



Around Our World

ROANOKE VALLEY SISTER CITIES, INC.

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Celebrating a young musician and 2 Polish patriots

By Dr. Kristina Bulas-Slowikowski
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Virtual exchanges are the new medium during this time of COVID. Poland continues to contain the spread of the virus with the use of restrictions similar to our mitigation efforts.

Opole had a very successful experience with the Kosciuszko Foundation's Chopin competition for young pianists held over the weekend of Oct. 10-11. Yevheniia Slipko performed as the entrant from the Frederick Chopin School of music in Opole and was sponsored by the RVSCI Opole committee. She placed 3rd in a very competitive group, ages 16-18, and received a monetary award. This was the first time that this competition was held virtually. The finals were broadcast on Polish radio and TV. The judges were world renowned. Everyone was overjoyed at her placing, and school

prestige jumped into the stratosphere. Well done, Yevheniia!! (Her account is on Page 4.) In the future, we look forward to sponsoring other pianists in this competition.

Medical exchanges are on hold, however virtual possibilities will be explored such as lecture-sharing and global medicine discussion boards. Martin Barylak – a first-year student at the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine, has a Polish family connection -- even in Opole -- and hopefully will have time to participate in an event with us. Opole has reached out to their partner cities to explore virtual art exchanges. We will be brainstorming with them as to how to accomplish their request.

I was able to help celebrate Kosciuszko



Pianist Yevheniia Slipko competed in the group for ages 16-18. Yevheniia's account is on Page 4.

Day and Pulaski Day with the University of Virginia Polish student organization in

(Continued on Page 4)



This is a detail from the poster advertising the Kosciuszko Foundation Chopin Competition for Young Pianists. Roanoke-Opole sister cities sponsored Yevheniia Slipko, a student from Opole, in the competition.

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President's Report

In 2020, we've shown we can do virtually anything



By Mary Jo Fassie
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Over the past nine months, we have all had to carry on the mission of Roanoke Valley Sister Cities from our computers as we have met virtually and communicated with one another, other Sister Cities International members and with our cities abroad. We have all learned to attend and participate in Zoom meetings, which have given us another way to reach out to one another and to plan for the future. These virtual meetings have even given us inspiration and a chance to learn from other sister cities about programs and ideas that have been successful as well as sharing what we do here in the Roanoke Valley and with our seven sister cities.

I would hope that Sister Cities International will continue reaching out virtually to all members of sister cities even after we are able to meet in person. For many people, it was probably their first time to attend a regional or international conference and to do so without any financial expense. Virtual meetings will still never replace all the face-to-face contacts that we have made at SCI conferences over dinner or at a meeting, nor the friendships created with visiting a sister city abroad or while participating in a cultural event here. The virtual world will only enhance our relationships.

Since our last newsletter in early June, I have been able to meet virtually with RVSCI at our annual meeting on June 23 and twice with the entire RVSCI board. I met at least three times with the Wonju committee to help them plan a virtual Korean event with the Taubman Museum of Art, and even once with Yeonju Jee, the sister city coordinator for the city of Wonju, to discuss a short

film competition in Wonju with whom we will collaborate by judging the entries. The Florianopolis committee also had a Zoom meeting to discuss an altruistic project in our Brazilian sister city, and I was also able to join in a Zoom discussion with Kisumu chairman Bill Modica and the directors of the Boulder, Colorado/ Kisumu sister city committee as we shared with an SCI board member projects that our cities have done to help the citizens of our Kenyan sister city.

Sister Cities International held a virtual international conference over the summer in lieu of meeting in person, and our regional states of Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina joined for a fall virtual meeting. At both of these events, topics centered on SCI global issues and how sister cities can help our programs grow. We were given a chance in breakout sessions to compare programs, ask questions and offer suggestions. Other country-specific SCI representatives have offered virtual meetings, including France and Russia, giving a chance for US cities to discuss ways to communicate with their cities abroad.

Since the beginning of last summer, RVSCI with the help of Treasurer Bill Bestpitch and Corresponding

Secretary Jean Broyles has successfully communicated with current and prospective members with letters to encourage everyone to renew or pay membership dues or donations. With grant money greatly reduced, it is essential that our organization continues to thrive and is able to make plans for future projects and travel.

This fall, I served on the committee for the Roanoke College International Film Festival, and RVSCI once again gave our financial support to the event, which will be hosted by the college virtually in February and includes films in Korean, Russian and French as well as German, Spanish, Indian and Japanese (the schedule is on Page 3). In October, several of us were interviewed by a journalist from Ouest-France, a daily newspaper in Normandy, asking about COVID-19 and the upcoming presidential elections. The article was published on our Election Day. With the help of Ann Hackworth, we stayed in touch this fall with Doug Jackson, Arts and Culture Coordinator for the City of Roanoke, to give us updates on the cleaning and repairing of the RVSCI columns in downtown Century Plaza, representing

(Continued on Page 3)



In November, Sister Cities International hosted its French Connection discussion on youth and education via Zoom. Three Norman friends from St-Lô attended as well.

(Continued From Page 2)

Roanoke and our seven sister cities. After 20 years, they were in much need of some TLC and have been cleaned with repairs by the artists to come soon.

As this fall comes to end, I would like to thank our RVSCI intern, Liesl Greider, who has worked hard at digitizing the

Around Our World newsletters from 1997-2011. A senior at Roanoke College and an intern in St-Lô during summer 2019, Liesl worked on an undergraduate thesis that will encompass the sister cities of Roanoke, St-Lô and Opole, their projects and programs since the

twinning of the cities. She was also able to represent RVSCI at several Zoom conferences and shared her experiences as an intern. We will miss her and wish her the best as she finishes her senior year at Roanoke College!

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

January/February

- **Jan 17:** SCI Presidential Inaugural Virtual Event, 7-9 p.m.
- **Feb 2:** RVSCI Board Zoom Meeting
- **Feb 17-26:** Roanoke College International Virtual Film Festival

March/April

- **March/April:** Korean Virtual Festival and Wonju Short Film Competition
- **April :** Global Virtual Medical Conference with VTCSOM
- **April 6 :** RVSCI Corporate Board meeting

June

- **June 1:** RVSCI Board Meeting and/or Annual Meeting
- ***SPRING 2021:** Young Artists Competition (Date and Theme TBD)

Film Festival Schedule

Roanoke College International Virtual Film Festival, Feb. 17-26

Feb. 17, 5 p.m. "Court": A 2014 Indian multilingual legal drama that examines the Indian legal system through the Mumbai Sessions Court trial of an aging protest singer who is accused of encouraging a manhole worker to commit suicide through one of his folk songs. 116 minutes

Feb. 18, 7 p.m. "Parasite": A 2019 South Korean black comedy. It follows the members of a poor family who scheme to become employed by a wealthy family by infiltrating their household and posing as unrelated, highly qualified individuals. 132 minutes

Feb. 19, 7 p.m. "Leviathan": A 2014 Russian drama. According to one of its producers, "It deals with some of the most important social issues of contemporary Russia while never becoming an artist's sermon or a public statement; it is a story of love and tragedy experienced by ordinary people." 141 minutes

Feb. 20, 2 p.m. "Un prophète": A 2009 French prison crime drama about an

imprisoned petty criminal of Algerian origins who rises in the inmate hierarchy, becoming an assassin and drug trafficker as he initiates himself into the Corsican and then Muslim subcultures. 155 minutes

Feb. 20, 7 p.m. "The White Ribbon": A 2009 black-and-white German drama darkly depicts society and family in a northern German village just before World War I and, according to its director, "is about the roots of evil. Whether it's religious or political terrorism, it's the same thing." 144 minutes

Feb. 24, 7 p.m. "Shoplifters": A 2018 Japanese drama about a non-biological family that relies on shoplifting to cope with a life of poverty. 121 minutes

Feb. 25, 7 p.m. "Bicycle Thieves": A 1948 Italian drama is part of the canon of classic cinema. It follows the story of a poor father searching post-World War II Rome for his stolen bicycle, without which he will lose the job that was to be the salvation of his young family. 89 minutes

Feb. 26, 7 p.m. "Motorcycle Diaries": This international production in Spanish is a 2004 biopic about the journey of 23-year-old Ernesto "Che" Guevara, long before he was an iconic revolutionary. The coming-of-age film recounts the 1952 trip across South America by Guevara and a friend. 126 minutes



The poster for the Russian movie "Leviathan," the third film in the festival. A link with viewing information for all movies in the festival will be available and emailed in February.

(Continued From Page 1)

Charlottesville at the home of Blanka Rosenstiel, Honorary Polish Consul of Miami. In attendance was Robert Joskowiak, Honorary Polish Consul for Virginia, and other invitees. As refreshments were enjoyed, President Trump's proclamation announcing General Pulaski Memorial Day (Oct. 11, 2020) was read aloud. Part of the

proclamation read as follows:

"The life of the Polish-American hero General Casimir Pulaski is a testament to our Nation's ideals and a paragon of the cause of human freedom. General Pulaski's devotion to country — and the shared values upon which our Nation and Poland were both founded — accentuates our common commitment to liberty. On

General Pulaski Memorial Day, we honor and celebrate his courage and expertise in the Revolutionary War, which helped found a Nation conceived in the ideals he held most dearly."

For the complete proclamation text, visit <https://tinyurl.com/y5dny356>.

Virginia celebrates Kosciuszko Day annually on Oct. 15.



In October, the Roanoke/Opole sister city sponsored Yehvenia Slipko in the Kosciuszko Foundation Chopin Competition for Young Pianists. Yehvenia, her school and friends in Roanoke were thrilled with her third-place showing.

Opole pianist rises to challenge of virtual competition

By Yehvenia Slipko
Student, Frederick Chopin School of Music

When I found out about the Kosciuszko Foundation Chopin Competition for Young Pianists, I was very excited, because due to the current situation I have not been able to take part in musical events for some time. Even though I had to learn a part of the program quite hurriedly, I really enjoyed preparing for this competition, especially because the program consists mostly of pieces by Chopin, who happens to be one of my favorite composers.

In the first round, I performed Chopin's beautiful Nocturne in F sharp minor (op.48, no2) and two quite contrasting etudes from Op. 11: Etude No. 11, also known as the "arpeggio" etude, and No. 12, called the "revolutionary" etude. I personally found the nocturne to be more challenging than the etudes, as the melody needs to flow, but at the same time it cannot be rushed. When performing the famous revolutionary etude I tried to express the emotions and the dramatic history behind it through my playing.

For the second round, I prepared the

Mazurka in B flat minor Op. 24 No. 4 and Ballade in A flat major by Chopin and a study by Witold Lutoslawski. Personally, I found the ballade to be the most difficult piece from this program, but it also happens to be my favorite. It is a piece that I think, other than being demanding technically, requires a lot of musicality and maturity. Lutoslawski's study is a piece that requires a lot of contrasts and energy, so it was a bit challenging to perform it after the ballade, but it is a piece that I really enjoy playing.

This competition was also a new experience for me, as it was my first online competition. It was a bit challenging to perform without people listening, but I gave it my all. I would recommend participating in online competitions simply because it is a different experience, being recorded instead of having an audience. Going into this competition I was just very happy to finally take part in a musical event and to prepare a program with a certain goal in mind, so I was ecstatic when I found out that I got third place. It is great motivation for further improvement. I am very happy that I took part in this competition and I also truly enjoyed listening to all the talented young pianists.

Internship and research lead to in-depth senior project

*By Liesl Greider
Roanoke College class of 2021*

Over the course of these past few months, I have been conducting my second internship with Roanoke Valley Sister Cities. Whereas I interned in St-Lô before, I was honored this time to be able to work with the Roanoke umbrella group, reporting directly to President Mary Jo Fassié. My job varied from week to week, but the majority of my time was spent researching the various sister city partnerships, with a particular focus on Roanoke, St-Lô and Opole. This research is going toward my two-semester long project, "Citizen Diplomacy of the Roanoke Valley: An Examination of Sister City Partnerships."

For the first month, I went about my research via the Around Our World newsletters. I was able to help make these more accessible by digitizing them from the 1990s onward. As I digitized them, I was also paying attention to their content, taking notes based on patterns I was finding and common exchanges.

Once I had completed these newsletters, it was time for me to move on to desk research by reading books and articles pertaining to my topic of citizen diplomacy and international relations. I spent my time reading and soaking up as much information as I could, using resources across the gamut from the American Journal of Economics and Sociology to children's books, such as one called "In a World of Difference." From these sources, I was able to draft my annotated bibliography and literature review, which will assist my research moving into the next semester.

Toward the end of my internship, I took on a role to assist the director of the Roanoke College International

Film Festival with the preparation and planning of this virtual event. The festival seeks to promote the same ideals as RVSCI but does so through the lens of film, analyzing movies from across the globe and how they are bridged together by the same theme (social justice), despite their differing cultures.

During the past month or so, I conducted interviews with RVSCI participants, many of them board members, given their lengthy experience with the organization. I had the opportunity to sit down – albeit virtually – with about 10 people, which was particularly rewarding given the individual nature of the rest of my internship. I am grateful to all of the

people who were so generous with their time, helping to give me an inside look at their personal experience with sister cities. Next semester, as I complete my research project, I will further analyze the responses from these interviews, but I am excited to already be able to see some general patterns forming.

Aside from these big projects, I also attended various webinars and conferences. These allowed me to learn more about the organization and its values while also making connections with other members. I thoroughly enjoyed this internship, and I cannot wait to see how everything I learned and researched pans out as I complete the project in the spring.



Liesl Greider is studying history and French at Roanoke College. Here she displays some of her materials from her senior research project.

COVID-19 in Brazil: challenges in a developing country

*By Gustavo de Araujo Pinto, M.D., Ph.D
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The first COVID-19 case in Brazil was identified in a man who had arrived a few days before from Italy. The diagnosis was confirmed in the country's most populous city, São Paulo, on Feb. 26, 2020. Since then, Brazil has become one of the epicenters of the pandemic, with more than 6 million infections and nearly 200,000 deaths.

To control an airborne disease in developing countries is a challenging task. We all know that in order to avoid transmissions many changes in individual and community behavior are critical. Social distancing, educational campaigns, financial support for those in need and a reliable leadership have shown to be of utmost importance.

Millions of Brazilians live in slums, use crowded public transportation systems and may not have a home office, making social distancing unfeasible for a large part of the population. Despite these limitations, we may say that the adherence to washing or sanitizing hands, as well as the use of face masks, was high.

The Brazilian Federal Government, albeit offering financial support for the unemployed and for those with fragile economic conditions, downplayed the epidemic and the potential severity of the disease. Many government members refused to wear masks or avoid crowds, preferring instead to promote the use of unproven treatments like chloroquine and ivermectin. This weak leadership, most of the time sending contradictory messages to the population and assuming inadequate behavior, led to conflict in many situations.

The Brazilian Public Health System is of

key importance in epidemic control. This system is universal, meaning that every citizen in Brazil has free access to health assistance. Although Brazil has a very solid and robust private health system, more than 75 percent of the population depends on public treatment. Despite some limitations in resources, the public system, known as Unique Health System (better known in Portuguese as SUS), has a paramount role in the life of Brazilians.

We are now facing a second wave of COVID-19 infections. Our first insight at this moment is that the epidemic shifted to the middle-class population. The ones who could protect themselves in the first wave by social distancing and working from home are now for some reason relaxing their protective measures.

Vaccination is our next step, but the financial, logistic and even political challenges are difficult to overcome. The sheer size of the country makes implementation difficult. The Federal Government has managed to make an agreement with AstraZeneca/Oxford University for the distribution of a vaccine. The São Paulo State Government chose the Chinese Sinovac vaccine. Both distributors will be welcomed by Brazilians once they have demonstrated the safety and efficacy of their products.

In conclusion, my concern is that this epidemic deepens the inequalities in developing societies, like Brazil's. Middle- and upper-class families can easily offer protection, support and online education to their children. What about the majority of the students who do not have access to this type of education? What will be the result of this difference of opportunities in 10, 15 years?

I hope soon we will have a new, safe, "normal" life.

-- Collaboration, Joslaine Austin, owner of
Arara Language Solutions



Dr. Gustavo Pinto, author of this report, visited Roanoke and lectured at the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine in 2015. Above he is being interviewed by Roanoke media before attending a meeting of City Council. Roanoke-Florianópolis co-chairwoman Joslaine Austin (center) helped with translation.

Joint program with Colorado group considered in 2021

By Bill Modica
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On Nov. 6, I participated in a Zoom conference call with national Sister City leaders regarding Kenya and specifically our sister city of Kisumu. The organizer was Anthony Catajan, a Sister City leader from New York, and the featured speaker was Jim Donovan, who is the SCI country coordinator for Kenya and was a United Nations envoy to Kenya.

The meeting lasted less than an hour and allowed us to provide them with an update about our programs in Kisumu and other projects, such as supporting the GLAC school and the fruit tree planting project we did last year. They discussed our contacts with the Honorable Peter Nyongo, governor of Kisumu County, whom I was fortunate to meet in person during my visit in October 2018. I also added my hope of promoting the airport in Kisumu, the RVSCI involvement with the Urban Area Association and getting involved with environmental projects in the Lake Victoria area.

Also on the call were Darryl and Sally Brown, who for the past 10 years have been in charge of the Kisumu Sister City committee from Boulder, Colorado. I was glad to get to talk to them and suggested we consider a joint program in 2021, which they agreed would be a good idea. The Boulder sister city group has been affiliated with the African Urban Poverty Alleviation Project, sponsored by Bill Gates. This enabled them to sponsor two sanitation projects along with the Boulder and Kisumu Rotary Clubs as well as a women's project providing sewing machines and building chicken coops. Their current projects are supporting local folks with making charcoal briquettes for cooking fuel, and working with three local schools.



This screen shot from the website of the Boulder (Colorado) Kisumu Sister City Committee shows a Kisumu man making briquettes for cooking fuel. The Colorado group began funding the project in 2018. The "briqs" are made from locally available materials like charcoal dust, sawdust and sugarcane bagasse that are mixed into a thick slurry and then condensed using presses. The "briqs" are sold to the Kisumu community as a more efficient and environmentally friendly alternative to burning wood, thereby decreasing deforestation. Profits go toward a local youth athletic club. – boulderkisumu.org

Jim Donovan said he was creating a contact directory for African sister cities, and we would be included under the Kenya section. He also said he planned to visit Kisumu to attend the Africities summit 2021. I will stay involved with this effort as we enter 2021 and try to connect the Rotary Clubs of Boulder and the Roanoke area to do a joint project with the sister cities of Kisumu. Mary Jo

Fassié was also on the call and added comments about our 7 Roanoke Sister City programs and about the RVSCI 2019 photo project with and by Kisumu children and Barbara Adams of Support Aid Ministry of Richmond. The photos from this project are still on display in the Roanoke Municipal Building.

We'll fill 2021 with several virtual collaborations

By Ramona Kirsch, Ed.D.
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안녕하세요! (Anyoung haseyo! "Hello!")

The Wonju Sister City Committee has been active these past few months, in spite of COVID restrictions! RVSCI board member Ramona Kirsch has accepted the position as co-chair with Brian Counihan. Together, Brian and Ramona have been busy organizing several collaborations including:

- **Korean Celebration with the Taubman Museum:** Our planned October 2020 celebration at the Taubman Museum of Art for Korean Alphabet Day was cancelled, so we agreed to try to plan an alternate virtual celebration! This event will be in early 2021 and will run both on the Taubman and RVSCI websites. Most events will be asynchronous so people can access the videos at their leisure. The committee has been gathering and recording video spots about Korean history, culture, food, dance and more for the virtual event and is also securing some new videos from



our partners in Wonju. Thanks to Ken Kilinski, who has been doing the videos here in Roanoke, and new committee member Kevin Shepard, who has secured the rights to utilize several videos from various venues.



- **Zoom meeting with Wonju and video contest:** In November we had a Zoom meeting with Yeonju Jee, the sister city coordinator for the city of Wonju. Brian and Ramona were joined by Mary Jo Fassié, Jean Broyles and Brian's daughter, Veronica, to discuss upcoming collaborations. Our Wonju partners are planning a video contest in which they asking Wonju residents to create a short video in English about daily life in their city. They have asked that our Wonju Sister Cities Committee provide a panel of judges for the videos. We are planning a video viewing party possibly in March 2021 at either the Taubman or the Grandin Theatre for Roanoke residents to view the videos as well. During this viewing party, we will announce the winners. In turn, the Wonju Sister City

Committee will be organizing a video contest for Roanoke Valley residents to create a video about daily life here!

- **Yonsei University:** Ramona was able to reach out to Yonsei University in Wonju to begin discussions of possible collaborative activities between Yonsei and higher education institutions in the Roanoke Valley! Yonsei is one of the three most prestigious universities in South Korea, and most of the top influencers in South Korea come from Yonsei and the other two institutions. They agreed to contribute video clips for our upcoming spring 2021 celebration. We look forward to further activities with them. Look for more information in the coming months about these and other Wonju events in 2021!

안녕히 계세요! (Anyoung hee gyeseyo! "Goodbye!")



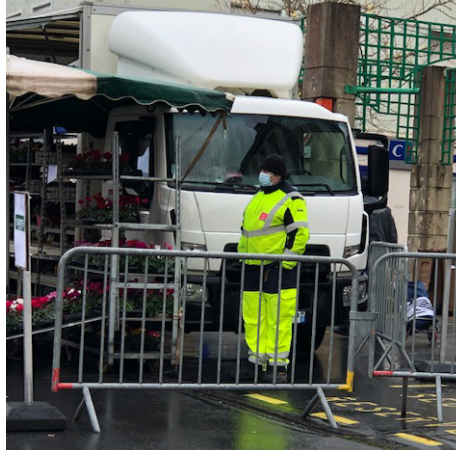
Return to normal highly anticipated on both sides

Ann Hackworth
Roanoke/St-Lô co-chairwoman
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Bill Bestpitch, Mary Jo and Pierre Fassié, and I were interviewed for a newspaper story on the American presidential elections that ran in the regional daily Ouest-France on Nov. 3. Journalist Pauline Boutin asked us Roanokers if we had planned to vote, about particular issues that concerned us, and if COVID-19 had had an effect on our political outlook.

Since October, Peggy Wells and I have attended two of the three Sister Cities International French Connection Roundtables via Zoom. The November session was titled "Youth and Education Today," and was virtually attended, as well, by Jeanine Verove (president of the twinning committee Saint-Lô 44) and Institut Saint-Lô teachers Sophie Pradat and Maud Mimoun.

Some of us were contacted by Norman friends following the official presidential election results on Nov. 7. From those conversations, we learned that the French had been re-confined to their homes (except for an hour a day) because the COVID-19 rates had gone up again. One friend shared a copy of the *attestation*, the detailed form each citizen must fill out to explain why they are away from home. If a police officer stops you without your form, you can be charged a fine of 135€ (approximately \$160). Then, as of Dec. 1, the restrictions were eased a bit: The limit on the distance citizens could be away from home went from 1 kilometer to 20, and time away from home went from 1 hour to 3. "It's almost a year since our lives have been diminished, and the return to normal is highly anticipated," wrote one friend. "Maybe late January?"



Jeanine Verove, president of the twinning committee Saint-Lô 44, shared these snapshots of daily life in our sister city. On Saturday, Dec. 5, she went to the celebrated farmers market in the middle of town. Clockwise from top left: At the main market entrance, a man ensures that everyone is wearing a mask; the fishmonger; the bread maker; "my nice farmer who sells me eggs or chicken"; and the honey maker.

Yunnan village sees many benefits of wedding photo industry

People's Daily Online (en.people.cn)

At the eastern foot of the lofty Yulong (Jade Dragon) Snow Mountain in Lijiang, in southwest China's Yunnan province, couples posing for their wedding photos have become a common new scene at the beautiful Blue Moon Valley in Jiazi village in Yulong Naxi autonomous county of Lijiang.

"In 2019, a total of 27,000 couples had their wedding costume photos taken in Blue Moon Valley. With each couple paying 660 yuan (\$100.7) for the photos, we achieved a gross income of more than 19 million yuan from the business. 7.5 million yuan of the income was distributed among villagers, and each person got 3,000 yuan on average," He Shijian, secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Jiazi village committee, told People's Daily Online.

Jiazi village, which is home to 2,495

villagers from 635 households in 19 villagers' groups, set up a wedding photography company in 2016 to take full advantage of the locality's gorgeous scenery, said He.

The model for the development of the collective economy not only avoided problems common to the tourism industry, such as environmental pollution and arbitrary charges, but also boosted the growth of the village's collective economy and realized win-win results for the tourism industry and environmental and ecological protection.

Thanks to the wedding dress photography company and the development of the local tourism industry, Jiazi village's per capita net income has exceeded 27,000 yuan. This year, the village was recognized as one of the famous tourist villages in Yunnan province.



This drawing was sent to former Roanoke-Lijiang co-president Mei Li Foy from a young lady she met in Lijiang in fall of 2018. While in Lijiang, Mei Li and Roanoke Vice Mayor Joe Cobb spent several hours with an artist, a Mr. Mu, whom they invited to visit Roanoke for an artistic exchange. Mr. Mu is the father of the young artist who made this drawing. Mei Li reports that the family is still interested in coming to Roanoke, and plans had been made for the father to exhibit his work at the Taubman Museum.



Couples pose to have wedding photos taken lakeside at Blue Moon Valley.

Pskov: Russia's most underrated tourist destination

*By Alexandra Guzeva
Russia Beyond*

Pskov was first mentioned in the chronicles in 903, more than a century before Moscow was founded. And throughout its rich history it had many turbulent times.

Situated not far from the Estonian and Latvian borders, Pskov was a major trade center and an important point of defense for ancient Russia. Just like many other ancient cities, Pskov lost its powerful and strategic status in the early 18th century when St. Petersburg was founded.

During World War II, the city was for three years occupied by the Nazis who left most of the historical buildings in ruins and pillaged museum treasures. Today, Pskov is a modern city where it's nice to walk and dine. There are great embankments and restaurants in old boyar mansions. And for sure you won't regret sampling and experiencing

the local culture.

The first place to visit is the local kremlin, Pskov Krom. It could be the perfect place for shooting "Game of Thrones," especially the Winterfell scenes. The city's oldest part, the kremlin, is situated high on the picturesque spit of two rivers: Pskova and Velikaya.

The most impressive feature in addition to its location and surroundings is certainly the citadel's walls, up to eight meters high and to six meters wide. Up on the walls are passages where one can walk, and a restaurant is right inside the wall.

Among the must-see sights inside the kremlin are the medieval ruins. In the 14th century, Pskov was one of several independent republics in the lands of ancient Russia, and there was a place for a popular assembly, known in Russian as veche.

The white and most attractive building inside the citadel is the Trinity Cathedral,

dating to the 17th century. There are so many churches that it's impossible to visit all; you'll even grow tired making pictures and trying to keep in mind which church has which name! Ten of Pskov's ancient cathedrals, monasteries and architectural sites are included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. The oldest among them is the ensemble of the Mirozhsky Monastery, dating to the 12th century.

Almost 70 miles from Pskov you will see true heaven on earth. Here, you will find three magnificent noble estates with parks and the Russian idyllic countryside. These places are connected with the life of the great poet Alexander Pushkin; Mikhaylovskoye was his family estate, while Petrovskoye and Trigor'skoye were owned by his relatives and friends. In 1824, he was sent to exile here, and within two years wrote his best poems and works.



Pskov kremlin and the Sovetskaya Embankment on the Pskov River.

Update on RVSC Sculptures

Sculptures on the mend after years of deterioration

Century Plaza downtown is home to a series of sculptures decorated and colored in various ways to symbolize the cultures of Roanoke and each of our sister cities. The eight sculptures were created by artists Mimi Babe Harris and Donna Essig and are part of the City of Roanoke's public art collection. They were dedicated on Oct. 24, 2004. David Lisk, then-Executive Director of RVSCI, read to the crowd of more than 150 people:

"It is my honor to bequeath to the City of Roanoke this public sculpture created by artists Donna Essig and Mimi Babe Harris which is entitled The Roanoke Valley Sister Cities Sculpture. Located here at the heart of our city in Century Square a park dedicated in honor the first centennial birthday (1982) of the City of Roanoke the entire membership of Roanoke Valley Sister Cities and 75 sponsors and donors are distinctly privileged to add to the beauty and meaning of the park by this gift of public art, symbolic of the universal search for international friendship and world peace."

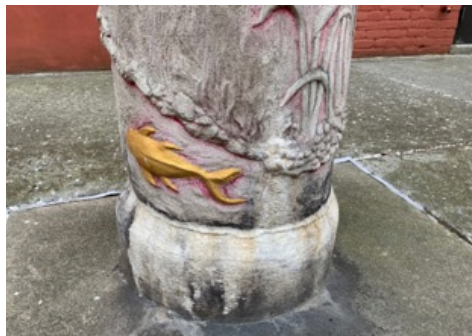
These columns have suffered over the past 16 years from exposure to the elements and air pollution. In order to remedy this situation, RVSCI contacted Doug Jackson, Arts and Culture Coordinator for the City of Roanoke. Doug put together a plan to clean and repair them.

First, the City of Roanoke pressure washed the ground before cleaning the sculptures. This was handled by the Department of Parks and Recreation, which contracted the work with someone. Then all eight sculptures were cleaned in October 2020.

The next step will be for artist Donna Essig to make some repairs where there's a loss of integrity. There will be some new color applied in patches. This will not be paint, but rather an integrated color,

so there won't be much color change at other parts and cracks will be addressed. Once this is completed, the City of Roanoke will seal them in 2021 to help prevent any further water infiltration.

-- Mary Jo Fassie



Before: The base of Lijiang's sculpture was cracked and leaching.



After: Artistic details stand out post cleaning.



Before: Wonju's sculpture was covered in grime.



After: Some new color will be applied in patches.



Before: Exposure to the elements did the Kisumu sculpture no favors.



After: A much-needed improvement.

Thanks to members & donors

Thank you to our generous supporters



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Annual Membership - Roanoke Valley Sister Cities New ☐ Renewal ☐ July 1, 20____ - June 30, 20____

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