



Around Our World

ROANOKE VALLEY SISTER CITIES, INC.

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Piano concert raises funds for war refugees

By Dr. Kristina Bulas-Slowikowski
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The war in Ukraine dominated all conversation with Poland since February. Opole sent out urgent communications requesting aid for the Ukrainian refugees streaming into town as well as for Opole's Ukrainian sister city of Ivano-Frankivsk. Both RVSCI and Roanoke County sent monetary donations to the Kosciuszko Foundation, which was supporting verified NGOs on the Polish border. These include the Folkowisko Foundation as well as Samodzielność od Kuchni, a Warsaw-based NGO that is aiding evacuated orphans with food, shelter and education. The war continues with no end in sight, and the need for assistance remains.

On July 17, RVSCI and Ukrainian Americans in Roanoke sponsored an emotional and memorable fundraiser at Olin Hall on the Roanoke College campus for the refugees in Poland. We hosted Stanislav Khristenko, a Ukrainian-born concert pianist who performed works from both Polish (Chopin) and Ukrainian (Lyatoshinsky, Silvestrov and Szymanowski) composers. The event received media attention and congratulatory messages from the Ukrainian embassy as well as from other Virginia sister cities.

Before the concert and during intermission, the public was educated on why Roanoke should care about Ukraine and why RVSCI was sponsoring the fundraiser. Information was shared on verified NGOs offering assistance to refugees in both Poland and Ukraine. Funds raised will be evenly divided between RVSCI and the Ukrainian



Ukrainian-born concert pianist Stanislav Khristenko played a benefit concert at Roanoke College on July 17.
Photo by Jonathan Heisler

American group to be forwarded to the NGOs of their choice.

Christine Stolarchuk, a second-year student at the Virginia Tech Carilion

School of Medicine, displayed her photographs from a recent trip to Lviv to

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President's Report

The arts figure prominently in first half of 2022



By Mary Jo Fassie
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We began 2022 by resuming many of the Roanoke Valley Sister Cities' in-person events and exchanges but continuing our virtual exchanges with our friends in our seven sister cities and with Sister Cities International.

In February, we were back at the Taubman Museum of Art for Lunar New Year, and we featured the Wonju short film competition winners, which showcased the city of Wonju in English. We continued our collaboration with the Roanoke College International Film Festival, which included films in Chinese, French, Korean as well as Italian, Japanese and Spanish. Films were shown on the campus of Roanoke College, at the Grandin Theatre and at the Taubman. Traveling to Kenya, artist and Kisumu committee member John Wiercioch visited Kisumu and connected with our friends and other artists there.

Our executive board met via Zoom in February as did the Pskov committee with Pskov State University before the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which has paused our communications. Controversy arose around the Virginia governor's recommendation to sever ties with all Russian sister cities in Virginia. RVSCI will not cut ties with a sister city whose residents would like to remain



In February, Roanoke Valley artist John Wiercioch (left) visited Kisumu. He is pictured with Samba Nixon (his guide) and Joseph and Mary Akeyo. John wrote: "My journey to Kenya gave me a good excuse to visit our Sister City, and I was happy to look in on the progress of a water filtration project that Roanoke's Kisumu representative Bill Modica helped initiate. It's at a school for orphaned kids on the outskirts of Kisumu, founded by Joseph Akeyo."

faithful to the mission of sister cities and who may not necessarily agree with the invasion of Ukraine. Green ribbons as a sign of resistance against the Russian invasion of Ukraine can be seen in Pskov, giving hope to those who disagree with this conflict.

The month of March was dominated by the arts as we held the annual Young Artists Showcase with virtual judging by staff members of the Taubman. RVSCI staffed a display table at the art museum's Roanoke Arts Pop! event, and I joined a virtual meeting of the Roanoke Arts Commission to present RVSCI and our commitment to the arts here and abroad. Florianópolis committee members Marilia and Mike Deisenroth returned to Brazil and were able to make connections with several artists for a future exchange sponsored by the Olin Gallery at Roanoke College. On the campus of Roanoke College, Brian Counihan from the Wonju committee attended the dedication of a Virginia Historic Marker in honor of Kim Kyusik, who graduated from Roanoke College in 1903 and was a leader in the Korean independence movement. In addition, Sister Cities International organized a

Zoom exchange to discuss our support of the people of Ukraine and the many refugees fleeing the country. The RVSCI Executive Board voted to send \$1,000 to the Kosciusko Foundation in support of the Ukrainian refugees fleeing to Poland.

Corresponding Secretary Jean Broyles and I attended via Zoom the Virginia Sister Cities meeting in Newport News in April. The RVSCI board met and made plans for the annual dinner meeting and discussed our recent and upcoming activities. Several members of the St-Lô committee attended the wonderful multi-media thesis presentation, "The Crossroads of Saint-Lô," presented by our outgoing intern, Charissa Roberson, in late March. I was later honored to be part of her thesis defense at Roanoke College.

The highlight of May was the Local Colors festival where RVSCI had two displays and Florianópolis Chairwoman Linda Harrison graciously represented Brazil in the parade. In June, the Lijiang committee held a successful Zoom exchange between college students from of RVSCI activities for 2021-22, we were

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Easter wishes from the mayor of Opole.

President's Report

(Continued From Page 2)

pleased to hear from guest speaker Robert Joskowiak, the honorary consul of the Republic of Poland in Virginia, who spoke about his role in Virginia and about the Ukrainian refugee crisis in Poland. The dinner was well attended and everyone enjoyed the fellowship and the beautiful views of the Roanoke Valley.

In July, the St-Lô committee held its annual Bastille Day picnic and reported on the intern exchanges already underway. Bee and Conrad Grundlehner talked about their trip to France and their visit with our St-Lô friends. On July 17, the Opole committee and the Ukrainian Americans of Roanoke sponsored a fundraiser for Ukrainian refugees by piano virtuoso Stanislav Khristenko, who gave a phenomenal concert at Roanoke College's Olin Hall. Mr. Khristenko, who was born in Ukraine, has received prizes in more than 30 international piano competitions. It was a great honor to have him share his talent with us. The RVSCI proceeds from this concert will be sent to the Kosciusko Foundation to help support the Ukrainian refugees in Poland.



A brief moment during the Roanoke/ St-Lô Bastille Day picnic when the skies cleared.



Lunar New Year's celebrations at the Taubman Museum of Art.



Roanoke-Wonju chairwoman Ramona Kirsch at the RVSCI display at Local Colors.

(Continued From Page 1)

visit her family. Mr. Khristenko paused periodically during the concert to relay personal stories of his family and friends left in Kharkiv. At intermission, a compelling video was shown that showcased the beauty of Ukraine and the horrors and toll of the war. We were educated. We listened to beautiful music. We shed tears.

Our sincere thanks to Robert Jaskowiak, honorary Polish consul for Virginia, for his help in facilitating this concert.

Thanks as well to Roanoke College for generously donating the use of Olin Hall for the concert and reception area as well as to Robert Bessolo, theater technical director for Roanoke College, for his help the day of the concert.

Funds for Ukrainian refugees may still be donated through the RVSCI website at www.rvsci.us.



After his concert, Stanislav Khristenko (left) chatted with Robert Jaskowiak, the honorary Polish consul for Virginia. Photo by Jonathan Heisler.



Concert-goers saw lots of information boards about Ukraine and a variety of NGOs. Photo by Jonathan Heisler.



From left: Kris Slowikowski, Anna Miroshnychenko, Viktoriya Chambers, Stanislav Khristenko, Inna Payne, Martha Kuchar, Christina Stolarchuk. Photo by Jonathan Heisler.

About Virginia's honorary Polish consul



Robert Jaskowiak

The guest speaker at RVSCI's annual dinner on June 7, Robert Jaskowiak was named honorary Polish consul for Virginia in 2018.

Mr. Jaskowiak was born in Poland and emigrated to the United States as a young man. He

received an MBA at Liberty University and is presently employed by the pharmaceutical industry. Along with State Delegate Nick Freitas, Mr. Jaskowiak was instrumental in having the commonwealth establish Oct. 15 as Kosciuszko Day in Virginia as well as Oct. 11 as Pulaski Day. Both Tadeusz Kosciuszko and Casimir Pulaski were

Polish noblemen who fought and contributed during the American Revolution alongside Thomas Jefferson and George Washington. Mr. Jaskowiak annually hosts Chopin concerts at the Barbourville Vineyards, showcasing world-renowned pianists, and he is active in promoting all things Polish.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

September

- **Sep. 6:** RVSCI Corporate Board Meeting, Center in the Square (5 p.m.)

October

- **Oct. 9:** Korean Alphabet Day

November

- **Nov. 15:** RVSCI Corporate Board Meeting, Center in the Square (5 p.m.)
- **Nov. 12:** Korean Pepero Day celebration at the Taubman

December

- **Dec. TBD:** International Holiday Celebrations

February 2023

- **Feb. TBD:** Lunar New Year, Taubman Museum of Art
- **Feb. 7:** RVSCI Corporate Board Meeting, Center in the Square (5 p.m.)

March 2023

- **March 3-5:** Roanoke Arts Pop!, Taubman Museum of Art

Competition addressed theme of sustainable water

This spring, Roanoke Valley Sister Cities held its annual Young Artist Showcase for students aged 13-18. The theme for the Sister Cities International competition was "Generation Rescue: Sustainable Water for All." Judging was provided by the staff of the Taubman Museum of Art.

The 2022 winners are:

1st place: \$300 prize, Denzel Marufu, 18, a student at North Cross School. The title of his work is "The Last Drops."

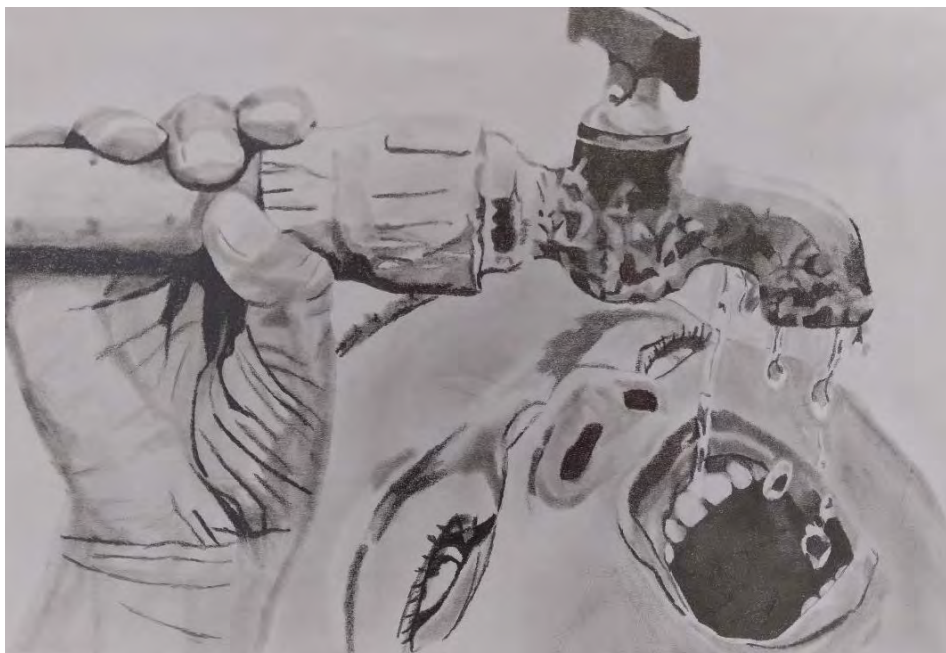
2nd place: \$200 prize, Hannah Wheeler, 18, a student at Northside High School and Arnold R. Burton. The title of her work is "Giving Back."

3rd place: (tie) \$100 prizes to Jackson Patterson, 15, a student at North Cross for "Every Water Drop," and Alaina Eliades, 17, a student at North Cross, for "Happy Hour."

These pieces have been submitted to Sister Cities International Young Artists Showcase for further judging. Honorable mentions (\$25 each) were awarded to Elinor Blackshaw and Ava Dalaski of North Cross.

First-place winner Denzel Marufu, along with his North Cross art teacher, Amy Jackson, was honored at the Roanoke Valley Sister Cities Annual Meeting held at the Center in the Square rooftop on June 7. Denzel shared his thoughts about the theme and his artwork: "Children are most affected by water shortages because they are more vulnerable to diseases caused by polluted water, which they are forced to drink since there is no means of clean water. The picture is to raise awareness to governments or other people about what is happening in some parts of the world."

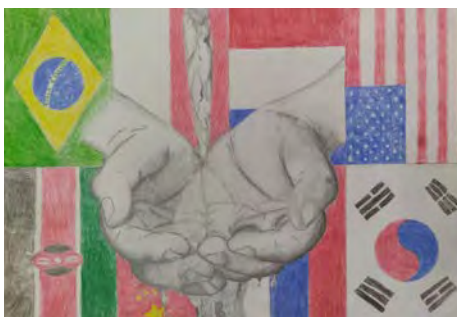
-- Mary Jo Fassié



First-place winner, "The Last Drops," by Denzel Marufu.



Second-place, "Giving Back," by Hannah Wheeler.



Third-place (tie), "Every Water Drop," by Jackson Patterson.



Third-place (tie), "Happy Hour," by Alaina Eliades.

Katherine Devine named artist in residence for RVSCI



Katherine Devine

In the Year of the Artist, the Roanoke Arts Commission has named Katherine Devine the 2022-23 artist in residence for Roanoke Valley Sister Cities.

Collaborating with RVSCI, she will develop a project or projects that will advance the work of Sister Cities, engage the community in our work, and grow her professionally as an artist. This project is funded through the City of

Roanoke and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Katherine received her undergraduate degree in art from East Carolina University in Greenville, N.C., and her master's degree from Hollins University. She received the Woman of Achievement Award in Art from DePaul Community Resources in 2011, and the People's Choice, Top Three Best Local Artists, from the readers of Roanoke's City Magazine in 2013. She has over 25 years of experience teaching art to all ages and has exhibited

original artwork and facilitated art workshops at schools, museums, art shows, festivals and community events throughout the Roanoke Valley.

She works in a small studio, but she dreams big. Katherine currently works and teaches in Roanoke's Grandin Village neighborhood.

-- Mary Jo Fassié

Annual Dinner

Scenes from our annual dinner meeting



Jean Broyles (left) and Sue Wertz greet our members and friends.

Our annual dinner meeting was held June 7 on the rooftop at Center in the Square. We had about 70 members and friends in attendance.

The Rev. Joe Cobb, chairman of the Roanoke-Lijiang committee and member of Roanoke City Council, gave this invocation at the beginning of the evening:



Bill Hackworth (left) chats with Sheri Bestpitch while RVSCI Treasurer Bill Bestpitch staffs the bar.



Our caterers from Hamm's Fine Foods (from left): Chef Chris Hamm, Donnie Dixon and Michael McGeorge.

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Annual Dinner

(Continued From Page 6)

Tonight, we pause to pray for...

the people of Ukraine;

and for the people of

Kisumu

Florianópolis

Wonju

Pskov

Lijiang

Opole

Saint-Lô

O, Divine Spirit,

There is a beauty in the human family --
a beauty that regardless of origin,
or language, or place -- there is a thread
that connects us, that weaves us
together to bridge divides and
differences and difficulties.

This thread of love transforms us
into a vibrant global community
of friends determined to do the very
things we know we can do best:

to be peaceful and to bring peace,
to be hopeful and to give hope,
to love and be loved.

May this thread of love transform us
all.

Amen.



Chet Kalinoski and Roanoke College Spanish professor Charlene Kalinoski.



From left: Joyce Waugh, Bill Fetzer; Chris and Betsy Bohannon; Roanoke-Pskov Chairwoman Jessie Coffman, Adelaide and Doug Coffman.



RVSCI President Mary Jo Fassié gives an overview of our recent activities.



From left: Samuel, Vanessa and Joslaine Austin with Dr. NL Bishop and VTCSoM student Sarah Yosief.



Roanoke County Schools Assistant Superintendent Dr. Jessica McClung (left) and RVSCI artist in residence Katherine Devine.



From left: Dave Epperly, RVSCI At-Large Board member Sara Epperly, Roanoke-Lijiang Chairman Joe Cobb, and James Matthews.



Roanoke Mayor Sherman P. Lea (left) and honorary Polish consul for Virginia, Robert Joskowiak.



From left: Charlie Jackson, Roanoke City Councilwoman Vivian Sanchez-Jones, Elizabeth Jackson, Roanoke Valley Sister Cities Young Artist Showcase winner Denzel Marufu; his teacher, Amy Jackson; and Cindy Petersen and Erin Shapiro, representing the Taubman Museum of Art.



From left: Roanoke County Board of Supervisors Chairman Paul Mahoney, Assistant Roanoke County Administrator Doug Blount, Roanoke-Opole Chairwoman Kris Slowikowski, and annual dinner guest speaker, honorary Polish consul for Virginia Robert Joskowiak. Blount is holding a copy of House Joint Resolution No. 64, designating Oct. 15 as Gen. Thaddeus Kosciuszko Day in Virginia.

A return to a more typical, busy schedule

By Ann Hackworth
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In many ways, our spring and summer have felt relatively back to normal. Our members have returned to many annual gatherings, and some have traveled to Normandy. Internships on both sides of the Atlantic have been successful, and plans are underway for three more this year.

On a sad note, we lost founding committee member and D-Day veteran Chuck Neighbor in April. Chuck was born in 1924 in Kansas. He was drafted from college in 1943 and assigned to the 29th Infantry Division. At 19, he survived the first wave in the division's D-Day assault on Omaha Beach when his landing craft was carried off course by the weather. He was seriously wounded later in Normandy, spending eight months recuperating, and then again in Germany. Chuck and his wife, Clarice, moved to Roanoke in the 1950s. He worked at the Hercules Army Ammunition Plant in Radford and retired in the late 1980s. The Neighbors had three sons and a daughter. In the 1990s, Chuck worked with fellow D-Day veteran Bob Slaughter to establish the National D-Day Memorial in Bedford. In 2013, he was named a Chevalier in the French Legion of Honor. That same year, Chuck published his memoir, "One Man's War



Chuck Neighbor revisited St-Lô in 2004 for the 60th anniversary of D-Day. Here, he and other veterans marched in a parade escorted by young children from the town. Chuck died on April 23, 2022.



Peggy Wells (left) and Judy Kniskern staffed the first shift at our booth at the Local Colors festival.

Story" Chuck was a quiet, humble and good-humored gentleman and an active member of our committee for many years. We and our Norman counterparts, Saint-Lô 44-Roanoke, sent donations to the D-Day Memorial in Chuck's memory.

This spring, our board was introduced to two French teachers in the Roanoke County schools system. Rebecca Wright and Marsha Taylor immediately and enthusiastically jumped into action. Rebecca found a host family and an internship for our first high school intern, Alice Lemi re, and even hosted her for a week herself. Marsha organized a detailed and comprehensive group trip to Normandy and Paris next summer (for details, email her at bonvoyage2023@gmail.com). We welcomed Marsha to our executive board in July.

Alice Lemi re came to the Roanoke Valley from April 26-June 30. A rising junior at the Institut Saint-L , Alice accompanied her "host sister" to Glenvar High School and served an internship with LEAP (Local Environmental Agriculture Project). Her report will appear in the next issue of AOW. In August, we will welcome two other Institut students, Ang le Cahu and Camille Timerie. Ang le will be hosted by Chris & Betsy Bohannon and will intern at Healing Strides. Camille will be hosted by Tim & Sherrie Henshaw and James Matthews & Joe Cobb and their children, and he will intern at the Taubman Museum of Art and at Roanoke city hall.

On May 21, we returned to Local Colors for the first time since 2019.



In early June, members Bee and Conrad Grundlehner spent a few days in Normandy. Here, Bee is shown with their longtime friend and host, C cile Laville (whom many of us met in St-L  in June 2019).

Members Judy Kniskern, Peggy Wells, Chris & Betsy Bohannon, and Andy & Penny Muelenaer staffed our booth in Elmwood Park.

Also in May, former Roanoke Valley Sister Cities intern Charissa Roberson went to St-L  for a month in which she completed two internships. Read her own account on Page 9.

In early June, members Bee and Conrad Grundlehner spent a few days in Normandy. Their longtime friend and host, C cile Laville, took them to Tatihou Island and Utah Beach where preparations were underway for D-Day anniversary observations. After Normandy, Bee and Conrad continued on to Bordeaux and then to Switzerland.

We held our Bastille Day potluck picnic on July 10, with around 25 members and friends in attendance. Despite the unseasonably cool temperatures, we were pleased with the turnout as well as the always-delicious food.

Plans are underway for member Teresa Wimmer to spend a week in St-L  in the fall. She aims to do a comparison study of American and French school cafeterias. We will have her report as well as those of Ang le and Camille in the winter edition of Around Our World.

Our thanks to super hosts Penny and Andy Muelenaer who welcomed the Philippe Gombard family of St-L  overnight in July on short notice. Andy and Penny reported that everyone had a wonderful time.

Former RVSCI intern tackles 2 'stages' in one month

By Charissa Roberson
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Bonjour, tout le monde! Thanks to Roanoke Valley Sister Cities, I had the wonderful opportunity to spend a month in our sister city of Saint-Lô, France, working at a local middle/high-school and with the regional daily newspaper. All during the commemorations for the 78th anniversary of D-Day! It was truly a remarkable month, and I am so grateful to have been given this experience.

I arrived in Saint-Lô on May 13, greeted warmly by my host family -- whose daughter, Alice Lemièrre, was visiting the Roanoke Valley at the same time! They welcomed me like a member of their family. We cooked and shared meals together, played games (I somehow managed to beat them all at pétanque), went on strolls around the city, and visited amazing sites such as Granville, le Mont-Saint-Michel, and the D-Day beaches.

Happily, my "host mom," Marie Helene Le Guen, is a teacher at the Institut Saint-Lô, so for the first two weeks of my internship, I drove to school in the morning with her and her son, Raphael. There I spent my days visiting English classes, meeting the students, and conversing and playing English language games with them. Everyone, from the 10-year-olds to the career students to

the professors, was extremely welcoming and kind. Before long, I felt like the school had adopted me! Right away, I realized that I didn't need to be afraid about speaking French or getting to know people.

After my time at the Institut, I had the amazing opportunity to work with Ouest-France at the office in Saint-Lô, thanks to Jeanine Vérove! I arrived just in time for the 78th anniversary of D-Day, and the journalists gave me the immense honor of following in their wake during the many ceremonies and events that took place around the region. I even got to write a little article ("*billet*") every day, sharing my thoughts, as well as an article about "The Crossroads of Saint-Lô," my Roanoke College senior project concerning Major Thomas Howie and the liberation of the city. (Ouest-France also wrote a short portrait about me to go alongside the article -- the day the pieces appeared in the paper, they made me feel like a star!)

I was overwhelmed by the generosity of the journalists, who took time out of their schedules to help me with my French, fix issues with my computer, share lunches and coffees with me, and bring me along to so many diverse assignments. I was able to get a front-row seat to the D-Day celebrations, with my "*presse*" badge proudly around my neck. I got to meet veterans from WWII,

shake their hands, and thank them. I visited Arizona Camp and Carentan and saw the throngs of people dressed in period uniforms. I attended a ceremony at Utah Beach on June 6 and was able to bypass the barriers to witness everything up close: the flight of WWII planes overhead, the speech of a veteran who landed on the beach on D-Day, remarks by dignitaries, and the 30-plus veterans in attendance, many of whom rose valiantly to their feet as the national anthem played.

As one of the journalists told me, it is impossible to understand how much D-Day and the American veterans mean to Normandy until you see it for yourself. I witnessed the gratitude on people's faces as they applauded and cheered for the veterans, who beamed and waved from their wheelchairs. I will never forget everything I saw that week. It is so special to be able to take home with me all the little articles that I wrote and to have so many amazing memories of this place and its history, especially on what may be the last anniversary with veterans in attendance.

I didn't expect to feel quite so sad leaving this place. I will dearly miss speaking French every day and learning new words and new expressions, many of them distinctly Norman. I will miss the people I have grown close to in just a short time. I will miss quiet evenings with my host family over bread and cheese and the occasional glass of red wine. I will miss Saint-Lô, with its new buildings and old ramparts and the marks of its history everywhere you turn. I find it hard to express just how grateful I am to everyone who made this month possible -- most especially Jeanine Vérove and her tireless efforts to bring good to everyone -- and to all those who made it such a meaningful and wonderful experience, including my host family, the teachers and students at the Institut, and everyone at Ouest-France in Saint-Lô. I can't wait to come back and visit!

-- Charissa Roberson, valedictorian of the Roanoke College class of 2022, was RVSCI's 2021-22 intern. She was the first sister cities intern to go to Normandy post COVID.



Charissa (left) visiting Granville with her host family: Marie Helene Le Guen, her boyfriend, Stéphane, and her son, Raphael.



With Robert Heurgue, a Frenchman (now American) who parachuted into Normandy with the Americans on June 6, 1944.



At the Institut Saint-Lô with some of the Métiers Sécurité students (future firefighters, police, soldiers).



Charissa's press pass for the D-Day anniversary events.

Seeking donations for water project; academic exchange launched

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

The Kisumu Committee of Roanoke Valley Sister Cities has been working to provide funding for the installation of a water treatment system for the first location we selected, at Magunga Primary School near Kisumu in Kenya. Once completed, we will move on to the second site we selected. So far, we have raised a little over half of the total amount needed to buy, install and operate the system. (As of July 1, we raised about \$2,200 toward the cost of the first water treatment unit for Kisumu. The estimated cost is \$3,800.) We also arranged for the location to be approved by the school. They will provide security and handle maintenance as well as establishing rules for access. To that end, we have reached out to the local community to provide a committee of parents and local leaders who will work with the ongoing operations. Dr. Simon Okoth of Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, a native of Kisumu, will head up the effort.

We still need more money to go forward, and I am appealing to our Sister City members and other supporters to make small or large donations in support of this project. We have not yet reached out to the local Kisumu government but will do that once we have the majority of the funds in hand. They can help with permits and approvals as needed. Our plan calls for the local community to take over the management and operation of the system and to handle the distribution of the purified water we generate. The school will enjoy free water for their part. Donations may be made at www.rvsci.us or by contacting Bill Modica at modicabill2@aol.com.

We are also happy to report that Dr. Ramona Kirsch, International Programs Director at Hollins University in Roanoke, was able to visit Nairobi, Kenya, in late June of this year. As a member of both the Roanoke Valley Sister Cities board



In June, Dr. Ramona Kirsch (second from left) of RVSCI and Hollins University met with staff members of a health clinic in Nairobi. One of the goals of the prospective collaboration is to improve health services delivery.

and the Hollins staff, she is working with Kenyatta University to establish a connection between the two schools and share accreditation and exchange programs for the 2022-23 academic year. While in Nairobi, she met with Kenyatta University Vice Chancellor Paul Wainana and Dr. Mildred Nawari of the Center for International Programs and other

faculty to establish a Memorandum of Understanding between the two universities. Kenyatta University has a campus in Kisumu that provides bachelor's degree studies in religion, gender studies, sociology and agribusiness. We hope to expand on these connections in the next few years.



Ramona met with Dr. Mildred Nawari of Kenyatta University in Nairobi, Kenya.



Kenyatta University Vice Chancellor Paul Wainana gives Ramona a friendship gift of eucalyptus oil.

College students engage in dialogue on life during pandemic

By Joe Cobb
Roanoke-Lijiang chairman
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On June 12, students from the Lijiang Culture and Tourism College gathered with students from Virginia universities for a virtual conversation on the experience of campus life during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Hosted by Joe Cobb, chairman of the Lijiang committee, and Mr. Zhang Liwei, director of the Foreign Affairs Office of Lijiang Municipal People's Government, Yunnan, China, more than 30 students introduced themselves and shared what they are studying in school. All of the students from the Lijiang College are English majors, so this provided them an opportunity to practice their English skills with our Virginia students. Locally, we had students from Virginia Tech, Roanoke

College and Radford University.

The first question for discussion asked, "As we are emerging from the pandemic, how have these years affected and impacted you as human beings and students?"

Several students talked about the dramatic changes in shifting from being together in a classroom to being together in a Zoom, or on-line room. For some, the adjustment was quite jarring and there was difficulty in adapting. Sitting in on-line sessions all day became very intense, with few breaks for social engagement or even going outside. For the Lijiang students, outdoor activities were very limited, except for occasional outings, and even then they were asked to wear their masks.

For other students, they went one or two years only seeing their classmates on a screen, and then had to adjust some of their perceptions of their peers when they were finally able to meet them in person

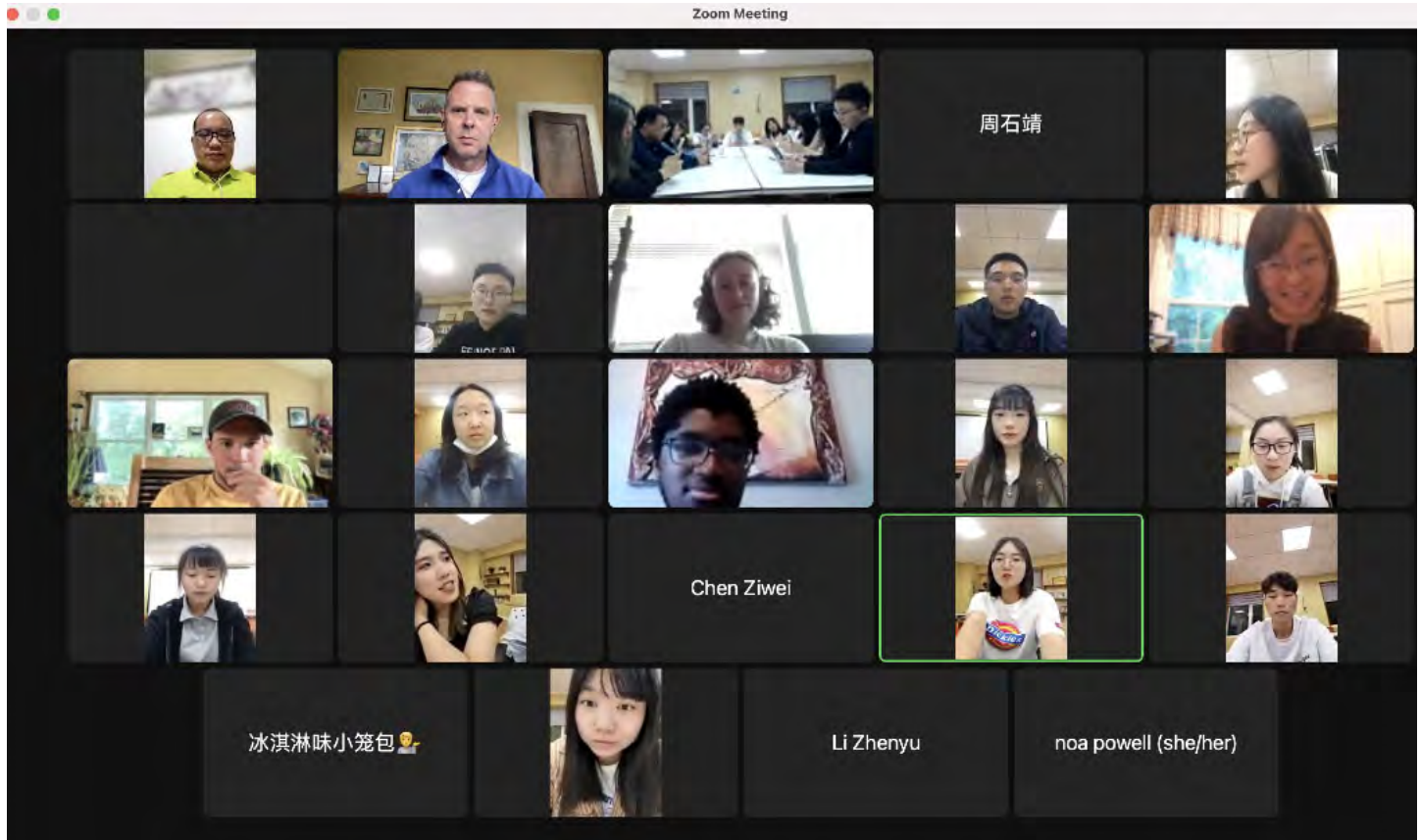
and connect or re-connect socially.

For some students, the pandemic revealed the creative and resilient nature of the human spirit, and in many ways the on-line platform gave introverts the opportunity to shine in ways they may not have otherwise.

This virtual connection also created an avenue for students to connect with others around the world, including professors, and to sustain a larger and greater supportive network.

Overall, the students expressed how much they grew during the experience and how thankful they are for new ways of communicating and staying in touch. Experiences like this virtual dialogue strengthen our friendships and introduce us to new ways of being in community.

Many thanks to everyone who helped make this dialogue and conversation possible.



A screenshot from the online dialogue between Virginia college students and those from the Lijiang Culture and Tourism College.

Why this couple loves life in 'Floripa'

By Mike Deisenroth
Roanoke-Florianópolis committee member
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Marilia came to Blacksburg in October 1993 on a fiancée visa. We had met the prior year when I went to Joinville, in Santa Catarina, on a consulting trip. We had dated long distance and written lots of letters. As I began planning for retirement, we discussed the idea of creating a second home in Brazil. Since she had experienced life in the states, I thought it would be nice to spend time in her country. We had friends in "Floripa" associated with the university and settled on it as a place to look because it is well developed, has many tourist-oriented facilities, and is close to her previous home and family. In 2001, we purchased a "new" house on the north end of the island in Jurere, about 450 yards off the beach. We had been looking at apartments, but the house was larger and comparable in price and offered many advantages. We put it out on an annual rental until we were ready for the move. In 2007, I retired from Virginia Tech, so we loaded a 20-foot container and made our move. For the first few years we split our time between Blacksburg and Floripa. In 2010, we sold our home in Blacksburg and started spending the majority of the year in Brazil, only returning to the "states" as tourists. In 2015, we went back to 6 months here / 6 months there.

Whether you are living in or just visiting Florianópolis, there are many things to make your stay great. The dollar is strong (about 5 to 1), so purchases and expenses are truly bargains when your income is in dollars. The city is large and is one of the three major tourist destinations in

Brazil. You can fly directly from São Paulo or Brasília to the island, and the "new" airport is a dream. We are not Uber users, but the service is available. We tend to use taxis to/from the airport but use our personal car for everyday transportation. There are many great places to eat, from small fishing village restaurants to luxury establishments. We eat a lot of seafood, which is the fresh catch of the day, and Brazilian beef is reasonably priced when you consider the exchange rate. Shopping can be done in air-conditioned shopping malls or in the city

center (*centro*) at the market. There are tourist beaches with an abundance of trinkets to buy or village shops that offer homemade crafts. You can relax at one of the 100+ beaches, paddle board, surf, or catch a ride on a pirate ship. There are many opportunities for hiking from the central mountains or to remote beaches.

If you were to ask which we like better, summer in the mountains in Southwest Virginia or summer at the beach in Brazil, we'd not be able to give an answer. Both are wonderful, and our style of living changes when we move back and forth.



Sister Cities members Marilia and Mike Deisenroth were in Florianópolis for a month. They hoped to find a Brazilian artist to share their talents with the Roanoke Valley.

Visit to Wonju includes promise of mayor's visit to Roanoke in 2023

*By Ramona Kirsch, Ed.D.
Roanoke-Wonju chairwoman
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In June 2022, I was in South Korea on business for Hollins University and was able to visit Wonju. I was hosted by the city of Wonju and was guided through three days of visits with city dignitaries and cultural sites by Ms. Soohyun Paek, Wonju's official in charge of International Exchange Program Coordination, Interpretation and Translation.

I had dinner with the Wonju mayor, Mr. Won Gang-soo, and the entire sister city committee as well as with the Director General of Administrative Bureau, Mr. Kim Jae-soo. I also met with Wonju's vice mayor, Mr. Cho Jong Yong, and the International Cooperation Team to discuss ways in which the longstanding sister cities partnership between Roanoke and Wonju could be strengthened.

Among the many beautiful cultural sites I visited, I toured the Park Kyung-ri Literary Park, former residence of the notable Korean writer Park Kyung-ri. I traversed both suspension bridges in the Soguemsan Grand Valley and created a beautiful Korean box with the famous Hanji paper that Wonju is known for. Finally, I was taken to the well-preserved "old city of Wonju" in Gangwon Gamyeong. These historical buildings are an important source to study the style of the government offices during the Joseon period (1392 to 1897).

Upon my return, I presented gifts from Wonju to Roanoke Vice Mayor Patricia White-Boyd during the July 5 City Council meeting. The mayor of Wonju hopes to visit Roanoke sometime in 2023, and the Roanoke-Wonju committee will work with the Roanoke mayor's office to develop an itinerary for the visit.

Among the upcoming collaborations with Wonju will be the second phase of the sister cities video contest. The first phase of the video contest entailed Wonju residents creating videos about

Wonju in English, which were then judged by the RVSCI Wonju video subcommittee. They selected two winners, and these winning videos were screened in February 2022 during the Lunar New Year Festival at the Taubman Museum hosted by Local Colors, RVSCI, and the Taubman. The RVSCI Wonju video subcommittee is busy finalizing

information about the second phase of the video contest, which will entail Roanoke residents creating videos about Roanoke in Korean. These video submissions will then be judged by a Wonju sister cities video committee in South Korea! Look for a public announcement and full submission criteria in August.



In June, Ramona Kirsch visited Wonju and had dinner with the city's mayor and the entire Sister City committee.



Kirsch relaxes in Park Kyung-ri Literary Park.



Kirsch traversed not one but two suspension bridges.



Dinner with Mr. Kim, director general of the Administration Bureau.



The "old city of Wonju" is in Gangwon Gamyeong.

Lyubarsky was Pskov native and world press freedom hero



Kronid Lyubarsky

Kronid Arkadyevich Lyubarsky was a prominent human rights activist whose work led to his incarceration, jailing and emigration in the 1970s. During his years in exile, he published a human rights bulletin, "News from the USSR," and an annual list of political prisoners in the labor camps, prisons and mental hospitals of the Soviet Union. Following the 1991 breakup of the USSR, he returned to Russia, where he served as chairman of a human rights organization, the Moscow Helsinki Group, and as deputy editor-in-chief of *"Novoye Vremya,"* a pro-democracy magazine.

Born in Pskov, Russia, on April 4, 1934, Lyubarsky graduated from Moscow University in 1956 and then worked at the All-Union Institute of Scientific and Technical Information of the USSR Academy of Sciences. He was an astrophysicist working on Soviet unmanned space flights to Mars when he was arrested in a clampdown on the democratic movement in 1972. At his trial he described his pride in reading about the Mars 2 space probe, even if it was from a prison-issue *Pravda* in his cell (*Pravda*, "truth," was the newspaper that was the official organ of the Communist

Party of the Soviet Union).

Convicted in October 1972, Lyubarsky spent the next five years in various labor camps and prisons. A talented organizer, he initiated the idea of celebrating a Political Prisoners' Resistance Day while he was still in camp. The initiative spread quickly to other camps and prisons, and to this day Oct. 30 is observed in Russia as Soviet Political Prisoners' Day.

After his release, Lyubarsky fought the Soviet regime with renewed vigor. He was one of the managers of a fund set up by the writer Alexander Solzhenitsyn to aid political prisoners and a member of the Soviet branch of Amnesty International. He and his family were forced into exile. Stripped of his citizenship, he sought political asylum in West Germany.

In Munich, Lyubarsky founded a bulletin, "News from the USSR," the only periodical providing objective and comprehensive information about the situation of human rights and resistance to the Communist regime in the Soviet Union. Published in Russian and English twice a month, it also carried an annual list of political prisoners in the USSR. The list appeared until 1989, when the last Soviet political prisoner was released, and was widely used for reference by private citizens, human

rights organizations and numerous parliamentary commissions, as well as the U.S. Congress.

Beginning in 1984, Lyubarsky also edited and published the magazine *"Strana i Mir"* (The Country and the World). The magazine reported not only on repression and resistance in the USSR but also economic and political developments in the rest of the world. Lyubarsky returned to Russia following the breakup of the USSR and became a Russian citizen on June 2, 1992. He was an author of the country's new constitution and drafted a number of its articles, including those on the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of his country.

In February 1993, he joined the magazine *"Novoye Vremya"* (New Times), where he was appointed first deputy editor-in-chief. There, he wrote in defense of democracy and human rights and against the war in Chechnya.

Lyubarsky died of a heart attack on May 23, 1996, while vacationing in Indonesia.

-- Online sources including an article published Sept. 11, 2020, by the International Press Institute)

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