis, they attended a dinner at a member's home where they received goodbye gifts. One was a beautiful, handmade framed photograph of the Hercílio Luz Bridge; the other was a dozen edible pink and green candy roses. Of all the countries Ray visited and served, he remarked that the people of Florianópolis were some of the most gracious.

-- Carole Mayberry and Mary Jo Fassié

On Oct. 1, 2019, Roanoke-Florianópolis co-chairwoman Joslaine Austin's company, Arara Language Solutions, won the Small Business of the Year Award in the Micro Business category from the Roanoke Regional Chamber. "We were honored to win in the Micro Business category," said Joslaine. "Congrats to Team Arara Language Solutions, LLC!"

Young Artists Showcase & Competition

Young Artists Showcase 2020: 'One World: Out Of Many We Are One'

Roanoke Valley Sister Cities' visual art competition (no photography) will once again be open to any students in the Roanoke Valley ages 13-18. Students must be no older than 18 by April 3, which is the deadline for the Sister Cities International competition. The Roanoke deadline is Friday, March 6, 2020. There is no fee to enter.

This year's Sister Cities International theme, "One World: Out Of Many We Are One," asks students to explore:

- How can internationally engaged future leaders help communities address the global

challenges of social unity and peace in the 21st century?

- How does international experience affect an individual's or community's ability to adapt?
- What are some examples/illustrations of coming together and celebrating our humanity?

The local first-place winning art piece, which will be submitted to Sister Cities International, must be two-dimensional, unframed, and no larger than 24 inches x 36 inches or 61 cm x 91.5 cm. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me, and please share this information with any visual art teachers and students. You can

also visit <https://sistercities.org/YAAS>.

Prizes once again will range from \$25 to \$200.

We are looking for a new venue to display the artwork, so please let me know if you have any suggestions.

Mary Jo Fassié



Roanoke Valley students ages 13-18 are encouraged to enter the Young Artists Showcase 2020.

Roanoke Valley student is an international finalist



Chisom Ezigbo and her winning work, "Heal the World."

This summer, Sister Cities International revealed the winners and finalists of its 2019 Young Artists Showcase, and one of those finalists is from the Roanoke Valley.

Chisom Ezigbo, a junior at

Roanoke Catholic School, is a finalist in the International Young Artists Showcase. Chisom won a \$200 first-place prize in the art contest held by Roanoke Valley Sister Cities in the spring. Entries for the Roanoke Valley Sister Cities competition came from the following high schools in the valley: Arnold R. Burton, Patrick Henry, Salem, North Cross, and Roanoke Catholic. Judges for the event were Roanoke artists and a member of the Taubman Museum of Art staff.

Roanoke Valley Sister Cities is a member of Sister Cities International.

The 2019 theme was "Global Citizens: Resilient Communities," which highlighted the importance

of citizen diplomacy and the innovative ways that an individual or community can prepare for adversity or challenges. Students were encouraged to draw inspiration from their experiences with Sister Cities, travel, exchange programs, international friendships, and the many ways that people cultivate relationships across cultures.

Chisom's "Heal the World" will be included in a national touring exhibition. The art of all the other winners and entrants can be viewed at <https://sistercitiesyaas2019.tumblr.com/AllArtEntries>

Mary Jo Fassié

International Film Festival schedule




roanoke.edu/RCIFF

 Roanoke College International Film Festival

2nd Annual Roanoke College International Film Festival: Food!

February 19–28, 2020

The Department of Modern Languages is pleased to present the 2nd Annual Roanoke College International Film Festival. This year's theme is food! Eight films representing eight different languages and cultures will be shown on campus, at The Grandin Theatre, and at the Taubman Museum of Art. All screenings are free and open to the public and will have English subtitles. Each film will be followed by a post-screening, panel-led discussion.

Sponsored by Roanoke College, The Grandin Theatre, the Taubman Museum of Art, and Roanoke Valley Sister Cities. Roanoke College sponsors include the Departments of Modern Languages, Anthropology, and English; Screen Studies and Peace & Justice Studies concentrations; in addition to Fintel Library, the Student Activities Board, Student Government Association, Hola, French Club, as well as the Offices of Community Programs and International Education.

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Language	Film Title	Date & Time	Venue	Director
HINDI	The Lunchbox 2013	February 19, 5:00 p.m.	The Grandin Theatre, Roanoke	Director: Ritesh Batra
GERMAN	Soul Kitchen 2009	February 22, 7:00 p.m.	Colket Ballroom, Roanoke College	Director: Fatih Akin
CHINESE	Eat Drink Man Woman 1994	February 20, 7:00 p.m.	Antrim Chapel, Roanoke College	Director: Ang Lee
JAPANESE	Sweet Bean 2014	February 26, 7:00 p.m.	Hollins University	Director: Naome Kawase
RUSSIAN	Earth 1930	February 21, 7:00 p.m.	Antrim Chapel, Roanoke College	Director: Dovzhenko
ITALIAN	Mid-August lunch 2008	February 27, 7:00 p.m.	Colket Ballroom, Roanoke College	Director: Gianni di Gregorio
FRENCH	Le saveur du palais/ Haute Cuisine 2012	February 22, 2:00 p.m.	Taubman Museum of Art, Roanoke	Director: Christian Vincent
SPANISH	Tortilla Soup 2001	February 28, 7:00 p.m.	Antrim Chapel, Roanoke College	Director: Maria Ripoll

New to the board



Ramona Kirsch
Member-at-large

Ramona Kirsch, Ed.D., is the Director of International Programs at Hollins University. Having traveled to more than 35 countries, she has more than 15 years of leadership in developing international education programs, leading delegations abroad and moderating panels at international conferences. She has an doctorate in Educational Leadership and Management and has received three Fulbright Awards. Dr. Kirsch has served on Fulbright Peer Review panels, the Florida Consortium for International Education and as board member and past chair of Study Florida. She has also worked with Sister Cities organizations in Tarpon Springs and St. Petersburg, Fla.



Bill Bestpitch
Treasurer

Bill Bestpitch, formerly vice president of RVSCI, is a member of Roanoke City Council. He chairs the Legislative Committee and serves on the Budget and Personnel Committees. In addition, he represents Roanoke on the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission and the Roanoke Valley Transportation Planning Organization. He received his BSW and MSW from VCU. During his long career as a social worker, he worked for the VA Department for Children, TAP, Blue Ridge Behavioral Health Care, Family Service of Roanoke Valley, Big Brothers Big Sisters of SW Virginia, and Creative Family Solutions. He is a US Army veteran with more than eight years of service. Bill and his wife, Sheri, have volunteered as a host family for RVSCI visitors.



Lee Learman
Member-at-large

Lee Learman, M.D., Ph.D., joined the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine as dean on July 1, 2019. He is an obstetrician-gynecologist with over 25 years of progressive leadership

experience in medical education and health care, and is an award-winning educational scholar and clinical researcher. He received his bachelor's degree from the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA), his M.D. from Harvard Medical School, and a Ph.D. in social psychology from Harvard University. Dean Learman completed residency training at UCLA and held leadership positions at UC San Francisco, Indiana University and Florida Atlantic University before moving to Roanoke.



Bill Modica
Recording Secretary

Bill Modica, chairman of Roanoke-Kisumu sister cities, serves on the Roanoke City Parks and Recreation Advisory Board and is a local real estate agent. He has served on the board of Local Colors and worked in East Africa with Virginia Tech's student teacher program. Under his leadership, Kisumu Sister City has planted fruit trees in Kisumu, assisted with expenses at Bethel Home for Orphans and GLAC primary school, paid for AIDS education in Kenya and joined the City of Kisumu Urban Area Association. Bill has traveled to Kisumu, meeting with local leadership and exchanging ideas for cooperation.

New members and donors

Welcome to some of the new RVSCI members and donors who have joined or contributed since our June 2019 newsletter!

Judy Caudill
Alice Davis
Dominic & Debbie Difrancesco
Dr. Ramona Kirsch
Christine Jordan

Scott Mason
Samuel McKnight
Dr. & Mrs. Robert Roth
Lois Traver
Mike and Virginia Wiegand



RVSCI Corporate Board Members

President: Mary Jo Fassié

Recording Secretary: Bill Modica

Corresponding Secretary: Jean Broyles

Treasurer: Bill Bestpitch

Members at large:

Anne-Marie Green

Ramona Kirsch, Ed.D.

Lee Learman, M.D., Ph.D.

John Makay

Sister City Chairmen:

Florianópolis: Linda Harrison & Joslaine Austin

Kisumu: Bill Modica

Lijiang: Rebecca Chang, Ph.D. & Mei Li Foy

Opole: Kristina Bulas-Slowikowski, M.D.

Pskov: Patricia Sagasti Suppes, Ph.D.

St-Lô: Ann Hackworth, Siobhan Scro and Peggy Wells

Wonju: Brian Counihan



Annual Membership - Roanoke Valley Sister Cities

New ☐

Renewal ☐

July 1, 20____ - June 30, 20____

Cities: ☐ Wonju ☐ Kisumu ☐ Pskov ☐ Florianópolis ☐ Opole ☐ Lijiang ☐ St-Lô

Student: \$10 - one city ____ # cities x \$10 = ____

Individual \$15 - one city ____ # cities x \$15 = ____

Family \$30 - one city ____ # cities x \$30 = ____

Example: 7 cities x \$15 = \$105

Other Levels: Patron ☐ \$50 | Benefactor ☐ \$100 | Diplomat ☐ \$250 | Consul ☐ \$500 | Ambassador ☐ \$1,000

Specify for: ☐ RVSCI Corporate \$ ____ &/or for: ☐ City or Cities checked above: \$ ____

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED \$ ____ Check # ____ Date ____

Name (please print) _____

Address _____

Tel (home) _____ Cell _____

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Make check payable to **Roanoke Valley Sister Cities** | Mail to **RVSCI – P.O. Box 136 – Roanoke, VA 24002**

All gifts/donations are tax deductible to the extent provided by law. RVSCI is a 501c3 – Fed ID #51-0246592

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Roanoke Valley Sister Cities
P.O. Box 136
Roanoke, VA 24002

ROANOKE VALLEY

