



# Around Our World

## ROANOKE VALLEY SISTER CITIES, INC.

Volume 24, Issue 1 | January-July 2021

Like us on Facebook! 

## Dr. Roth was RVSCI's visionary co-founder

By Neil Harvey  
The Roanoke Times  
(Reprinted with permission)



Dr. Bob Roth attended the 2017 RVSCI annual dinner with (from left) Sushkin Caecelia Hubbard; his wife, Dot; and Dr. Kris Slowikowski at Roanoke College. He died May 14 in Williamsburg.

Dr. Robert Roth might not have become an official Roanoker until he was well into his 40s, but one of the marks he helped make on the city still thrives today, more than a half-century later. Roth, a former Methodist missionary and plastic surgeon, co-founded Roanoke Valley Sister Cities Inc. in 1964 and served as the organization's president from 1991 to 2010. He died [May 14] in Williamsburg at age 91.

A native of Queens, New York, Roth in 1961 traveled to Wonju, South Korea, to work as a missionary doctor. While there, a friendship with another surgeon, Dr. Young U. Kim, revealed an unlikely Roanoke connection between them: Kim had practiced medicine in the city, at the old Jefferson Memorial Hospital, and Roth's wife, Paulene, had taught at Hollins College, although Roth himself had not been to this area at the time.

"He was my surgical partner and he was my best friend," Kim said of Roth on

Sunday. Now 96, Kim lives in Roanoke County.

During a 1964 community relations committee meeting, Wonju's mayor floated the idea of finding a sister city in the United States. Kim was present at that meeting and suggested Wonju bond with Roanoke, citing their similar size, topography and climate.

"I spent some time in Roanoke many years before as a surgeon also. I liked the people and the environment. Roanoke was excellent for us," Kim said.

His pitch was accepted and, not long after, Roanoke's city council passed a resolution in support of the union.

The concept of sister cities — involving cultural exchanges between

(Continued on Page 3)

## We will continue Dr. Roth's mission

*The following is a letter by RVSCI President Mary Jo Fassié. It was read aloud at Dr. Roth's funeral in Williamsburg on May 22.*

On behalf of the Roanoke Valley Sister Cities executive board and membership, I would like to express our sincere condolences to Dot and the Roth family upon the passing of Dr. Roth. Not only was he the co-founder of our organization in 1964 with the sister city of Wonju, South Korea, but he was a role model who

(Continued on Page 3)

### In this Issue:

RIP, Dr. Roth .....	Page 1 & 3
Sidebar: We'll carry on .....	Page 1 & 3
President's report .....	Page 2
Sidebar: In his own words & Mark your calendars! .....	Page 4
RVSCI intern report .....	Page 5
Thanks to members & donors .....	Page 5
Young Artists Showcase .....	Page 6
Roanoke-Kisumu report .....	Page 7-8
Remembering Diane D'Orazio .....	Page 7-8
Roanoke-Pskov report .....	Page 8
Roanoke/St-Lô report .....	Page 9-10
Roanoke-Opole report & Greetings from Opole .....	Page 11
Roanoke-Florianópolis report .....	Page 12
Remembering Norma Jean Peters .....	Page 12
Roanoke-Lijiang report .....	Page 13
Roanoke-Wonju report .....	Page 14
SCI Juneteenth Statement .....	Page 15
Officers and donation/membership info .....	Page 16

# President's Report

## Slowly but surely, a return to face-to-face events



By Mary Jo Fassie  
President, RVSCI  
mjfassie@gmail.com

For all of us, 2021 began like no other year. However, in 2020, we learned that “we can do virtually anything,” and 2021 has not been any different. Our RVSCI board and members communicated via Zoom meetings on Feb. 2, April 6 and at our second Virtual Annual Meeting on June 1. We are hoping that the second half of 2021 will start with in-person meetings and events, beginning with St-Lô's Bastille Day outdoor pique-nique on July 11 for those who are fully vaccinated. Fall executive board meetings will return to the Center in the Square boardroom on Sept. 7 and Nov. 17, thanks to the generosity of CITS President and General Manager Jim Sears. Zoom meetings might return during the winter as they may be a better option for that time of the year.

Because the mission of RVSCI is to promote “mutual understanding, friendship and peace,” we decided in January to send New Year's cards to our sister cities abroad and to local officials. Wanting to send a positive message to all during the pandemic, this practice will remain a tradition in the future.

In December 2020 and January 2021 many of us watched from our computers the SCI “Holidays Around the World” and “Sister Cities International Inaugural Celebration” that SCI presented with special guest, singer Dionne Warwick, former Goodwill Ambassador for the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization. She imparted a positive message by signing “What the World Needs Now.” Ms. Warwick received the 2020 Eisenhower Peace Prize at the Presidential Inaugural Event.

January was also time for me to submit the grant request to Roanoke County, twinned with Opole, Poland, and to prepare for the Young Artists Showcase by contacting all the high



This is the New Year's card RVSCI mailed to our friends abroad.

school art teachers with information and applications. In February, we once again participated and helped fund the Roanoke College International Film Festival, which went virtual and allowed for interesting discussions with a moderator for each film.

From January to June, Sister Cities International offered a wide variety of Zoom conferences and roundtables where we were able to communicate with sister city members and dignitaries all over the US and abroad and learn about other interesting initiatives. With other members of the St-Lô committee, I participated in 2 roundtables and with other board members we tuned in for the SCI Youth Initiatives, Women in Local Leadership, Africa Celebrates International Women's Month conferences. All of these programs can be viewed on [www.sci.org](http://www.sci.org) and proved to be not only informative but have inspired us with some new ideas.

In April, RVSCI held a successful virtual Young Artists Showcase and would like to thank the judges from the staff at the Taubman Museum of Art who gave their time and expertise for this virtual event.

In May, sad news came as we lost the co-founder and past president of RVSCI,

*May the new year 2021  
continue to foster mutual  
understanding, friendship and  
peace among the people of the  
Roanoke Valley and our friends  
in Florianópolis, Kisumu,  
Lijiang, Opole, Pskov,  
Saint-Lô, and Wonju.*

*Happy New Year!*



Dr. Robert Roth. Unfortunately, because of family obligations, none of us were able to attend the funeral, but a letter from RVSCI was read at the funeral in Williamsburg. We will stay in touch with Dot and the family, but we will miss Dr. Roth's guidance and enthusiasm for our organization.

In June, Opole, Poland, organized a “Nice to Meet You” international event with 5 countries in attendance. Participants from Roanoke included myself, Dr. Kris Slowikowski, Ramona Kirsch (Hollins University Director of International Programs), Jenine Culligan and Janet Carty, both from the Eleanor D. Wilson Museum at Hollins. We discussed and presented visual arts in our respective cities and made some great connections and new friends. Hollins University is planning to host an artist from Opole for a two week period in the fall of 2022, a project from 2020 that was put on hold because of Covid 19.

RVSCI is planning some in-person holiday events this December, and we hope that you will be able to join us for dinner or a luncheon where we plan to celebrate the customs and culture of our cities and renew friendships. So, stay tuned for those upcoming events!

(Continued From Page 1)

locations from disparate parts of the globe — emerged in the aftermath of World War II as a means of fostering closer international relations.

When Roth returned stateside later that year and passed through Roanoke for the first time, he emerged from a bus and was surprised to find himself hailed as the city's first visitor from Wonju. Mayor Benton Dillard awarded him the key to the city, and he became the subject of two days' worth of interviews by local media.

In 1967, Roanoke named a street in Wonju's honor, and in the time since, six more cities have become its siblings: Florianópolis, Brazil; Lijiang, China; Saint-Lô, France; Kisumu, Kenya; Opole, Poland; and Pskov, Russia.

Century Park Plaza, near the Roanoke City Market, became the home of a sculpture garden to honor the sister cities in 2004.

"Now they're in a place where people pass by them every day," Roanoke Valley Sister Cities' current president, Mary Jo Fassié, said. "For [Roth] it was just a very strong connection. He had such dedication to organizing the sister cities.

"I got to know him later on in his career. He was always open to any suggestions or new ideas, and he encouraged all the chairmen to reach out to their sister cities," Fassié said.

"He opened up this whole world of sister cities to us," said Bill Bestpitch, treasurer of Roanoke Valley Sister Cities. "Maybe someone else would've done it eventually, but he started it."

Roth himself relocated to the valley in 1972 and practiced plastic surgery at Lewis-Gale Clinic. Paulene died in 1974. Roth later married Dorothy "Dot" Hubbard, who had also worked as a missionary in Korea; she survives him and now lives in Hampton.

Robert and Paulene adopted a son, Thomas Roth, and a daughter, Lauran Roth Glover, both Korean, and he and Dot later adopted a daughter, Joy Kimberly Gebhardt, who was also born in Korea. He and Dot lived for years at Smith Mountain Lake and, in 2014, moved to Williamsburg.

In the 1980s, Roth took on the cause of warning others about the dangers of caffeine and other methylxanthines, and he penned a book on the subject. During his time in Korea, he said he saw a rise in caffeine consumption there, and with it a number of health issues that he felt became more pronounced across that country.

A funeral service for Roth [was] held [May 22] at the Wellspring United Methodist Church in Williamsburg.

(Continued From Page 1)

led us on a journey as we added six other cities on four continents: Kisumu, Kenya; Pskov, Russia; Opole, Poland; Florianópolis, Brazil; Lijiang, China; and Saint-Lô, France. Through his vision as co-founder and later as president from 1991-2010, our organization grew in many directions as we lived the mission of Sister Cities International.

Over the years, we enjoyed our visits to Peace Pagodas at Smith Mountain Lake where Dr. and Mrs. Roth hosted our organization for potlucks and summer meetings. It was a fitting place to gather and gave us all a chance to network among cities and taste the cuisines of seven different countries. It was here in 2004 as the new chairperson for the St-Lô, France, committee that I first got to know the Roths and understood their vision and dedication to the mission of sister cities.

That fall a dream came true for Dr. Roth when the sculptures representing our seven sister cities were installed in Century Plaza in downtown Roanoke in 2004. Years of planning and searching for a home finally became a reality!

During his last year as president and in coordination with Roanoke City Arts

Council, Dr. Roth oversaw a huge art installation project as artists from five of our sister cities came to Roanoke to create art at the Roanoke Civic Center and to visit art classes in the valley. What an undertaking!

Over the years, he and Dot worked tirelessly to write, edit and publish our newsletter, *Around Our World*, which featured each city, our exchanges and visits, dinners and celebrations, cultural projects here and abroad. This is a challenging task, as I was soon to find out in 2015 when I became president.

In the spring of every year, we all worked together to plan the annual dinner at Roanoke College. In 2017, we were so pleased that Dr. and Mrs. Roth were able to join us at the dinner as we celebrated another year of successful programming. The next day we gathered at the Noel C. Taylor Municipal Building in downtown Roanoke for the dedication of the new Roanoke Valley Sister Cities display cases, which were dedicated in the names of Dr. Roth and former Executive Director David Lisk. Dr. Roth had even donned one of our new sister city T-shirts for the event. Lauran and Joy arrived for the dedication, totally surprising their parents!

As we continue with the sister city



In June 2017, Dot and Bob Roth posed at the newly dedicated RVSCI display cases at the Noel C. Taylor Municipal Building. Bob is wearing a newly minted RVSCI T-shirt. --Photo courtesy of Lauran Roth Glover.

mission that Dr. Roth began in 1964, we will all remember Dr. Roth's favorite Scripture passage, "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you." These are fitting words that will guide us as we look to be inspired and motivated "to promote peace through mutual respect, understanding, and cooperation – one individual, one community at a time."



## Bob Roth, in his own words

*Dr. Roth wrote a brief memoir that appeared in the April 2014 issue of AOW. The following is edited from that account. The full version is available at <https://www.rvsci.us/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/newsApril14.pdf>*

"Born 1929 in New York City, I was educated in public schools. In the summer 1946, it happened. As if I had been dipped in boiling oil, I had total sloughing eczematous dermatitis -- so severe it threatened my life. Fortunately, I was blessed with a compassionate family doctor. But Rx options were minimal. In a spiritual, life-changing transformation -- a near-death experience -- I lamented, 'I'm dying.' Out of a bright light at the foot of my bed, I heard a voice, 'You are not dying. I have some important things for you to do before you die.' From then on, I began to heal. I read in World Outlook, a church magazine: 'Missionary Surgeons Needed in Korea.' I had never heard of Korea!

"A covenant was made: I would become a doctor and go to Korea as a missionary to serve my Savior.

"I attended Columbia University Physicians & Surgeons School of Medicine [MD degree] and had 5 years of surgery training at St. Luke's Hospital/ Med. Center. In 1961, 15 years after my covenant, Paulene, my wife, and I arrived in Korea. Despite having seven months of Korean language study at Yale University, which was a high linguistic hurdle, we were required to spend another year of Korean studies at Yonsei University in Seoul.

"Prior to our arrival in Korea, I had heard there was a very talented chief of surgery at Wonju United Christian Hospital. From 1956-59, Dr. Young U. Kim had practiced medicine in Baltimore and at the Jefferson Hospital in Roanoke, Virginia. In 1961, he and I finally met in Wonju. It was instant friendship, mutual respect. In the next decade,

WUCH grew from 50 to 240 beds, and registered 150,000 patients."

### **Medical growth and development (1964- 2014)**

"WUCH became Yonsei-Wonju Medical Center, School of Medicine/ Research Institute. YWMC is the Trauma Medical Center for Kangwon Province. With evacuation helicopter ER service, it was the support center for the 2018 Winter Olympics in the Haebak mountains east of Wonju.

"In October 2009, Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine establishes a relationship with Yonsei-Wonju College of Medicine & Research Center. Drs. Cynda and Bruce Johnson, Vice-Mayor Dr. Dave Trinkle and Ann Trinkle and Dr. Kye Y. Kim travel to Wonju to sign a memorandum of understanding. Reciprocal visitors to Roanoke arrive in August 2013.

"Active exchanges/rotations begin after the first VTCSOM 4-year senior class graduation, May 10, 2014."

## MARK YOUR CALENDARS!



### July

- **July 30:** International Day of Friendship (reach out to your friends abroad)

### September

- **Sept. 7:** RVSCI corporate board meeting, Center in the Square, 5:30 p.m.

### NOVEMBER

- **Nov. 16:** RVSCI corporate board meeting, Center in the Square, 5:30 p.m.

### DECEMBER

- **Dec. TBA:** Roanoke/St-Lô dîner de Noël, Florianópolis Holiday Celebration.

# RVSC's intern report

## Even without in-person meetings, intern was kept busy



Tori Clinevell

Tori Clinevell, a Salem native and rising senior at Roanoke College, took up the challenge of the Gig (short) Internship program at Roanoke College this spring. RVSCI was very happy to have her help amid the constraints of the pandemic. We never got to meet in person but communicated via phone and email, and we saw her at our Zoom board meetings. Tori picked up from my porch old editions of the AOW/ Roanoke Valley Sister Cities newsletters

and returned them after finishing her task. Tori wanted to share with us why she chose this internship:

"What interested me about a Gig internship with Roanoke Valley Sister Cities was that I was going to get the opportunity to see how a local nonprofit organization that promotes global relationships kept working amid a global pandemic. Prior to this internship, I had experience working and volunteering in other local nonprofits such as Feeding Southwest Virginia, The West End Center and the Rescue Mission of Roanoke, but Roanoke Valley Sister Cities gave me the

unique experience of getting to sit in on their board meeting and get a better understanding of the changes nonprofits have had to face. During this internship I digitized 13 volumes of the RVSC newsletters from 1970 to 2009. I also participated in judging the 2021 Young Artists Showcase. I will be graduating in 2022 with a BA in psychology and hope to use this valuable experience with nonprofit work in the future."

We wish Tori much success and thank her for volunteering with RVSCI!

-- Mary Jo Fassié

## Thank you to our generous supporters



A big thank-you to our Consul, Diplomat, Benefactor and Patron donors and to the All-Cities members for 2021-2022 whose donations and dues we received by July 11.

### **Consul:**

Curtis & Ann Steele

### **Diplomat:**

Arara Language Solutions  
Atlantic Technical Consultants

### **Benefactor:**

Rose Ann Burgess  
Joseph Cobb  
Jessie Coffman  
Alice Davis  
Mike & Marilia Deisenroth  
Ramona Kirsch

Dr. Lee Learman, dean of Virginia Tech  
Carilion School of Medicine  
Michael Maxey, president of Roanoke College  
Dr. Kye & Moon Kim  
David Musick  
The Hon. Patricia White-Boyd, vice mayor of Roanoke

### **Patron:**

Liz Allison  
Chris and Betsy Bohannon  
The Hon. Dr. Rupert Cutler  
DiFrancesco family  
Victoria Diaz Eastman  
The Hon. Ray & Terri Ferris  
Gary Harkrader  
MaryLen Harmon  
Linda Harrison  
Bill Modica

The Hon. Stephanie Moon Reynolds  
Thursday Morning Music Club  
Patty O'Toole  
Virginia West  
John Wiercioch  
Karen Willis

### **All-cities members:**

Bill Bestpitch  
Dr. Nathaniel & Sylvia Bishop  
Mary Ann Conrad  
Alice Davis  
Mary Jo Fassié  
Linda Harrison  
Drs. Cynda & Bruce Johnson  
Christine Jordan  
Dr. Lee Learman  
Dorothy Roth  
Dr. Kris Slowikowski  
Lois Traver

# Young Artists Showcase 2021

## Taubman Museum staff judged virtual student competition



First-place winner: Hannah Nguyen's "Still, We Rise."

Roanoke Valley Sister Cities held its annual Young Artists Showcase in April. This year it was done virtually. The theme for the competition was "United in Hope." All of the Roanoke Valley high schools were invited to participate, but only North Cross submitted artwork. Amy Jackson, Fine Arts Department Chair at North Cross, has participated since our first competition in 2015. She even makes the competition part of her curriculum with the theme of global awareness.

Judges for this year's competition came from the Taubman Museum staff: Laura Conte, Ana Morales and Laura Motes, who all made very detailed comments about their impressions of the entries. Our RVSC intern, Tori Clinevell from Roanoke College, also participated in judging.

Placing first in the competition was high school senior Hannah Nguyen with her entry: "Still, We Rise." She received a check for \$200. In her artist statement, Hannah said, "I'm inspired by the poem 'Still I Rise' by Maya Angelou. Amidst difficult time, unity and equality can



Second-place winner (tie): Phoebe Anderson's "A Cure."



Second-place winner (tie): Annie Slempp's "Hatching a New World."

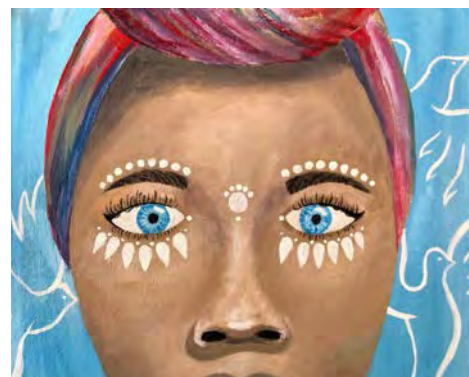
connect people regardless of sex, origin, religion or nationality. Together we will rise and stand up against any obstacles or discrimination. I hope to share the message of equality and unity by combining not only different human origins but also animal and natural elements. Together we make up Mother Nature and with equality, we will rise!"

Second place (\$100 each) went to 11th graders Annie Slempp ("Hatching a New World") and Phoebe Anderson ("A Cure"). Phoebe said that she drew her piece during the lockdown and noted that all nations are "united in their hope for the cure."

Third place (\$50 each) was awarded to 11th grader Meade Greer ("Ethnic Peace") and 9th grader Jackson Patterson ("United in Chaos"). Jackson noted that his drawing "portrays a figure wearing



Third-place winner (tie): Jackson Patterson's "United in Chaos."



Third-place winner (tie): Meade Greer's "Ethnic Peace."

a mask with the flags of all of the sister cities showing that we are all in this together."

Honorable mentions of \$25 each were also awarded to Lanaya Cephas, Reagan Karlen, Remy Lusk and Grayson Boone.

Hannah's piece, as well as those by Annie Slempp, Jackson Patterson and Meade Greer, was sent to Sister Cities International for further competition. SCI will announce all international winners in August.

-- Mary Jo Fassié



## Joining forces to help people and Kenya's natural habitat

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



*We aim to be mindful of the needs of the natural habitat and wildlife that make Africa a unique environment. – Internet photo*

The worldwide COVID-19 virus has impacted our friends in Kisumu even more than it has us in Virginia. Health care is much more difficult there, and government resources are much more limited. Recent communications indicate that they are badly in need of personal protective equipment for medical workers, for schools and for the public at large. Immunization has not penetrated the rural areas at all and is very limited in the cities and towns. Because our funds are limited, we can do very little directly to help, so we are asking for donations to support the effort. If you can help out, please make a check out to Roanoke Valley Sister Cities/ Kisumu and send it to P.O. Box 136, Roanoke VA 24002.

As we seek ways to help our African friends, we found an organization doing important work in Kenya. African Wildlife Foundation is a US-registered 501c3 foundation. Its African headquarter is in Nairobi, Kenya, and its US offices are in Washington DC. Let me quote its CEO, Kaddu Sebunya: "We are advancing our advocacy and policy collaborations

with African and Global leaders with the immediate goal of elevating the African voice, which too often has been left out of international deliberations that impact African people, wildlife and land. ...I want to relay my profound thanks to those who recognized the terrible challenges facing African communities and protected areas." The foundation has distributed almost 28,000 hygiene kits of masks, gloves and sanitizers and provided \$41,800 in equipment to local community organizations, as well as \$9,150 in food rations and reached 1,128 people with financial assistance. To support them, I became a member of the AWF and donated \$100 in June.

Other projects of the AWF that impact our connections in Kisumu are promoting radio collars and predator-proof metal *kraals* (enclosures) to protect livestock from lions. Human-wildlife conflict looms as the biggest danger to these big cats in rural areas. Kenya's LUMO Conservancy project aims to protect both people and lions from retaliatory killings. In Kenya and Tanzania, AWF has trained more than 3,000 farmers in conflict mitigation and provided resources to protect African wildlife. Last August, the AWF OI Pejeta Conservancy and the Kenyan Wildlife Service worked together with German scientists to ensure that northern white rhino populations are successful in breeding and expanding their range in Kenya's national parks.

While we often focus on the needs of the urban residents of Kenya, we need to also be mindful of the needs of the natural habitat and wildlife that make Africa a unique environment we all can enjoy for years to come. This work by AWF supports managers of protected areas to address anti-poaching, counter wildlife trafficking, mitigating conflicts and securing wildlife recovery plans. For more information, please write to: [afrikanwildlife@awf.org](mailto:afrikanwildlife@awf.org). Thank you for caring.

## Dr. D'Orazio's heart was with animals and babies

Former Roanoke-Kisumu committee chair and board member Dr. Diane D'Orazio passed away on May 28, 2020, in Hawaii at age 62 after a long struggle with breast cancer. Over the years, she worked as a veterinarian and volunteer animal advocate at several places in the Roanoke Valley, including Vets to Cats, Mill Mountain Zoo and Southwest Virginia Wildlife Center.

Diane traveled to Kisumu about eight times, sometimes accompanied by her family and other Kisumu committee members. She helped fund these medical missions and even shared with Kisumu residents her veterinary experience working with chickens.

Below is an account in her own words from the August 2012 issue of the AOW about a life-changing experience at the New Life Babies Home.

*(Continued on Page 8)*



*Diane D'Orazio holds Grace, a red-tailed hawk at the Southwest Virginia Wildlife Center.*



*In Kisumu, Diane D'Orazio's son Cory holds Noah, one of the children at New Life Babies Home.*

(Continued From Page 7)

### ***"Small Miracles"***

"I had no idea I would cry that day. My son Cory and I had been in our sister city Kisumu, Kenya, for about 3 weeks staying with our friends Salim and Ruby Sokwala, 'Dr. Ruby.' We were checking on charities and students that our Roanoke-Kisumu Sister City Committee supports. I had been spending most mornings feeding the babies at the New Life Babies Home, an oasis of love and hope for abandoned and orphaned children. Cory was using his skills as photographer to create images that would help promote this amazing ministry. Until that day, I had only experienced the joy of watching babies thrive in the care of very special people. There had been no reason for

tears.

"They named him 'Darius.' He was rescued from one of the slum communities in Kisumu City and brought to the home that day. Right after birth, someone dropped him in a plastic bag, still attached to his placenta, down a community pit-latrane. The next person who came to use the latrine heard his feeble cry. With the help of several others, they pulled him to safety. The bag saved him from the agony of scalding acidic waste in the pit. When I saw him for the first time and heard his story, something broke in me. Instant recall: I was back in the hospital room where I gave birth to my first child, a son... I was thanking God for showing me what love really means in this gift. I tried to imagine the emotions the baby's mother must

have gone through before she decided to throw him away ... or before that decision was taken out of her hands by someone else. The tears came from the depths of my soul. I cried for all of the mothers around the world who can't care for a newborn child the way God intended.

"The next thing I knew, arms were around me. Staff members understood my tears. The head nurse, Anzella, said, 'I used to cry each time a new baby was rescued. Then I saw how well, with care, they would be in a few weeks' time.' Now, she sees past the agonized decision that brought them there; instead, she looks forward to seeing what love can do."

## **Roanoke-Pskov**

### **Introducing Roanoke-Pskov sister cities' new chairwoman**

By Jessie Coffman  
jah.coffman@gmail.com



Jessie Coffman

"I was born in Raleigh and moved to Botetourt County at the age of 11. I majored in political science at Hollins with a minor in sociology. I'm almost finished with my MALS [Hollins' master of arts in liberal studies] degree, with a concentration in the social sciences, particularly gender and women's studies.

"Our end of Botetourt County was particularly homogenous, and I started 'visiting' the world through books and movies. My first time on a plane was when I went to London for a semester abroad my junior year of college. This experience was life changing in myriad

ways. One of those was seeing myself and the U.S. from a global perspective.

"I have always been fascinated by different perspectives, different flavors, and different cultures. Through my children, my volunteer work, and my work at the United Way of Roanoke Valley, I've had the fantastic luck to meet Roanokers originally from all over the world. Happily, that continues with visitors to the zoo. One of my Roanoke highlights was a series of introductory language courses taught by Blue Ridge Literacy students.

"I love to be plugged into our community. This year I am the Executive Vice President of the Junior League, and all of these experiences help inform my decisions in co-leading our organization.

"I am honored and excited to continue learning about Roanoke's global connection. I remember my mom, a nurse, explaining the story behind Wonju Street to me when I would go with her



Jessie Coffman is Director of Development at Mill Mountain Zoo. – Photos from Jessie Coffman

to volunteer at the hospital. I was so intrigued by the concept of Sister Cities. It pleases me immensely to play a part in the work on RVSCI. I am quite interested in continuing learning."



## La Chapelle de la Madeleine is to be renovated



Jean Mignon

A place of tribute to the American soldiers who liberated Saint-Lô in July 1944, la Chapelle de la Madeleine and its surroundings will soon undergo a major renovation.

Jeanine Vérove reports:

"This spring, we began working with city government officials to suggest ideas that will make the Madeleine a more modern and appropriate exhibition, more attractive to young people. The surroundings will be redone and will allow wheelchair access. The square may be fitted out with replicas of the barracks that housed some Saint-Lois families from 1944 until the 1990s. We would

name this space in memory of Jean Mignon."

(Well-known to longtime members of Roanoke/St-Lô sister cities, Jean Mignon was the guiding spirit of the memorial exhibition to the soldiers of the 29th and 35th infantry divisions, which has been housed at the Madeleine since 1995. He died in August 2019 at age 89.)

"We would also include a picnic area and playground," Jeanine continued. "We would review the toilet area, which today is really rudimentary, and in the bakery we would make a space to see videos or to hold small meetings.

"The city's technical, cultural and events services are involved [in this project].

"The Howie family has suggested asking for monetary donations."

(Major Thomas Howie was Battalion Commander in the 29th Infantry Division who was killed in action during the Battle of Normandy in World War II while leading his unit to liberate Saint-Lô.)

"We will see what will be retained from among all these good ideas," Jeanine concluded.

-- Rke/St-Lô committee



The medieval chapel houses exhibits that honor the soldiers of the 29th and 35th infantry divisions. – Internet photo

## 2 former interns tell us what they're up to now

I did my Roanoke internship at the Taubman Museum of Art from Jan. 23 to March 14, 2019.

My duties were as follows:

- \* Welcome visitors in the "Art Venture" area.

- \* Prepare the artistic material for the artistic workshops.

- \* Assist in setting up artistic workshops.

- \* Translate exhibition texts from English to French as well as vocabulary sheets.

- \* Design and realization of an activity related to the history of art in the "Art Venture" space.

Following my internship, I continued my master's degree in cultural and technical heritage at the University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne in Paris. This year, in order to specialize myself, I am doing a second (and last!) master's in museography at the University of Lyon. I am currently doing my 5-month end-of-studies internship at the Château d'Oiron (a castle dedicated to contemporary art). ... I'm very lucky to be able to do a face-to-face internship, despite the [pandemic].

I would like to work in a museum, in the conservation of collections.

-- Elise Dubuis



Elise Dubuis

(Continued on Page 10)

# Roanoke/St- Lô

(Continued from Page 9)



Former intern Pierre Fize and his son, Hélié, after a race in Santa Marta, Colombia. The whole family is quite athletic. – Family photo



Pierre's wife, Cinthia Coelho-Fize, and Hélié enjoy a day at the beach. Cinthia is originally from Brazil. – Family photo

Although, technically, my first exposure to the USA was a family trip when I was 15, The Roanoke Times/ Roanoke.com gave me the fantastic opportunity to start a connection that, since 2000, has never ended. I spent over a year in Michigan back in 2003 (yes, that year of the Freedom fries thing) with an automotive supplier, then took a couple jobs in the north of France.

For any sort of reasons involving a cool job, lavender fields, endless running trails on the Mediterranean shore under permanent sunshine, I ended up moving to Marseille, where our little one, Hélié (think about the Greek word for sun, Helios), was born in 2016. We moved to wonderful (and

windy) Chicago in 2017, extended our stay twice, travelled as much as we could in as many states as possible, and got to know how great America is, with some limitations of course and hectic times last year, but such an incredible power of creativity, entrepreneurship and amazing human kindness.

We are returning to the south of France in the fall, and we are happy and sad at the same time, as our experience in the USA has been marvelous. To a point where Hélié actually only speaks English. I can never thank enough the amazing people I met in Roanoke back in 2000 for initiating such a chain of events and reinforcing USA – France friendship and common history.

-- Pierre Fize



In Saint-Lô, opponents of a proposed immersive-history project derisively dubbed "D-Day Land" are not giving up. On June 16, a dozen or so gathered at the foot of the June 6 traffic circle (above), the monument that pays homage to the civilian victims of WWII. They were protesting the project called "Homage to Heroes," a \$58-million show set in an 800-seat theater that would incorporate live actors and archival footage. Project organizers estimate that it could attract as many as 600,000 tourists a year and plan for it to open in time for the 80th anniversary of D-Day in 2024. French veterans and their descendants are actively campaigning against it. "War is not a spectacle," said Maxi Krause, spokesperson for the group at the June 6 monument. "That's why we're here today. Saint-Lô was almost razed to the ground during World War II, and we must not forget all the civilian victims of this conflict. This story is not completely healed in La Manche."

– Photo from Ouest-France



About 25 members and friends attended our Roanoke/St-Lô Bastille Day potluck picnic on July 11 in Salem's Longwood Park. As expected, we were a smaller group than usual, but we were delighted to be together again and even welcomed some new faces. Per normal, the food was delicious and plentiful. RVSCI President Mary Jo Fassié and Treasurer Bill Bestpitch represented the RVSCI board. Sherrie Henshaw, who recently accepted the task of overseeing our financial paperwork, acknowledged co-chairwoman/secretary Peggy Wells for her 21 years as treasurer of our committee. We thanked Peggy with a card and a bottle of muscadet, a white wine – un vin français, naturellement. We look forward to regrouping in December for our Dîner de Noël. Details coming soon!



## Zoom lets us show off RVSCI's and valley's elements of art

By Dr. Kristina Bulas-Slowikowski  
Roanoke-Opole chairwoman  
krisbulas@gmail.com

A year into the pandemic and the world has tired of restrictions on life, travel and freedom and has turned creative in seeking normalcy. So has RVSCI and its amazing sister cities.

Roanoke College Choir is being proactive and is optimistically scheduling a European tour in 2022 to include a visit to Opole. Opole is eagerly awaiting their visit and will assist in details regarding lodging and scheduling performances.

Medicine student rotations are on hold on both sides of the pond. Preliminary discussion has begun between the Medical University of Wroclaw and VTCSoM Fralin Biomedical Research Institute as to how to join forces on ongoing medical research. Much to discuss and iron out but the possibilities are there.

Opole recently hosted a "Nice to Meet You" live international forum with its partner/sister cities, which was broadcast live on its Facebook page:  
<https://www.facebook.com/MiastoOpole/videos/1507712156240632>

It had more than 800 views. Mary Jo

Fassié, Ramona Kirsch and I represented RVSCI. Our Power point presentation explained not only the mission of Roanoke Valley Sister Cities but where we are located in Virginia, our modus operandi, the city of Roanoke and the county of Roanoke, the latter being twinned with Opole. We shared elements of art in the Roanoke Valley, including public art and festivals, the Taubman Museum of Art and a variety of events that we have hosted or participated in at the Taubman (Lunar New Year, Chardon Polka Band, Korean culture festival and Roanoke Arts POP). In addition, we included our Young Artists Showcase and the art exchanges with Opole, receiving and sending four artists to their plein-air artists event.

Jenine Culligan and Janet Carty along with Ramona represented Hollins University and the Eleanor D. Wilson Museum of Art on the Hollins campus. Ramona spoke about Hollins University and their international exchanges. Jenine and Janet talked about the art museum at Hollins, their facility and activities and the art proposal to host an Opole artist in 2022.

Opole's partner cities from Lithuania, Germany and France presented their

experiences in continuing exposure to the arts during COVID and how they shared projects with Opole. The biggest difference is that all of these co-operations are funded by the partner city/country, and they operate with a defined budget. Hollins presented their art opportunity for Opole, which was to be held during the 25th anniversary of partnership with Opole and ambushed by COVID in 2020. We hope to host a visiting artist in 2022.

So despite COVID we have become proficient in the use of Zoom and exploring ways to capitalize on virtual experiences and continue in a positive, engaging manner.

## Greetings from the mayor of Opole

Mr. Dan O'Donnell  
Roanoke County Administrator  
July 1, 2021

Dear Mr. O'Donnell,

On the occasion of the approaching Independence Day, on behalf of the citizens of Opole and myself, I would like to express my dearest wishes of well-being and prosperity to you, your colleagues, and all the citizens of Roanoke County.

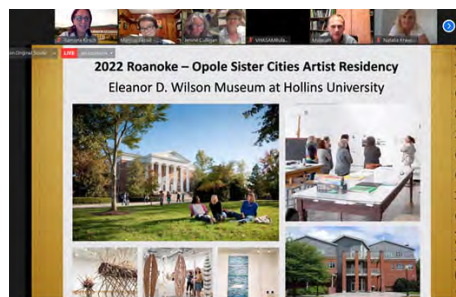
I hope that celebrating America's most important holiday will fill you with positive energy and help you rise to new challenges, which the COVID-19 pandemic has posed to us. I am certain that by preserving our traditions we can find extra strength to face our current difficulties.

I wish you all of it sincerely and send my warmest regards from Opole. I hope that we will manage to resume our cooperation and carry out some successful projects in the not too distant future.

Sincerely,  
Arkadiusz Wiśniewski  
Mayor of Opole (City president)



The logo of Opole's "city president," aka mayor.



Kris Slowikowski, Mary Jo Fassié and Ramona Kirsch participated on Opole's live international forum, which aired on Facebook. These are 4 screenshots of information shared with the participants by RVSCI, the county of Roanoke, Hollins University and the Taubman Museum of Art.



## City commemorates pioneer who fought racial, gender discrimination

Born in Florianópolis on July 17, 1901, Antonieta de Barros was a pioneer in fighting discrimination against blacks and women. She was elected to the Legislative Assembly of Santa Catarina as the first black female state deputy in the country and the first woman deputy in her state. Antonieta was a professor, journalist and writer, remembered most for her ability to express her ideas within a historical context that did not permit a woman's freedom of expression.

She dedicated part of her life as an educator and director of the Complementary School of the Lauro Muller School Group, the Santa Catarina Normal School and the Dias Velho College.

A black woman, poor and orphaned, she fought against discrimination both gender and racial and became one of the most influential women in the state of Santa Catarina.

In addition to her political militancy, Antonieta participated in the cultural life of Santa Catarina. She founded and directed the journal "A Semana" from 1922 to 1927. During this period, through her chronicles, she circulated her ideas, principally those linked to questions of education, oppressive policies, the feminine condition, and racial prejudice. She also directed a biweekly magazine "Vida Ilhoa" in 1930, and wrote for local journals. In 1937, under the pseudonym Maria da Ilha, she wrote her book, "Farrapos de Ideias (Tatters of Ideas)."

She was a deputy of the Santa Catarina Legislative Assembly from 1935-37 and was state deputy from 1947-51, called as an alternate and affiliated with the Social Democratic Party.

She died in Florianópolis on March 28, 1952, at the age of 50.

The Legislative Assembly of Santa Catarina annually awards the the

Antonieta de Barros Medal to women with relevant service in defense of Catarinense women's rights. The túnel da Via Expressa Sul in Florianópolis was established in her name.

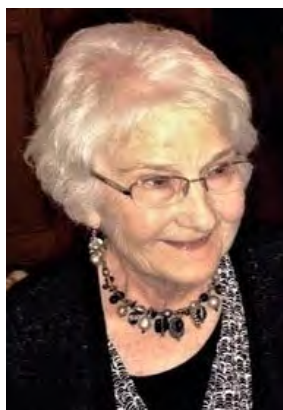
-- Mary Jo Fassié and Wikipedia



Those who pass by Lieutenant Silveira Street in the center of Florianópolis will see this mural, a tribute to Antonieta de Barros (Pictured Right) who was Brazil's first black state deputy. -- Internet photo

## Norma Jean Peters was a devoted educator, volunteer

By RoseAnn Burgess  
Vivace15@cox.net



Norma Jean Peters

Norma Jean Peters, who died Dec. 15, 2020, was former co-chairwoman of the Roanoke-Florianópolis committee.

Mention the name of Dr. Norma Jean Peters and you

immediately call to mind her devotion to education for all individuals, regardless of age.

She was a student and graduate of the Roanoke County Schools, Tribeca College, Vanderbilt University and Virginia Tech, where she earned her doctorate in education. She was also a Supervisor of Social Studies and Foreign Languages for Roanoke County Schools.

Retirement led her to teach in the education department of Hollins University.

This interest also applied to herself as she was a life-long learner by reading or traveling. She was fortunate to travel to Europe, South America, South Korea, China, Russia and many other countries.

Most of her memberships in organizations was toward bettering a previous level of achievement. Norma Jean was active in Sister Cities-Florianópolis, The Historical Society of Western Virginia, the O. Winston Link Museum, The Roanoke County

Library Board and the Roanoke Valley Preservation Foundation Board.

Her education memberships included the National Education Association, VEA, RCTA, Virginia Retired Teachers Association and Delta Kappa Gamma.

She always had leadership roles in many groups, including co-chairwoman of the Roanoke-Florianópolis committee. She traveled to Florianópolis and to South Korea to assist in programs supported by the sister city groups.

Norma Jean was very active in Hollins Nazarene Church serving in many capacities of leadership. A Roanoke native, she will be greatly missed for her good works in the Roanoke Valley and the invaluable guidance shared with all.

Norma Jean would have agreed with this saying of Benjamin Franklin: "Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn."

## Teacher realizes dream with tuition-free school for girls

China Daily Global

*As the Communist Party of China celebrates the 100th anniversary of its founding this year, China Daily has talked to CPC members to know what made them want to become a party member and the impact this has had on their work and life.*

Twenty years ago, Zhang Guimei encountered a teenage girl sitting in a daze on the side of a road in Huaping county, Yunnan province, with a sickle in one hand and a broken straw basket at her side.

Zhang, a local high school teacher, asked what was wrong.

The girl told Zhang that she wanted to go to school, but her family was too poor to afford it. Her parents had arranged for her to be engaged and had already received betrothal money of 30,000 yuan (\$4,665) from her fiancé's family.

Zhang went to the 14-year-old girl's home in an attempt to persuade her parents to allow their daughter to continue schooling.

"Please leave the girl to me. I'll take care of her tuition and allowance," Zhang said to the girl's parents.

However, they flatly refused her. Unable to help, Zhang left.

With the young woman always on her mind, Zhang racked her brain trying to figure out how to help the local girls.

"I found that the number of girls in school was getting smaller from grade 10 to grade 12," she said.

Girls often had to drop out of school

because their parents save money for their sons instead, or the girls must prepare for marriage after their parents have received a dowry.

"If you educate a woman, you educate a nation," Zhang said. "An educated woman will be responsible and won't let her children drop out of school."

Zhang came up with the idea of building a girls-only high school where students wouldn't have to pay anything. She started fundraising campaigns, but they weren't successful.

In 2007, Zhang was elected a representative of the 17th National Congress of the Communist Party of China and attended the plenum in Beijing. A news report on Zhang helped her ambition of building the school catch the attention of Huaping county officials and other supporters.

In 2008, Huaping Girls' High School, China's first tuition-free high school, was opened and enrolled 100 students, with Zhang as its president. Most of the girls were from mountainous areas and had failed high school entrance exams. Several had physical disabilities or were orphans or children of single parents.

"As long as the girls want to be educated, the high school opens its arms to them," Zhang said.

However, the school did not fare well in the beginning. Less than half a year after opening, there was an exodus of the teaching staff--nine of the 17 teachers recruited by the school left.

Zhang was happy to find that six

of the teachers who remained were CPC members and were committed to helping girls in the mountainous area pursue their dream of going to a university.

"I hope that the girls get stronger and are able to assist those who are in the need of help," she said.

In 2016, Huaping Girls' High School was upgraded with new facilities, including a canteen, dormitory and track field.

Ninety-six of the first 100 students made it to college entrance examinations and got offers from universities.

So far, 1,804 of the school's students have been enrolled in institutions of higher learning in China.

Zhang was born in 1957 into a worker's family in Northeast China's Heilongjiang province, the youngest of six children. At 17, she followed a sister who was sent to work in Yunnan. After graduating from Lijiang Normal School, Zhang moved with her husband to Dali, Yunnan, where both of them were teachers.

In the aftermath of her husband's death in 1996, Zhang moved to Huaping, where she taught at a school during the day and took care of a children's home in her spare time.

Shan Qiyang, who graduated from Huaping Girls' High School in 2014, called the school "a big family with Zhang having an important place in their hearts." Now Shan herself is a kindergarten teacher.

Zhang has donated more than 1 million yuan to the school in the past three decades, having only meager savings for herself. She lived in the school's dormitory with the girls.

Following in Zhang's footsteps, many of the graduates of Huaping Girls' High School have chosen to work in remote areas.

"I'm grateful to Teacher Zhang," said Zhou Yunli, who graduated from the school and was enrolled at Yunnan Normal University. Now she teaches at Huaping Girls' High School.



Zhang Guimei (right) addresses students at Huaping Girls' High School in Lijiang, Yunnan province, in September 2020. -- Photo from Chen Xinbo/Xinhua



## A colorful night at Wonju Hanji Festival

During the month of May, the Wonju Hanji Festival celebrated the beauty and artistry of *Hanji* mulberry paper, one of Korea's most-cherished traditional arts and crafts. The festival offered a variety of programs to learn about the traditional paper, including a Hanji fashion show, a Hanji art exhibition and a Hanji-making class to introduce the history and various uses of the traditional mulberry paper.

Wonju is one of the famous places for the traditional Hanji paper.

Hanji is made from the inner bark

of *Broussonetia papyrifera*, known colloquially as paper mulberry, a tree native to Korea that grows well on its rocky mountainsides, known in Korean as *dak*. Crucial to making hanji is the mucilage that oozes from the roots of *Hibiscus manihot*. This substance helps suspend the individual fibers in water.

Traditional hanji is made in laminated sheets using the *we bal* method (a sheet formation technique).

The process of creating hanji also employs *dochim*, a method of pounding

finished sheets to compact fibers and lessens ink bleed.

Hanji paper is famous across Asia for its white color and extreme durability and was a high import to China in tribute missions.

Visitors to the Wonju festival can also buy or make their own Hanji and other handicrafts, such as lamp shades, fans, dolls, flowers and much more.

-- Mary Jo Fassié and Wikipedia



Visitors walk down "the undersea tunnel of light," made up of 2,000 jellyfish and fish paper lanterns at the 23rd Wonju Hanji Festival in Wonju, Gangwon Province, on May 3. -- Photos from The Korea Times



A girl touches a fish-shaped hanji lantern at "the ocean of imagination."



Jellyfish-shaped lanterns sway in the wind at "the undersea tunnel of light."



# Juneteenth Statement

## SCI statement on the signing of The Juneteenth National Independence Day Act

"Sister Cities International was deeply moved by [the] events at the White House as Juneteenth was officially signed into law as a federal holiday. As our founder, President Dwight D. Eisenhower, said in 1945, 'the proudest human that walks the earth is a free American citizen.' Opal Lee's lifelong quest to celebrate freedom from bondage and slavery has demonstrated the strength we have as individuals, and the power we hold when we stand together. Opal's grit and determination embody what it means to be a citizen diplomat. Hailing from Fort Worth Texas, one of the most decorated Sister Cities programs of the 1,800+ partnerships worldwide, she is an extraordinary advocate for justice who has fought for 94 years to see this day become a reality. She demonstrates that our mission of 'bringing people together, one friendship at a time' is a foundation for building lasting peace. Most of all, yesterday's events send a message to our partners around the world that 'the future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams,' as First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt famously said. The image of President Biden falling to his knees and hugging lifelong advocate Opal Lee will be etched into our hearts forever."



**SisterCities**  
INTERNATIONAL  
Connect globally. Thrive locally.



*Opal Lee stands next to Vice President Kamala Harris as President Biden signs Juneteenth into law as a federal holiday.*

### Prefer to go paperless?

If so, we'll email you the virtual version of AOW.  
Please email:  
**[roanokevalleysistercities@gmail.com](mailto:roanokevalleysistercities@gmail.com)**



## RVSCI Corporate Board Members

### 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

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

John Makay

#### **Sister City committee chairmen and chairwomen:**

**Florianópolis:** Linda Harrison

**Kisumu:** Bill Modica

**Lijiang:** Rebecca Chang, Ph.D.

**Opole:** Kristina Bulas-Slowikowski, M.D.

**Pskov:** Jessie Coffman

**St-Lô:** Ann Hackworth & Peggy Wells

**Wonju:** Brian Counihan & Ramona Kirsch, Ed.D.



**Contact us at:** roanokevalleysistercities@gmail.com

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 \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

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

**www.rvsci.us | Like us on Facebook!**

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

## ROANOKE VALLEY



## SISTER CITIES