



# AROUND OUR WORLD

ROANOKE VALLEY SISTER CITIES, INC.

VOLUME 25, ISSUE 2 | AUGUST 2022 – DECEMBER 2022



RVSCI artist in residence and festival creator Katherine Devine created roses from freshly fallen ginkgo leaves.



RVSCI corporate board member at large Archie Freeman (left) and Roanoke-Kisumu member Ruphina Okeyo greeted visitors at the entrance to the Ginkgo Tree Festival in Century Plaza.

## INAUGURAL GINKGO FESTIVAL

*A Celebratory Community Event*

By Katherine Devine, RVSC artist-in-residence  
katherinedevine@me.com

As part of Roanoke City's Year of the Artist in 2022-23, I applied for and was delighted to have the opportunity to be the artist-in-residence for Roanoke Valley Sister Cities. Having lived in Roanoke for many years, I had been aware of the organization but wanted to learn more and to be helpful in meeting the organization's mission and goals. I focused my efforts on opportunities for members of the art community and the general public to join me as we all discovered the efforts and history of RVSC.

In my talks with community members, I discovered that many people had visited Century Plaza in downtown Roanoke, where eight sculptures — one of each of our sister cities and one of Roanoke — are installed. They were designed by artists Mimi Babe

Harris and Donna Essig. Very few people that I spoke with were aware of the history and connection with RVSC that these sculptures represented.

We picked Nov. 5 to host an event to bring more awareness to this beautiful location and to RVSC. The courtyard is lined with ginkgo trees, whose leaves create a festive golden carpet in the fall. We picked Nov. 5 and hoped it would work out that the leaves would do their part. Local artist Robyn Mitchell designed a beautiful flier, which was shared widely. In addition to the representatives for each Sister City sharing treats and information, local musicians Erin Hunter, Jordan Fallon and Jason Long performed for our first Ginkgo

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By Mary Jo Fassié  
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## YEAR OF THE ARTIST PROJECT YIELDS COLLABORATIONS AND A FESTIVAL

According to Chinese astrology, 2023 is the year of the water rabbit. The sign of the rabbit is a symbol of longevity, peace, and prosperity in Chinese culture. 2023 is predicted to be a year of hope. As we leap into this new year, our wish is that any conflicts will resolve in peace throughout the world.

Since our last newsletter, RVSCI has been active in the Year of the Artist project organized by Roanoke Arts Commission Director Doug Jackson. Katherine Devine, RVSCI artist in residence, has helped to initiate several projects to connect RVSCI to the community. In September, October and November, representatives from Wonju (Ramona Kirsch), Kisumu (Bill Modica) and Florianópolis (Linda Harrison) connected with the artists and general public to explain the origin of Roanoke's relationship with its sister cities. These monthly encounters took place at Roanoke's Noel C. Taylor Municipal Building before the Monday evening meeting of Roanoke City Council and where local artists have an ongoing exhibit as part of the Year of the Artist. These presentations by RVSCI reps will continue from February to May. Another initiative was the first annual Ginkgo Festival held in Century Plaza, which highlighted the culture and origins

of Roanoke's 7 sister cities as well as celebrating the beautiful fall ginkgo trees.

This fall I also met with several of our sister city committees in person or via Zoom to discuss current relationships and plans. In September, I Zoomed with Lijiang committee members from Roanoke and China, met with the Wonju committee

from Florianópolis with whom we later met via Zoom. In November, Opole chair Kris Slowikowski and I met with Hollins University staff, making plans for the 2024 Opole artist invitation sponsored by Hollins and the 30th anniversary of the Roanoke County/Opole sister city relationship.

During the fall, I met several times via Zoom with the Roanoke College International Film Festival committee, which RVSCI will once again support. Films are being planned for February and will be shown on the campus of Roanoke College, Hollins University, the Grandin Theatre and the Taubman Museum of Art.

RVSCI will once again offer prize money to high school artists (ages 13-18) in the Young Artists Showcase competition this spring. The theme for the showcase is "Peace by Piece: Food Security in My Community." Deadline for Roanoke entries will be April 14.

Be sure to come out for several events where RVSCI will be present: Lunar New Year celebration (Feb. 4) and Roanoke Arts Pop (March 3-5) both at the Taubman and at the Local Colors festival in May. We hope to see you "hop" by and say hello!



in Roanoke and participated in a Sister Cities International Zoom about Africa. In October, along with St-Lô committee members, we had a discussion with Hollins University French professors about a possible exchange in 2023. Later in October, Florianópolis chair Linda Harrison and I met at Olin Gallery at Roanoke College to discuss plans to invite an artist





# Young Artists SHOWCASE

Sister Cities International aims to promote peace through mutual respect, understanding, and cooperation – one individual, one community at a time. This theme for the Roanoke Valley Sister Cities 2023 Young Artists Showcase is "Peace By Piece: Food Security in My Community."

Climate change has become an undeniably harsh reality in our lives, making the importance of raising awareness and taking action more essential every day. As temperatures rise, water patterns are disrupted, ecosystems are disturbed, cultures are affected, and energy resources are proven to be unsustainable for long-term use. These ongoing changes impact our local and global communities in every aspect, and youth are the key to tackle this global reality.

## ELIGIBILITY

Students must be between 13 and 18 years of age at the time of the 2023 international deadline (May 1 for the Roanoke top 5 submissions to Sister Cities International). The student must be affiliated with a dues-paying member of Sister Cities International. This is Roanoke Valley Sister Cities.

## SISTER CITIES INTERNATIONAL AWARDS

Photographs of all artists' work are published on Sister Cities International's website, <https://www.sistercities.org/2022-yaas>

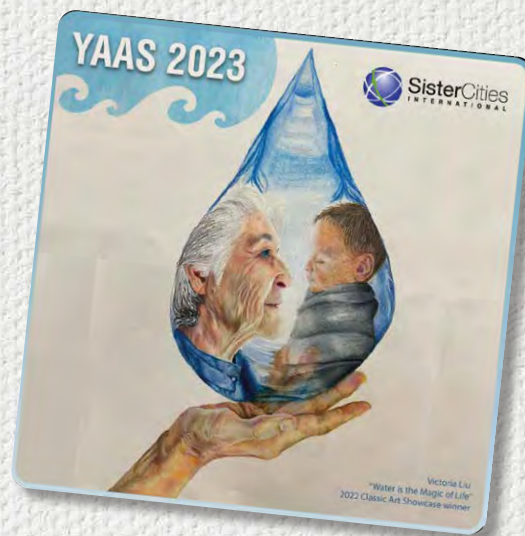
One artist will be selected as a Grand Prize winner, a 2nd-place winner, and a 3rd-place winner. The Grand Prize winner will receive \$1,000; 2nd-place winner will receive \$250; 3rd-place winner will receive \$100.

The winners will be announced at the virtual Youth Leadership Summit, tentatively scheduled for August 2023.

## ROANOKE VALLEY SISTER CITIES AWARDS

Photographs of the 1st- through 3rd-place artists' works will be published on the RVSC website and Facebook page.

1st place wins \$300; 2nd place wins \$200; 3rd place wins \$100; and honorable mentions win \$25 each.



## SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS TO RVSC

Students may select one (1) piece of original artwork to submit for this showcase.

**Important note:** This year we will not accept physical artwork, only photographs of the artwork. To ensure that our judges have the best quality view of your artwork, please confirm that photographs are no less than 1350 x 1080 pixels.

Photos of media accepted include oil, acrylic, watercolor, charcoal, colored pencil, crayon, ink, marker, etching, collage. **Digital medium artwork will be accepted this year.** This is not a photography contest.

Only two-dimensional (2D), unframed artwork will be accepted. A teacher must send the photograph(s) of the student artwork along with the application to [roanokevalleysistercities@gmail.com](mailto:roanokevalleysistercities@gmail.com).

All photos of artwork must be e-mailed by **April 14, 2023**.

Judges will evaluate submissions based on theme interpretation, originality and creativity.





# INAUGURAL GINKGO FESTIVAL

(continued from page 1)

Tree Festival. A volunteer from Tree Stewards Roanoke joined us with informational handouts. We gave out coloring sheets for the children that I designed based on details from the sculpture installation, as well as cultural activity sheets designed by RVSC intern Jared Ackerman. Members of RVSC, families and friends enjoyed a celebratory community event together.

Another project that is still under way is a monthly opportunity for RVSC to present a talk, partnered with exhibiting artists from the Roanoke Self Portrait Project. In September, we learned about artists Jane Gabrielle and John Woodrum, along with a presentation about Wonju, South Korea, presented by Ramona Kirsch.

In October the exhibiting artist was Michelle Peppers. Bill Modica shared information about Kisumu, Kenya.

November's exhibiting artists were Julia Raring and Bryce Cobbs with a presentation by Linda Harrison about our Brazilian Sister City, Florianópolis. We also learned about the upcoming visit of Brazilian mural artist Thiago Valdi, who will be creating a mural here in Roanoke in the fall of 2023, which is of particular interest to our artists in Roanoke.

We will continue to have these opportunities to discover more about our exhibiting self-portrait artists in the Municipal Building in collaboration with the following presentations: February — St. Lô, France; March — Opole, Poland; April — Lijiang, China; and May — Pskov, Russia. Information about these presentations is shared through the Arts Commissions weekly newsletter and on social media. The public is welcome to join us.

My most recent project for RVSC was designing the New Year's card for 2023. I am truly grateful for this opportunity. I look forward to learning

more as I continue to find ways to highlight the work RVSC does to foster peaceful and respectful relationships with our Sister Cities and in our community during the remaining months of my residency.



Jason Long (on guitar) and Erin Hunter provided some of the music during the festival.



Above: RVSCI President Mary Jo Fassié (left), RVSCI Corresponding Secretary Jean Broyles, RVSC fall intern Jared Ackerman and Krista, a Roanoke Ambassador, at the ginkgo festival.

Left: Simone Paterson, Fern Shaffer and Katherine Devine at the Roanoke sculpture in Century Plaza.





Artist-in-residence Katherine Devine's most recent project for RVSC was designing the New Year's card for 2023. About the card and her inspiration, on her Facebook page the artist wrote: "I have returned to their motto many times this year: 'To promote peace through mutual respect, understanding, and cooperation — one individual, one community at a time.'"



RVSCI board members and friends at the Ginkgo Tree Festival (from left): Katherine Devine, Vivian Sparks, Andreea Mihălașe-O'Keef, Ann Hackworth, Ramona Kirsch, Jessie Coffman, Sara Epperly, Alice Epperly, Linda Harrison, Bill Modica, Debra Boule, Bill Bestpitch and Mary Jo Fassie.



## WESOLYCH SWIAT SZCZESLIWEGO NOWEGO ROKU 2023

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

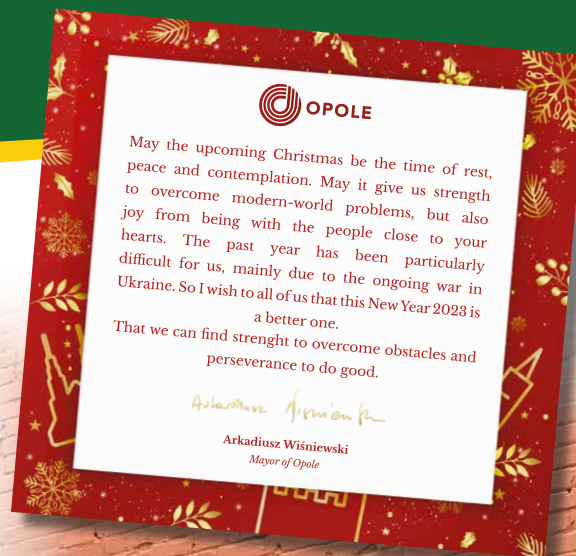
The above means "Merry Christmas and Happy New Year 2023." The Opole committee's goals for 2023 include solidifying plans for the 30th anniversary in 2024-5 of partnership between Roanoke County and Opole, Poland, along with a visiting artist workshop at Hollins University.

In November, Opole volunteers were happy to be represented at the Ginkgo Festival in Century Plaza in downtown Roanoke and to share treats from Poland.

Monies from the July Ukrainian fundraiser concert were distributed equally between our Ukrainian partners and the Kosciuszko Foundation (KF). Our funds were matched by an additional \$2,000 from the KF to help fund a newly established preschool for Ukrainian refugee children in Szczecin, Poland. These funds were designated to pay for electricity, heating and water at the new site as well as to provide breakfast and lunch for the 60+ enrolled children who were being immersed into Polish language classes. We will receive periodic updates from the KF as to the status at the school.

Poland continues to welcome refugees from Ukraine with numbers reaching 8 million — the majority of them are women and children. The strain on Poland has been immense with numbers continuing to increase due to winter and loss of infrastructure across the border. Poland's population has grown by 3 percent due to refugees requesting temporary protection. The housing crisis is real, and as of March 1, refugees will be charged a percentage to remain in state housing. The costs are being funneled to NGOs. Other refugees will move on to other EU countries.

The crisis will not end at war's end. Infrastructure needs to be rebuilt. Continued support will be needed. If you wish to support Poland's efforts at the border and in Poland, please send your donations to RVSCI (P.O. Box 136, Roanoke, VA 24002 or donate at [www.rvsci.us](http://www.rvsci.us)) with the notation Ukraine relief. Monies will be sent to the KF to be distributed to areas with the greatest need.



Ellen and Chico Harkrader of Roanoke at the Ginkgo Festival. In 2011, Chico participated in an artists exchange during a summer workshop in Opole.



Norman interns to Roanoke in 2022 (from left): Alice Lemi re, Camille Timerie and Ang le Cahu. Excerpts from their internship reports are at right. Full reports and photos are on the RVSCI website. Photo from La Manche Libre.



## BRIEF EXCERPTS FROM OUR INTERNS' REPORTS

We ask interns to both sides of the Atlantic to provide us with a brief, written report. We want to know their impressions of life in a foreign country and whether or not they'd recommend the experience to others.

**ALICE LEMI RE:** "It took a while when I came back to France to realize that this travel was a real journey during which I grew up. I used to be one of the shyest persons, I was not able to discuss with strangers without shaking my legs! And now when I look back on my journey I'm proud of having been able to handle this issue."

—Alice visited Roanoke in April-July 2022. Her host family was Jennifer, Kevin and Leah Conroy of Salem. She attended Glenvar High School and went to summer camp.

**CAMILLE TIMERIE:** "The internship gave me the opportunity to help out the people who are taking care of these collections and I feel very proud to have been a part of the several initiatives. There is always something going on there, and we can safely say that the Taubman museum is one bustling place!"

— Camille was in Roanoke in August 2022. His host families were Tim and Sherrie Henshaw of Roanoke County, then James Matthews and Joe Cobb and their children, JJ and Ginny, of Roanoke. He interned at the Taubman Museum of Art and in various departments with the city of Roanoke.

**ANG LE CAHU:** "I had the opportunity to improve my English level while participating in internships and activities that interested me. The fact that I was hosted by a family gave me many more opportunities to practice my English."

— Ang le visited Roanoke in August 2022. Her host family was Betsy and Chris Bohannon of Roanoke County. She interned at Healing Strides of Virginia and with the Blue Ridge Land Conservancy.

## EXCHANGES ARE ALIVE, WELL ON BOTH SIDES OF THE ATLANTIC

By Ann Hackworth  
Roanoke/St-L  co-chairwoman  
avhack@aol.com

**W**e welcome you to read short excerpts from the reflections of our three intrepid French interns from 2022 (at right). Alice Lemi re arrived in the Roanoke Valley in April, and Camille Timerie and Ang le Cahu spent August here. Alice and Camille are students at the *Institut Saint-L *, and Ang le graduated from there in the spring. Their full reports, along with multiple fun photos, are available online at [www.rvsci.us](http://www.rvsci.us).

In October, Roanoke/St-L  member Teresa Wimmer set off for our sister city to spend about 3 weeks seeing if she could happily transpose her Star City life, career and hobbies to St-L . We have been charmed by her report (pages 8-9) and know you will be as well.

We are pleased to welcome longtime member Chris Bohannon to our Roanoke/St-L  executive board. An accomplished francophone, he and his wife, Betsy, generously hosted summer intern Ang le for the month of August.

Debra Boule, and my husband, Bill, and I staffed the Roanoke/St-L  table at the ginkgo festival. We brought our stand-up photo display, greeted visitors and handed out informational fliers and samples of tasty *bonbons* (candies), Krema and Saint Siffrein fruit jellies.

On Dec. 7, we held our committee's annual *diner de No l* (Christmas dinner). Served in the back room at Montano's, we had 19 people, fewer than usual,

but actually a very nice gathering for the space. New executive board member Marsha Taylor told us about the trip she's leading to France in June with a group of 15 students and adults. Then, John Long, director of education at the National D-Day Memorial in Bedford, talked about current programs at the memorial, with which our committee has a long-standing relationship. The National D-Day Memorial, the only monument in the nation to D-Day, is committed to educating the next generation about the largest amphibious assault to ever take place. For more information, explore the memorial's extensive website at <https://www.dday.org/>. We thank John for his willingness to share his expertise.

Co-chairwoman Peggy Wells and I will represent this committee at the gathering with local artists and the Roanoke City Council on Tuesday, Feb. 21, at 6 p.m. in the Roanoke Municipal Building. We will talk to Roanoke artists, council members and the general public about the history of our sister city relationship as well as our ongoing, mutual projects. Please consider coming out downtown to support us!

Finally, please add to your calendar our annual Bastille Day potluck *pique-nique*, Sunday, July 16, 5:30 p.m., at Shelter No. 4 (top of the hill), Longwood Park in Salem. Please bring a main dish and side and/or dessert. The breeze is always lovely on the hill in the middle of July. All are welcome! *Vous  tes tous les bienvenus!*



## My 3-week internship in St-Lô: Quelle aventure!

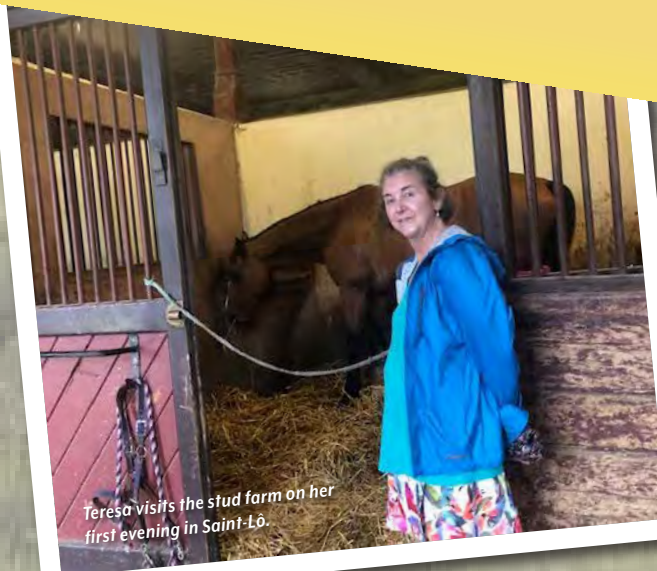
By Teresa Wimmer  
harpdance@hotmail.com



Teresa Wimmer enjoys the beach with Louise, the sister of Jeanine Verove



"Another favorite hobby -- birdwatching and bird feeding," writes Teresa. "Made this acquaintance at Mont St-Michel."



Teresa visits the stud farm on her first evening in Saint-Lô.



## You know that you're in Saint-Lô if:

1. After taking a train, subway, shuttle bus, plane, another plane and another train to Saint-Lô, you are warmly greeted by Saint-Lô 44 - Roanoke President Jeanine Verove. With a quick hand gesture, she guides me to the first historical site: le Haras National de Saint-Lô, the national stud farm. "Just next door!" says Jeanine. Oh-so-beautiful and oh-so-kind, these horses. Because I had the *bonne chance* to arrive in the evening, we were able to watch the young horses prepping for an upcoming competition. *Allez-y!*

2. Most of my internship was spent observing and participating in the restaurant *scolaire* at the L'école primaire Samuel Beckett. Even the *école maternelle* (pre-K) students are served a 4-course meal for lunch. Yes, a 4-course meal, but the staff emphasizes avoiding food waste. A toddler is given a *gout*, a taste of something, whereas a fourth grader will be served more. For the older students, each table is given a bread basket and a pitcher of water. A bread station is set up for the students to get more when needed. Usually, one student from the table gets the extras.

3. There are adult staff, men and women, called *animateurs* and *animatrices*. They serve the courses to the children, offer seconds, refill the water pitchers, clear plates and clean tables. The ambiance is warm and joyful as the staff are sometimes singing and dancing. Of course, proper conduct is adhered to.

4. The first week, I also interned at Cuisine Centrale du GIP (*groupement d'intérêt public*). They prepare and deliver the meals for the elementary schools. Upon entering, it had the appearance of a normal office building. However, once beyond the Prep doors, it is like walking through a maze on the Starship Enterprise, with some large doors sliding open and closing behind you. Quickly put to work with a large wooden paddle, I stirred a brew of bubbling rice and milk for a dessert called *semoule*, a semolina cake. Great for vegetarians and those with religious restrictions.

5. I have never eaten so much in my life. And it was all good. Next, I interned at Collège Louis Pasteur, a middle school, and at Lycée Le Verrier, a high school. Being close to the sea, the menu includes various seafood and each with its own

sauce. The seafood, frequently whole fish, arrived first thing in the morning, packed in ice. Vegetables and fruits came fresh also and consisted of what was in season. When I was there, it was carrots, leeks and rhubarb. Fresh, whole baguettes were delivered at this same hour. I used to think, a school kitchen is a school kitchen ... until my internship. I politely asked for a floor plan of the kitchen at Louis Pasteur, and they heartily gave me one. Viewing the floor plan is available upon request.

6. The dishwashing room is called *La Plonge*. Fun! After the food is prepped and stored, each of the prep rooms is ready to be cleaned. Tables, machines and floors are then sprayed using a long hose and a cleaning product. When finished, lights off, door closed. The room is left to dry.

7. *La vie quotidienne* (my daily life): In the library, I sat down on a couch to read. A sign on a table said: "If you want to put your feet up on the couch, go ahead. But, please remove your shoes first." I did.

8. I did my laundry at the *laverie automatique*. Easy. Everything chosen and paid for at one machine, credit cards accepted. Next door was a pharmacy. Outside the pharmacy was a vending machine for condoms. After-hours accommodation. How considerate.

9. Coming back chez Jeanine from one of many excursions, what was at the patio door but a hedgehog eating the cat's food. Régisse, the cat, very close by, looked on with keen curiosity.

10. I rode the regional bus line, called SLAM, around town. I went to a French film, "La Page Blanche," and watched my favorite soccer team, L'Equipe de France, play a match on TV (France won), and went to the *Centre Aquatique* to watch a class. The medium for art was photography. Huge photographs were outside the train station, inside the library, in gardens, along sidewalks, the stables. All unique and different.

11. And, the *tartes de pomme*, they seem to follow you everywhere...

This tiny hedgehog showed up at Jeanine Verove's home and started eating the cat food. The cat, Régisse, can be seen in the upper right-hand part of the photo, watching intently.

*Cou cou! Merci:*

RVSCI, Mary Jo Fassié, Roanoke/  
Saint-Lô, Peggy, Ann, Chez  
Jeanine and her sister Louissette,  
Chez Les Gomberts - Philippe,  
Aurelie, Cleo, Adèle, GIP, the  
schools' chefs and staff. Cookie  
and Régisse, two black cats  
that were my best friends since  
I missed my fish, Raphael. And,  
President Eisenhower, founder of  
Sister Cities International. *Quelle  
bonne idée!*



## EXPRESSIONS OF SYMPATHY, SUPPORT FOLLOWING A TRAGEDY

By Dr. Ramona Kirsch  
Roanoke-Wonju chairwoman  
kirschrr@hollins.edu

As most of you are aware, a very tragic accident occurred in South Korea on Oct. 29, 2022, during Halloween festivities in the Itaewon neighborhood of Seoul, South Korea. At least 158 people were killed, and 196 others were injured due to a crowd surge. I immediately sent an e-mail inquiring if this impacted anyone in Wonju, and fortunately it did not.

In addition, Roanoke Mayor Lea sent a letter to the Mayor of Wonju expressing Roanoke's "heartfelt condolences to those who lost their lives and their bereaved families, as well as those injured. We pray for their speedy recovery." The mayor of Wonju responded gratefully and stated that this support from our sister city of Roanoke "will help us overcome grief, pull ourselves together, and get through this difficult time."



Gathering at the municipal building for an RVSCI and artists talk are (from left): Roanoke Arts and Cultural Coordinator Doug Jackson, Ramona Kirsch, Katherine Devine, artist Jane Gabrielle, artist John Woodrum, Bill Modica and Linda Harrison.



I will be representing RVSCI and the city of Roanoke at Sister Cities International's first African Regional Summit from Feb. 20-24 in Cape Town, South Africa. During the summit, I will be participating in a Call-to-Action Activity: Libraries & Literacy Project. I will be part of a group that will visit and donate books to and do reading projects with 5 primary schools in the Langa Township, the oldest township in Cape Town and seat of the fight to end apartheid. RVSCI is asking for donations of the following types of books that I will take with me to the summit:

- Elementary books for children ages 7 to 12 years of age
- Educational coloring books

E-mail [roanokevalleysistercities@gmail.com](mailto:roanokevalleysistercities@gmail.com) or phone/text (540) 798-3788 if you would like to make a donation.





Accepting  
submissions  
until  
May 31

## Young people of the Roanoke Valley... show us your creativity!

Help us celebrate the Roanoke Valley with our sister city,  
Wonju, South Korea!

**Submit a video (in Korean) about the Roanoke Valley!**

### OVERVIEW

Create a video about Roanoke to send to our sister city, Wonju, South Korea!  
This is part of a collaboration with Wonju, which had its own video competition for Roanoke in 2021 (see below for more information about the winners, along with links to the winning videos).

### IMPORTANT DATES

Deadline for submissions: May 31 (11:59 pm EST)  
Announcement of winners: June

### ELIGIBILITY

High-school and university students across the Roanoke Valley  
(no professional videographers)

### PRIZES

**Grand prize:** \$800 cash\*\* and year membership to Roanoke Valley Sister Cities  
**Second place:** \$400 cash\*\* and year membership to Roanoke Valley Sister Cities  
**Participation prizes:** All eligible submissions will receive a gift card to a local Korean food establishment and a certificate of participation  
*\*\*Winning videos will be premiered in June and will also be featured on the Roanoke Valley Sister Cities website and Roanoke YouTube channel.*

### VIDEO SUBMISSION SPECIFICATIONS

**Length:** No longer than three (3) minutes  
**Language:** Can be in English, with English subtitles (special consideration if in Korean or with Korean subtitles!)  
**Visual contents:** Visual elements may include blogs, drone footage, still photos, documentary/narrative segments, visual and performing arts images, etc., that highlight the city of Roanoke and surrounding area.

### GENERAL SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

- Scan the QR code
- Video submission
- Application form

*NOTE: Your video submission is not considered complete until we receive these items.*

### CRITERIA FOR REVIEW

All videos will be judged on the following criteria:

1. Creativity
2. Quality of content regarding Roanoke and the Roanoke Valley
3. Suitability of theme
4. Technical quality



### WINNING VIDEOS OF 2021

- **Ms. Yerin Kim**, submitter. *Theme of video:* The Present (To her, the best present of all was a visit to Wonju, and let's enjoy the present)  
Link: <https://youtu.be/oql6Orkhq5I>
- **Ms. Hyobin Hwang**, submitter. *Theme of video:* Wonderful Wonju (vibrant and beautiful city of Wonju)  
Link: [https://youtu.be/rrMQ2\\_EbCsQ](https://youtu.be/rrMQ2_EbCsQ)

For any questions, please contact **Dr. Ramona Kirsch**,  
chairwoman of the Roanoke-Wonju Sister City Committee,  
[rkirsch03@gmail.com](mailto:rkirsch03@gmail.com).  
For more information about Roanoke Valley Sister Cities Inc.,  
see [www.rvsci.us](http://www.rvsci.us)



# Farewell

to a gifted artist and dear friend



*Bill Saari*



Bill Saari, a dear friend of RVSCI, died Nov. 19, 2022, from cancer. He was 79.

Bill often represented Roanoke-Wonju at RVSCI board meetings, but he had connections in most of our sister city committees and beyond. “He probably hosted people from more countries than anyone else in Roanoke,” said RVSCI Treasurer Bill Bestpitch.

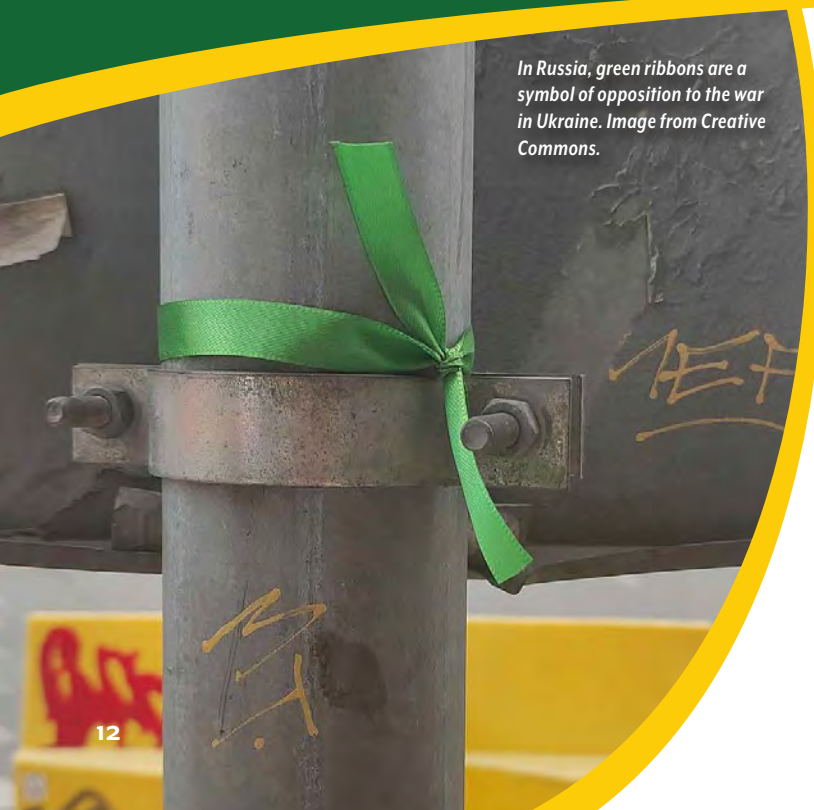
His last Sister City trip was to Wonju in 2015, traveling with then-committee chairman Brian Counihan and a group of students.

Bill was a gifted artist and very much a people person who loved connecting with other artists, strangers, friends and world travelers.

We will miss him, his stories and his upbeat and generous spirit.

— Mary Jo Fassié

## PSKOV, RUSSIA



## A PAUSE IN THIS RELATIONSHIP, WITH HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

**B**ecause of the occupation of Ukraine by Russian forces, Roanoke’s relationship with its Russian sister city of Pskov has been paused. The concept of people-to-people diplomacy remains the core of Sister City’s mission, and we hope to continue bringing people together to see fewer conflicts, rather than more. This relationship dates back to 1992. It is the wish of the Pskov committee that communication with Pskov State University will resume at a later date.

— Jessie Coffman, Roanoke-Pskov committee chairwoman



## RENEWING OUR COMMITMENT TO OUR AFRICAN PARTNER

By Bill Modica  
Roanoke-Kisumu chairman  
Modicabill2@aol.com

The Roanoke-Kisumu Sister City committee renewed our commitment to support the City of Kisumu Urban Area Association for another 3-year term. This business organization works directly with the local government agencies to support programs for sustainable development, social rights, food, health and peace and justice. The director, Nixon Samba, has helped us with contacts and provided assistance to us and our delegates when we visit.

As Roanoke-Kisumu chairman, I continue to promote the work of Sister Cities by participating in programs in the Roanoke area such as the Local Colors festival, An African Experience Workshop at the Higher Education Center in November and the first Ginkgo Festival at Century Plaza, where we shared information about our sister city projects. I also attended presentations at the Roanoke Municipal building for Roanoke City Council and local artists to introduce the Kisumu display booth in the building as a showcase of African arts. If you have not yet visited the Sister City display, take time to drop by there when weather permits.

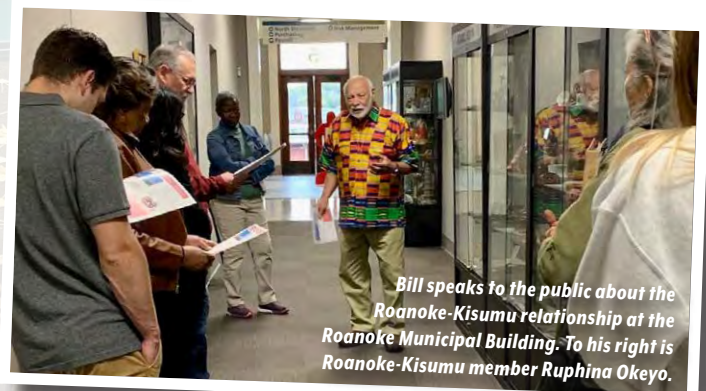
Our membership remains at around 30 dues-paying members and a gathering of general supporters. Our fund-raising efforts in support of a cleaner water source for two schools in Kisumu has reached over 75 percent of our goal for the first project to be completed. In addition, we now have established a link between Kenya's Kenyatta University and our own Hollins University that we hope will enhance educational opportunities, thanks to Hollins' Dr. Ramona Kirsch. Her story was featured in the Feb.-July 2022 AOW.

Our upcoming work will be focused on adding more members, continuing to support projects in Kisumu and starting an artist exchange in the coming year. To this end, we have sought to identify a Kisumu folk artist to visit Roanoke in 2023. Working with the Roanoke Arts Commission and the City of Roanoke, we would like to host and promote an exchange of culture and music. If you have contacts or ideas of ways to enhance these efforts, we invite you to share them with us.

Dr. Ramona Kirsch, chairwoman of the Roanoke-Wonju sister city committee, will be representing RVSCI and the city of Roanoke at Sister Cities International's first African Regional Summit from Feb. 20-24 in Cape Town, South Africa.

Let's make 2023 a great year for everyone and move forward together.

Bill Modica staffs the Roanoke-Kisumu table at the Ginkgo Festival.



Bill speaks to the public about the Roanoke-Kisumu relationship at the Roanoke Municipal Building. To his right is Roanoke-Kisumu member Ruphina Okeyo.



## PREPARING FOR MURAL ARTIST; REMEMBERING A WORLD-CLASS ATHLETE

By Linda Harrison  
Roanoke-Florianópolis chairwoman  
lindaharrison29@hotmail.com

Florianópolis sister city committee is looking forward to fall 2023 as we plan the visit of a Brazilian mural artist, Thiago Valdi, from Florianópolis. In preparation, we have had meetings with Talia Logan, the director of the Olin Gallery on the campus of Roanoke College, which is funding this exchange, and with artist Suzun Hughes who has offered living quarters and mural space for the artist in downtown Roanoke. In November, we were able to Zoom with Thiago to talk about his stay in Roanoke and the type of mural(s) he might be able to create.

In November, I also participated in the RVSCI Ginkgo festival and was happy to hand out Paçoquita, a popular candy from Brazil, as well as information about the Roanoke-Florianópolis relationship. Later in the month, I made a presentation at the Municipal Building as part of the Year of the Artist and informed the public of the origins of our sister city.



Pelé

On Dec. 29 at the age of 82, Pelé, the Brazilian king of soccer, died in São Paulo. He helped to win 3 World Cups starting at the age of 17. He had undergone colon cancer treatments since 2021. I remember in the late '70s reading stories to my students about him. Pelé's fame was such that in 1967 factions of a civil war in Nigeria agreed to a brief cease-fire so he could play an exhibition match in the country.

He was granted an honorary knighthood by Britain's Queen Elizabeth II in 1997.

Pelé's life after soccer took many forms. He was a politician (Brazil's Extraordinary Minister for Sport), a wealthy businessman and an ambassador for UNESCO and the United Nations. He was born Edson Arantes do Nascimento in Três Corações and grew up shining shoes to buy his modest soccer gear.

Newly elected Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva paid his respects at Vila Belmiro, the stadium where Pelé played for most of his career.



Linda Harrison at the Brazil Sculpture in Century Plaza.



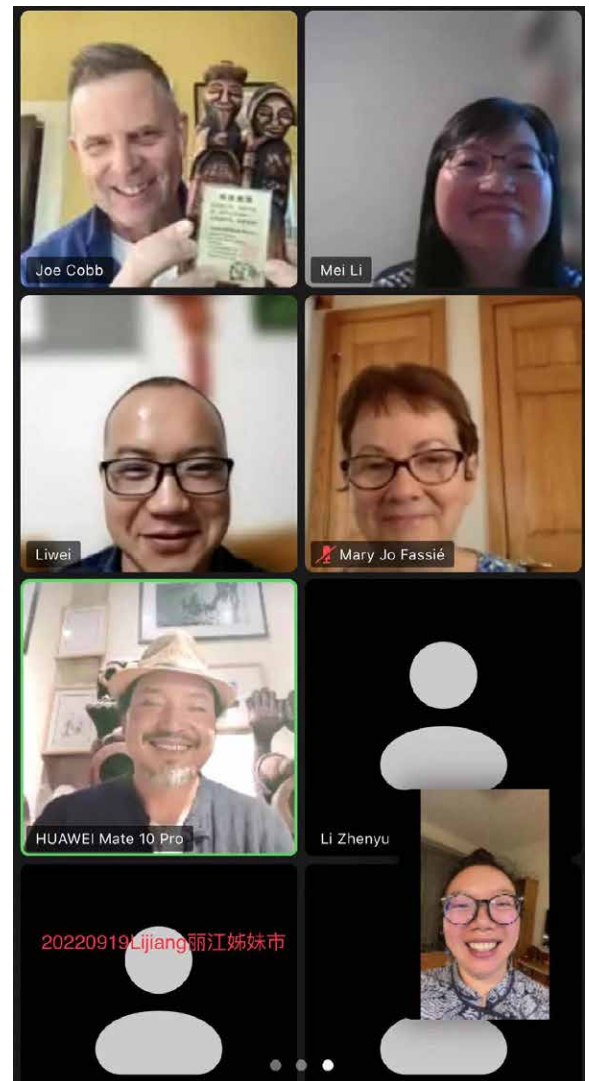
# RECONNECTING WITH OUR LIJIANG ARTISTS: MR. MU XINRONG AND AJUN

By Joe Cobb  
Roanoke-Lijiang chairman  
Joseph.cobb@roanokeva.gov

On Sept. 19, 2022, through the wonders of Zoom, Meili Foy, Mary Jo Fassié and I were able to reunite with our artist friends in Lijiang, Mr. Mu Xinrong and his wife, Ajun, the Director of Foreign Affairs for the city, Mr. Liwei, and several other officials from Lijiang, to hear about one another's lives and to continue the conversation of hoping to bring Mr. Mu's family to Roanoke for an artist-in-residence program in the near future.

It was delightful to see new work recently completed by Mr. Mu, which includes carvings designed from drawings by his daughter, who is also becoming an accomplished artist. Ajun is an extraordinary photographer, and Mr. Mu specializes in wood carvings that convey the essence and history of his people and their language.

In addition to this delightful conversation, we recently received a letter from the Mayor of Lijiang to our Mayor Sherman Lea conveying greetings for the new year. We are truly grateful for this growing friendship and relationship and look forward to deepening this connection in person in the years to come.



A screenshot from a September Zoom meeting with Joe Cobb (top left), Meili Foy (top right), Mr. Liwei, director of foreign affairs for Lijiang (second from top, left), Mary Jo Fassié (second from top, right), artist Mr. Mu Xinrong (bottom left) and his wife, photographer Ajun (bottom right). Joe Cobb is holding two carvings that the Chinese artist gave him during a visit to Lijiang in 2018. "I wanted him to see how his gifts continue to inspire me," said Joe.

Vivian Sparks staffed the Roanoke-Lijiang table during the ginkgo festival.



New work recently completed by Mr. Mu, which includes carvings designed from drawings by his daughter, who is also becoming an accomplished artist.



## Mark your calendars!

- Feb. 4:** Lunar New Year, Taubman Museum, 12-2 p.m.
- Feb. 7:** RVSCI board meeting, Center in the Square boardroom, 5 p.m.
- Feb. 15-26:** Roanoke College International Film Festival
- Feb. 21:** St-Lô & Roanoke artists at Roanoke Municipal Building, 6-7 p.m.
- Feb. 28:** Roanoke College Internship Fair, 4:30-6:30 p.m.
- March 4-5:** RVSCI at Roanoke Arts Pop, Taubman
- March 20:** Opole & Roanoke artists at Roanoke Municipal Building, 6-7 p.m.
- April 4:** RVSCI board meeting, CITS boardroom, 5 p.m.
- April 14:** Deadline for Young Artists Showcase entries
- April 17:** Lijiang & Roanoke artists at Roanoke Municipal Building, 6-7 p.m.
- May 20:** Local Colors Festival
- May 29-June 12:** RVSCI trip to Saint-Lô & Paris
- June 6:** RVSCI Annual Dinner Meeting, rooftop, CITS
- July 16:** Bastille Day potluck picnic, Shelter #4, Longwood Park, 5:30 p.m.





## ***Thank you to our generous supporters!***

Since publication of our July 2022 newsletter, these are our Patron, Benefactor, Diplomat, Consul and All Cities Members who have joined their support of RVSCI and our projects.

### **PATRON**

Bill Bestpitch  
Jeanne Jégousso, Ph.D.  
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Thursday Morning Music Club

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William Lange and Lorraine Lange, Ed.D.

### **CONSUL**

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Drs. Jacek and Kris Slowikowski, M.D.s

### **BENEFACTOR**

DiFrancesco family  
William Jefferson, M.D.  
Ramona Kirsch, Ed.D.  
Teresa Wimmer

### **ALL CITIES MEMBER**

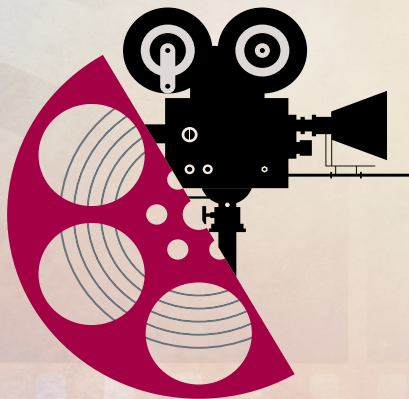
Mary Ann Conrad





# International Film Series

## in collaboration with Hollins University



### February 15–26, 2023

The Department of Modern Languages is pleased to present the fifth Roanoke College International Film Series in collaboration with Hollins University. Our goal is to put the community and different disciplines in meaningful dialogue with one another and to increase community awareness of international cultures. The theme of our films this year is **Ghosts**. All screenings are free and open to the public and will have English subtitles. Each film will be followed by a post-screening, panel-led discussion.

The year's film series is sponsored by Roanoke College, Hollins University, Roanoke Valley Sister Cities, the Grandin Theatre, and the Taubman Museum of Art. Roanoke College sponsors include the Jordan Endowment; Office of Community Programs; Fintel Library; Center for Studying Structures of Race; Departments of Modern Languages, English, Sociology & Public Health, and Religion & Philosophy; the Anthropology, Screen Studies, and Peace & Justice Studies concentrations; and Student Activities Board.



HINDI

### Photograph

February 15, 7:00 p.m.  
The Grandin Theatre

Ritesh Batra  
2019, PG-13

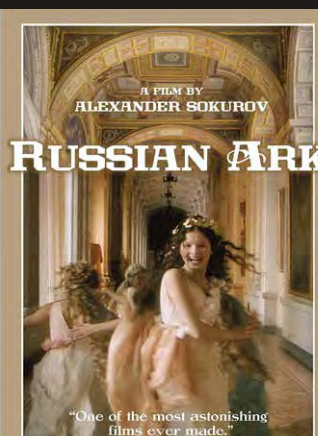


SPANISH

### Volver

February 16, 7:00 p.m.  
Wortmann Ballroom at Roanoke College

Pedro Almodóvar  
2006, R

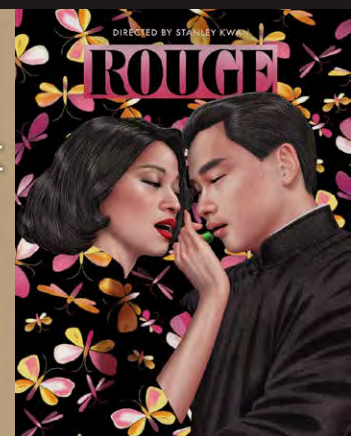


RUSSIAN

### Russian Ark

February 17, 6:00 p.m.  
Visual Arts Center Auditorium at Hollins

Alexander Sokurov  
2002, NR



CANTONESE

### Rouge

February 21, 7:00 p.m.  
Wortmann Ballroom at Roanoke College

Stanley Kwan  
1987, NR



JAPANESE

### Pulse

February 22, 6:00 p.m.  
Visual Arts Center Auditorium at Hollins

Kiyoshi Kurosawa  
2001, R



ITALIAN

### Sicilian Ghost Story

February 23, 7:00 p.m.  
Wortmann Ballroom at Roanoke College

Fabio Grassadonia and Antonio Piazza  
2017, NR



GERMAN

### Phoenix

February 24, 7:00 p.m.  
Antrim Chapel at Roanoke College

Christian Petzold  
2014, PG-13



FRENCH

### Sylvie and the Ghost

February 26, 2:00 p.m.  
Taubman Museum of Art

Claude Autant-Lara  
1946, NR



## 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:**

Sara Epperly, Ph.D.

Archie Freeman

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

John Makay

Andreea Mihalache-O'Keef, Ph.D.

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

**Florianópolis:** Linda Harrison

**Kisumu:** Bill Modica

**Lijiang:** Joe Cobb

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

**Pskov:** Jessie Coffman

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

**Wonju:** 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

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Email \_\_\_\_\_

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

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