



# AROUND OUR WORLD

ROANOKE VALLEY SISTER CITIES, INC.

VOLUME 27, ISSUE 2 | AUGUST - DECEMBER 2024



The Opole delegation visited Mack Trucks Roanoke Valley Operations with Kris Slowikowski and members of Roanoke County government.

## 30 YEARS AND THRIVING Polish delegation visit was a whirlwind, with promises of good things to come.

By Kristina Bulas-Slowikowski, M.D.  
Roanoke-Opole chairwoman  
krisbulas@gmail.com

After months of hard work and preparation, Roanoke Valley Sister Cities and Roanoke County welcomed a delegation from Opole, Poland, on Oct. 6, 2024, to celebrate our 30th anniversary of partnership. The group of five was met at the Roanoke airport by local children dressed in Polish costume offering flowers, as is customary in Poland. Our guests were lodged at the Roanoke College Monterey House and were able to dine at the school cafeteria.

The Opole delegation included Mr. Arkadiusz Wiśniewski, Mayor/President of Opole; Mr. Maciej Wujec, Deputy Mayor/vice president of Opole; Mr. Łukasz Sowada, Councillor (former Chairman of Opole City Council); Mr. Łukasz Śmierciak, Director of the Department of Promotion; and Mr. Maciej Wróbel, Department of Culture, Tourism and International Cooperation.

Kaelyn Spickler, assistant to the administrator of Roanoke County, provided a comprehensive agenda focusing on tourism, public safety and education.

(continued on page 4)

## IN THIS ISSUE

- Roanoke-Opole report ..... Pages 1, 4-5
- President's report .....Pages 2-3
- 2025 Young Artist's showcase ..... Page 6
- Roanoke-Kisumu report ..... Page 8
- Roanoke-Florianópolis report..... Page 9
- Roanoke/ St-Lô report .....Pages 10-13
- Félicitations, Régine Archer..... Page 11
- Roanoke-Lijiang report .....Pages 14-15
- Roanoke-Wonju report ..... Page 16
- Meet our new board members..... Page 17
- International Film Festival..... Page 18
- Board/donation/membership info ..... Page 19
- Our donors ..... Page 20
- Mark your calendars! ..... Page 20





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

## MYRIAD ACTIVITIES, GUESTS, TRAVEL MADE FOR AN EXCITING FALL

**R**oanoke Valley Sister Cities is committed to its mission here in the valley and abroad. So, as we begin a new year, let's look back at some of the RVSCI highlights of fall 2024.

In September, the Opole, Poland, committee held a reception for Roanoke artist Chico Harkrader at the South County Library. Chico donated his painting "Triad" to RVSCI, and wanting to have it on display where Roanoke County citizens would be able to enjoy it, the committee decided on the county library as Opole is twinned with Roanoke County. The reception was well attended by the RVSCI board and county officials who thanked Chico for honoring us with his stunning artwork.

Free intermediate Korean language classes sponsored by RVSCI started up again in September at William Byrd High School. Silvia Lee served as the instructor, and Cherry Bell Damasco-Farrington from William Byrd aided in the venue and media outreach. The classes will continue in 2025 and will add a beginner's class in February.

In October, we had the pleasure of greeting five representatives from Opole, including the mayor of the city. The County of Roanoke prepared a wonderful itinerary for their weeklong visit

of the Roanoke Valley. Roanoke College provided housing for the group at Monterey House on campus. We gathered at Roanoke College for a wonderful introductory dinner on Monday, showcasing the Roanoke Valley and our 30-year relationship and learning from the visitors' video presentations

weather was beautiful, and the delegation was even able to hike to McAfee Knob.

If you haven't seen the refreshed RVSCI display cases in the Noel C. Taylor Municipal Building, be sure to stop by during daytime hours. All the cases were illuminated by the City of Roanoke, and RVSCI board members helped in reorganizing each case.



*This fall, the city of Roanoke added lights to the sister cities display cabinets at the Municipal Building.*

what a beautiful and active city Opole is. Roanoke-Opole Chair Kris Slowikowski served as a tour guide much of the week and hosted a dinner at her home. The

Later in October, Roanoke College hosted a presentation, "How to be a sustainability entrepreneur, one piece of land at a time," by Christian Dobreiner, a geologist with extensive experience in environmental sustainability projects in the oil and gas industry worldwide, and Ann DeLong, a Foreign Service Officer in the Department of State who had a 20-year international career as an environmental scientist working for the EPA and as a consultant. They live part-time in Bedford and Florianópolis, Brazil, and own land in the state of Santa Catarina, Brazil, in the Serra Geral mountains, where they have done extensive environmental projects and hope to partner with Roanoke College.

The RVSCI 3rd annual Ginkgo Festival took place on the first Saturday of November. All RVSCI cities were represented, sharing information about each city and treats. We

Roanoke artist Chico Harkrader (left) and Roanoke-Opole chairwoman Kris Slowikowski pose with Harkrader's painting "Triad," which he donated to RVSCI and is on display at the South County Library.



TRIAD  
 Artist: Chico Harkrader  
 Roanoke-Opole Sister City Partnership



were joined by the Roanoke Tree Stewards, who provided information about the history and origin of the ginkgo tree. Artist Katherine Devine involved passersby and children in a ginkgo artistic station and coloring activities involving images from the RVSCI sculptures. Music was provided throughout the festival by Roanoke musicians and young musicians from the Chinese community. Courtney Foxe served as our first Ginkgo Festival Queen and, attired in a beautiful golden costume and crown, danced using colorful scarves – so charming!

Later in November, Lijiang Chair Jessie Yu traveled to China with her daughter Armani. Jessie attended the International Friendship Cities Conference in Kunming. They both traveled to Lijiang and met with officials, visited the Lijiang Teacher's College, Lijiang Yaojia School and Jade Dragon Snow Mountain. They enjoyed experiencing the blending of diverse cultures in Yunnan Province and the culture of the Naxi people.

I attended the VA Sister Cities meeting via Zoom in November. This is always a good time to share activities with other cities in our state (Alexandria, Charlottesville, Newport News, Norfolk, Richmond, and more) who have sister cities.

On Dec. 3, the St-Lô committee hosted its annual Dîner de Noël and updated

everyone on their recent activities, including the upcoming trip to St-Lô. Several days later, Roanoke muralist Jon Murrill traveled to Florianópolis to attend an artistic conference and to paint an exquisite mural with artist Thiago Valdi who came to Roanoke in the fall 2023, leaving us with two beautiful murals.

In 2025 as we celebrate significant anniversaries, we look forward to possible trips to Kisumu and Opole and a visit from Florianópolis officials. We hope that you will be able to join us for these important celebrations as well as at local festivals in Roanoke. Become a member of RVSCI or donate ([www.rvsci.us](http://www.rvsci.us)), and we will keep you informed throughout the year.



**Ginkgo Festival Queen Courtney Foxe dances at the 3rd annual Ginkgo Festival.**

## 30 YEARS AND THRIVING

*(continued from page 1)*

Highlighted visits during the week were to Explore Park, where a bench was installed to commemorate the partnership with Opole; the McAfee Knob hike (and, yes, they made it to the top); and the D-Day Memorial in Bedford. A visit to the Burton Center for Arts and Technology provided a sampling of culinary students' cooking. They went to South County Library to view Chico Harkrader's painting and to the courthouse in Salem to showcase municipal offerings. A key to the County was given to every member of the delegation at the Board of Supervisors meeting. Visits to both Hollins University and Roanoke College offered future possibilities for student and teacher exchanges. A special highlight was a visit to the Roanoke Public Safety Center where the tour included visiting the 911 call center, a discussion with police and fire chiefs, IT management and TOUCH the Trucks - fire trucks, police cars, drones and a highly trained attack dog. A tour of the Mack trucks facility showcased a fully automated plant that builds 16 trucks ready to go in one day.

The dinner celebrating our 30th anniversary was held at Roanoke College. Special guests included Ewa



*The Polish visitors celebrate hiking to McAfee Knob.*

Pietrasienska, Consul of the Polish embassy, along with her husband, Pawel; Robert Joskowiak, Honorary Polish Consul for Virginia, members of the Roanoke County board of supervisors and the county administrator. A Power Point presentation of 30 years of cooperation between Roanoke and Opole was a highlight of the evening. Part of the presentation included reference to Polish Heritage Month, which occurs in October with mention of Kosciuszko and Pulaski commemorative days. Display boards were on view as well as a comprehensive binder including pictures and articles regarding our cooperation from the past 30 years. What a memorable evening.

Roanoke Valley Polish families met the group for a personal meet-and-greet at my home. There was lots of laughter, good food and drink plus learning that some Roanoke families had mutual acquaintances and even distant relatives with some of the Opole delegation group.

Roanoke College President Frank Shushok hosted the group at his home for food and drinks.

The grand finale was a visit to the Floyd Country store along with a drive up the parkway and steaks at the Texas steakhouse. The group wants to bring the chain to Opole -- they enjoyed it so much and, yes, there was dancing at the Floyd county store -- so fun.

Many thanks to Jeff Vick who accompanied the group on Amtrak to Washington, D.C., where they were met by Allan Greenberg from the State Department and treated to a whirlwind tour of local monuments and sites, then put in an Uber and off to Dulles airport for their flight home.



*The grandchildren of Jola Roszaks, a member of the Roanoke Polish community, helped welcome the Opole delegation to Roanoke in costume and with flowers.*

The weather was perfection, the Opole guests were amazing, and the itinerary was jam-packed minute by minute. This was a most memorable visit, and we are looking forward to good things to come.

Special thanks go to Roanoke County: Richard Caywood and Kaelyn Spickler and her team; Roanoke County Board of Supervisors for their support and media coverage; Roanoke Valley Sister City Opole members who offered their time and assistance; and especially to Mary Jo, who helped with the dinner planning and all of the items that I did not think of; and to Jeff Vick and Allen Greenberg for their assistance and expertise.

*Dziękujemy i Zapraszamy.* Thank you and come back to visit.



At the celebratory dinner at Roanoke College, Kris Slowikowski poses with RVSCI board member Jeff Vick (right) and Ewa Pietrasienska, consul of the Embassy of the Republic of Poland, and her husband, Pawel.



At Explore Park, Arkadiusz Wiśniewski, Mayor/President of Opole, poses with the bench that was installed to commemorate the partnership between Opole and Roanoke County.

***The weather was perfection, the Opole guests were amazing, and the itinerary was jam-packed minute by minute.***



**Opole Councillor  
Lukasz Sowada ziplines  
at Explore Park.**

## Roanoke Valley Sister Cities - 2025 Young Artists Showcase

### 2025 Theme: "Friendship: The Heartbeat of Global Peace."

Sister Cities International aims to promote peace through mutual respect, understanding, and cooperation – one individual, one community at a time. The Showcase provides a unique platform to explore how global friendships can drive positive change and bridge cultural divides.

#### Eligibility

- Students must be between 12 and 18 years of age at the time of the 2025 international deadline. (March 21, 2025 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:

- Below are photos of the top three 2024 international winners.
- One artist will be selected as a Grand Prize Winner, 2nd Place Winner, and 3rd Place Winner.
- The Grand Prize Artist 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 2025.

#### Roanoke Valley Sister Cities Awards:

- Photographs of the 1<sup>st</sup>- 3<sup>rd</sup> place artists' work will be published to the RVSC website and Facebook page.
- **1<sup>st</sup> Place \$300, 2<sup>nd</sup> Place \$200, 3<sup>rd</sup> Place \$100 and Honorable Mentions \$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 be accepting physical artwork, only photographs of the artwork. To ensure our judges have the best quality view of your artwork, please confirm that photographs are no less than 1350x1080 pixels.**
- Photos of media accepted include oil, acrylic, watercolor, charcoal, colored pencil, crayon, ink, marker, etching, collage will be accepted. **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 **March 21, 2025**.
- Judges will evaluate submissions based on theme interpretation, originality, and creativity.





RVSC board members and friends gather for a photo toward the end of the Ginkgo Festival. RVSC used this image on its New Year's card to our partners and friends abroad.



...  
**FREE &  
 OPEN TO  
 ALL!**

# BEGINNER KOREAN CLASS

Classes held at William Byrd High School  
 2902 Washington Ave., Vinton, VA 24179  
 Enter at Door 22

Step into the Korean language with our Beginner Korean Class, designed for newcomers. Whether you're looking to understand your favorite K-pop song or your current Korean drama, this class is the perfect starting point.

## Spring 2025 Session

- 📍 SATURDAYS
- 🕒 12:30 PM - 2:00 PM
- 📅 CLASSES BEGIN FEB. 8, 2025

CONTACT US →

📞 (540) 521-1168

✉️ roanokevalleysistercities@gmail.com  
 vintonworldtrekkers@gmail.com



# KOREAN LANGUAGE CLASSES



with Roanoke Valley Sister Cities, Inc.  
 Vinton World Trekkers  
 WBHS International Club

## FOR INTERMEDIATE LEARNERS

### Spring 2025 Session

- ✓ Saturdays
- ✓ 11:00 am - 12:30 pm
- ✓ Classes begin Jan. 11, 2025

Classes are open to all & are **FREE!**

Classes held at William Byrd High School  
 2902 Washington Ave., Vinton, VA 24179  
 Enter at Door 22

More info  
 roanokevalleysistercities@gmail.com  
 (540) 521-1168

## KENYAN HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS MEAN FAMILY, CHURCH AND GOOD FOOD

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

**W**ondering what is Christmas like for the Kenyans now living in Roanoke?

Well, the ones I have talked to say they try to go home for the holidays and spend time with their families. In Kenya, it is common for families to get together, with those living in cities travelling to visit family members who live in the countryside. The holiday period lasts from just before Christmas Eve until just after New Year's Day, and very little work is done outside the home unless it is absolutely necessary.

Families gather at church on Christmas Eve for services, singing and often with a reception that includes traditional food. Sometimes gifts are exchanged, but often that is saved for Christmas Day. Christmas Day is a time for festivities and group meals. Often the day is spent with the most senior family members or sometimes the most well off. The house is decorated with homemade paper decorations, greenery and flowers. Because evergreen trees are rare there, if there is a tree, it is usually a cedar. Ornaments are like those found in the States. Outside decorations are not common except in stores and shopping malls.

Attending church is traditional and seeing family and friends is expected. Services last from 1 to 2 hours. Most Kenyans are Christians, though some are Muslim.

Traditional foods for the big meal, called Nyama Choma (roast meat), include beef BBQ, fish, baked chicken, sheep meat and grilled goat. Rice is the most common side dish along with vegetables, usually from the home garden. A must for this meal is a flat bread called chapati and ugali, a type of corn bread. It would be improper not to serve these. Those who raise livestock usually slaughter one of their best animals. Everyone eats from serving plates on a common table, and it is not unusual for them to use their fingers instead of flatware. People sit wherever there is room and often spill out from the dining area onto the porches with the TV on in the background. Drinks are often fruit juice, local



*Kenyan immigrants gather for a holiday celebration at Higher Life Christian Church in Roanoke.*

beer and water. There has to be plenty of food and the meal can continue for a long time with various courses and lots of catching up conversations. Desserts are expensive and not always present. Fruit is more usual, and sometimes candy or sweets are served.

One other tradition is for guests to wear only new clothing for the Christmas festival and to show off their finery. Lots of photos will be taken and saved.

Gift giving is expected with bigger gifts for the more senior family members. Be sure to always give gifts with the right hand or both hands. Guests bring a small gift when invited to the meal. Flowers are common, and gifts of flour, coffee or sugar are appreciated. Woven bags, called kiondo, are sometimes used as wrapping, but it is expected that you return the bags afterward. In urban areas, New Year's Eve parties may include dancing, touring activities, singing and concerts. Most work-related activities are postponed until after New Year's, and many shops are closed for the entire time so families can travel and visit. Don't expect businesses or government offices to be open.

If you have the occasion to visit Kisumu or other Kenyan areas, be prepared for a warm reception and lots of followship. For those Kenyans living in the USA, these traditions are very important and followed with great enthusiasm.

## FLORIPA AMANHÃ: MY EXPERIENCE PAINTING IN BRAZIL

By Jon Murrill  
Roanoke-Florianópolis member  
murrillart@gmail.com

As a Roanoke artist, I am always eager to expand and grow our city's passion for the arts. So last year, when Brazilian artist Thiago Valdi visited Roanoke, I jumped at the opportunity for us to learn from each other. Through the Roanoke Valley Sister Cities program, I was able to introduce Thiago to Roanoke, but more importantly, to bring his flair for the arts to our doorstep.

For Thiago and me, murals are a way of life. Thiago is usually found painting murals in his home city of Florianópolis, Brazil, much as I do here in Virginia. Through collaborating last year we not only formed a friendship but have also rekindled a connection between our sister cities and expanded each other's artistic horizons for years to come.

This December I was invited by Thiago to collaborate with him in Brazil. Florianópolis, known familiarly as Floripa, is a beautiful seaside city in southern Brazil. The city boasts a thriving public art scene and a strong connection to its natural surroundings. Aside from touring the city, Thiago also encouraged me to learn more about the different traditions and various art forms practiced by so many different artisans.

We centered our collaboration around an arts and culture conference, Floripa Amanhã, translated to "Floripa tomorrow." This event revolved around how the city can grow and thrive in the future centered around the arts. We were honored to paint a mural in the center of the

conference located at the Parque Jardim Botânico de Florianópolis, a local park boasting plants and flowers of every color imaginable. Our concept depicted two portraits, with mine inspired by a local myth, as "the guardian of the garden."

Through my experience in Floripa, I was able to discuss new ways for the arts to thrive and grow as well as ways to overcome the challenges of an emerging arts scene. My hosts' flair for color and energy courses through the veins of not only their art forms, but their way of life in Floripa.

I was also able to deliver a letter and gifts from Roanoke to their mayor, Topázio Neto, who has rekindled a fire for learning about the Star City. As we approach our 30th anniversary as sister cities, I am recognizing how much we already have in common. Both of our cities revere our natural surroundings, have many unique cultures and subcultures, and take pride in being a beacon for arts and culture in our own corners of the world.

As a member and advocate for sister cities I cannot express how uniquely positive it is to build a foundation for growth through the spirit of travel. It is incredible what we are capable of when we open ourselves up to new experiences and traditions. I hope that my short trip will continue a long relationship with Florianópolis and serve as an example of strengthening both our cities through world travel and new friendships.



Jon Murrill (right) exchanges gifts with Florianópolis Mayor Topázio Neto.



In Florianópolis, Roanoke artist Jon Murrill (second from right) poses with Florianópolis artist Thiago Valdi (center) and other Brazilian artists at the portrait Murrill and Valdi completed together in December. Murrill mainly concentrated on the left side of the painting, and Valdi, who was artist in residence in Roanoke in 2023, worked on the right side.

## REFLECTING ON A THRILLING SUMMER; PREPARING FOR ANOTHER TRIP

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

On Aug. 19, Roanoke City Council member Vivian Sanchez-Jones reported to Council about her experience as the city's representative to Normandy during the 80th anniversary of D-Day in June. She reported that the focus in St-Lô of the commemoration was on the civilian victims of the Allied bombings. On June 5, Vivian shook the hand of French President Emmanuel Macron at a tribute. On June 6, Vivian and other officials of St-Lô's sister cities lay a common wreath at the monument to civilian victims at the June 6 roundabout. The wreath highlighted sharing, peace and friendship among our cities and nations. On June 7, Vivian helped plant the first of 80 trees in memory of the victims in Bois-Jugan. Finally, Vivian and others signed an updated Memorandum of Understanding between St-Lô and Roanoke, renewing our sister cities friendship after 25 years. Vivian brought home a copy of the MOU and presented it to Council during her talk. Peggy Wells, Bill Bestpitch and I briefly addressed Council about the importance of the sister cities program. Hollins University (now) senior Ella

Strickland also spoke to Council about her happy experience as one of three university students in the inaugural exchange between St-Lô and Hollins.

On Oct. 19, St-Lô officials, some of our Norman friends, members of our sister city counterpart group St-Lô 44-Roanoke, and several citizens paid tribute to the late Jean Mignon. In a simple ceremony, a park adjoining La Chapelle de la Madeleine was inaugurated as the Jean Mignon Peace Garden.

Jean, an illustrious long-time citizen of St-Lô, was born in 1930 and died in 2019. He was a witness to the Allied bombings and took as a mission in his life the need to transmit this history to younger generations as well as welcoming and thanking veteran and their families. A civil servant, municipal elected official and union official – among other titles – he also was one



*This fall, St-Lô city officials, friends and citizens gathered for the dedication of the Jean Mignon Peace Park, adjacent to La Chapelle de la Madeleine.*

of the architects of the renovated Chapelle de la Madeleine, which shelters the memorial to the 29th and 35th U.S. Divisions, which liberated St-Lô in 1944.

Here in Roanoke, on Nov. 2 our members staffed a table at the 3rd annual Ginkgo Tree Festival in downtown Roanoke. Thanks to Chris and Betsy Bohannon, Peggy Wells and Debra Boulé. The event included live music, children's and adult art and cultural activities, and treats from the sister cities.

On Dec. 3, 24 of us gathered at Anello's restaurant for our annual holiday get together, the Dîner de Noël. We had no guest speaker, but Peggy and I aimed to catch folks up on the latest news. To that end, executive committee member Marsha Taylor spoke about the student/adult trip she'll lead to St-Lô and other parts of France next June. Marsha introduced her fellow Roanoke County schools French teacher Lisa Decrozant, who will accompany Marsha's group of Roanoke and Blacksburg students as a chaperone.

Artist and teacher Cornelia Marin returned to Roanoke in late December. She'll have an exhibition at the Grandin Theatre in February. Cornelia's friend and host, Brenda Barksdale, has organized a reception and fashion show on Wednesday, Feb. 5, at the Grandin.

If you are in downtown Roanoke, take a moment to pop into the Municipal Building to check out the RVSCI displays in the first-floor corridor. The city recently added attractive lighting to each case. (The Rke/St-Lô case is a work in progress!)

Our annual Bastille Day picnic potluck will be on Sunday, July 13, at 5:30 p.m. at Longwood Park in Salem. All members and friends are welcome to attend. Invitations to come.

Also in this issue of AOW are reports from two former interns to St-Lô. Teresa Wimmer reflects on how her 2022 stage in St-Lô has led to some changes in her job at the William Fleming High School cafeteria. And Glenvar High School graduate Rachael Brown describes her June 2024 summer internship.



After her presentation to Council, Roanoke City Council member Vivian Sanchez-Jones (right) offered the signed, updated Memorandum of Understanding to fellow council members (from left) Bev Fitzpatrick, Vice Mayor Joe Cobb, Trish White-Boyd, Peter Volosin and Stephanie Moon Reynolds.



Signage at the Jean Mignon Peace Park includes a photo of Jean.



**Happy 100<sup>th</sup> birthday**

to **REGINE ARCHER**

**Joyeux 100e anniversaire et félicitations à notre chère amie, Régine Archer!**

# FROM THE COUNTRYSIDE TO THE BEACH TO THE CITY OF LIGHT: QUITE A TRIP

By Rachael Brown  
rachaelb2516@gmail.com



*Rachael was charmed by the cows on her host family's farms in Normandy.*

I arrived on June 12 in France, and my internship was at a public school in St-Lô. At the school, I helped young students at the end of the day with homework, and throughout the day I would play with them and help in the class to teach them a little bit of English. It was a wonderful experience. All the children and teachers were so nice. I had a great time at the school. I even got to see horses with the children one of the days I was at the school.

After that, my host sister and I went to the beach for a week. I also was able to visit my host family's farms to see their cows. They had such gorgeous farms in the countryside in the south part of Normandy.

The beach was also in the south of Normandy in a town called Jullouville. It was a nice little town, and I had fun. I got to see Mont St-Michel. It was an amazing sight to see – gorgeous -- and had a very interesting history. I also didn't know it was a cathedral.

On my last 3 days we went to Paris. I got to see the landmarks of Paris, some of which had Olympic decorations on or around them. Being in Paris during the Olympics was a once-in-a-lifetime experience. I had such a fun time in France, and I am very thankful for this amazing opportunity I was given. Thank you.

*On a quick tour of Paris during the Olympics, Rachael saw some of the iconic sights of the city decorated with symbols of the international games.*

# SAINT-LÔ, FRANCE

## SERVING UP HEALTHFUL CHANGES AT A CITY SCHOOLS CAFETERIA

By Teresa Wimmer  
harpdance@hotmail.com



*"Shake it Up Edamame and Rice" is a new vegetarian entree/ meat alternative offered to students at William Fleming High School.*

Two years ago, thanks to the sister city relationship between Roanoke and St-Lô, I fulfilled my food- and nutrition- themed internship in several St-Lô schools. I learned and shared their kitchen trucs (tricks and skills) and compared them to ours in the Roanoke City Public Schools. Since then, a transformation has taken place in the Colonel's Cafe at William Fleming High School. Mainly initiated by the introduction of our new food service management vendor, Southwest Food Service, in partnership with Roanoke City Public schools, WFHS's Cafe upgraded to more of the priorities and style that I saw in St-Lô. These priorities included more local vegetables, standardized recipes, spices and seasonings, kids-first food approach, a water station, less waste, and more signage and decor.

In this past school year, 2023-24, more and different types of vegetables were offered. On behalf of SFE, "We will be able to expose the students to more than the usual corn and green beans," says Nikki Allman,

WFHS's kitchen manager. Delicious collard greens, brussels sprouts, sweet potatoes, chickpeas, melons, and okra were just some of the vegetables added to the menu.

One of the surprises for me in St-Lô was that water was served instead of milk for lunches. This past year a water station was set outside the cafeteria at Fleming.

The USDA mandates that we have potable water accessible near the cafeteria to keep students hydrated. In addition, a student must take a reimbursable meal, which is made up of whole grains, fruit, veggie, meat or meat alternative, and milk. Milk is optional but not mandatory. What is mandated is that the student must take a minimum of three of the components, and one must be a fruit and/or veggie. Fruit juices, flavored water and sports drinks are sold separately. Beverage options were not an option in St-Lô. There was water.

Maintaining low waste is a high priority in St-Lô, where a daily tab is kept on the actual waste weight. Our kitchen manager has had experience with systems like this in previous jobs. Even though RCPS does not have this system, and she doesn't think they need it, Nikki maintained a good balance of supply and demand so that waste was minimal.



*Nancy Guardado, one of Teresa Wimmer's co-workers, staffs the salad bar at the Colonel's Café at William Fleming High School.*

In the high school at St-Lô, the decor and signage in the dining area resembled a European bistro or cafe, with blackboards listing menu items, posters with information on local farmers who produce the food, and a video created daily by the chef incorporating the popular comic character Mr. Bean.

Southwest Foodservice Excellence, the company that Roanoke City Public Schools hired to oversee food and nutrition in all city schools, has this bistro/cafe atmosphere also, but with a Southwest USA flair. SFE went further with this theme, searching on the Virginia State website for Vegetable of the Month signs and information on the local farmers who produce our food.

In Nikki Allman, we have a great manager, a huge advocate of the program, our students, and our team at William Fleming High School. Commenting on her visual choices, Nikki explained, "I wanted it to be homey, fun, innovative, and comfortable for the kids." Her background has always been in the food industry, previously working in hotels, bars, and restaurants in her native Myrtle Beach, S.C. Next year we plan to expose the students to other food cultures.

As for me, my knowledge and experience in food and nutrition continue to grow. My duties include salads, parfaits, sandwiches, wraps, different deli variations, as well as growing my talents in customer service by serving breakfast to the kids, and cashiering at lunch. Understanding time and temperature and proper rotation and documentation for food safety, are included in skills gained.



*During her 2022 internship, Teresa was thrilled to visit le Haras, one of France's national horse stud farms, located in St-Lô.*

## LEGEND AND MODERNITY OF THE ANCIENT CITY: A DEEP VISIT IN LIJIANG

By Jessie Yu  
Roanoke-Lijiang chairwoman  
Jessieforever2017@gmail.com

By mid-November, the leaves in Roanoke have already fallen, but in Kunming, the capital of Yunnan Province, it feels like spring, with flowers blooming in vibrant competition.

In my first year as the chair of the Roanoke-Lijiang Sister City Committee, I was honored to be invited to attend the China International Friendship Cities Conference. Coincidentally, the host city, Kunming, is not far from Lijiang. Both are located in Yunnan Province. My daughter Armani and I had the privilege of taking an in-depth visit to Lijiang.

Lijiang Ancient Town, with its unique culture and history, traditional architecture, and diversity of humanity and nature, was designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1997. At the entrance of Lijiang Ancient Town, you will come across a waterwheel, which is one of the town's iconic landmarks. The waterwheel utilizes Lijiang's abundant water resources to channel water into the town for farmland irrigation and urban domestic use.

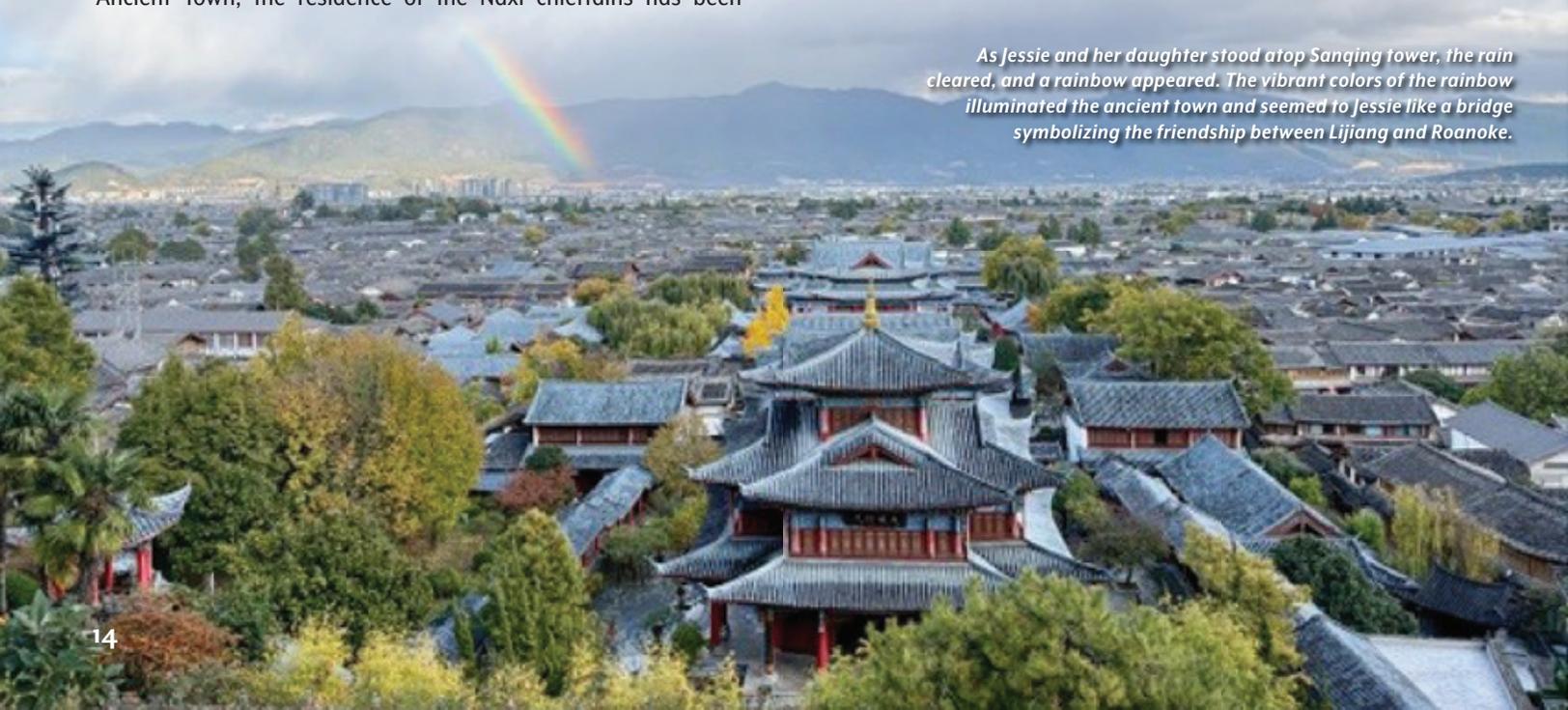
The Lijiang region is home to the local Naxi people. Within Lijiang Ancient Town, the residence of the Naxi chieftains has been

preserved. We can imagine the Naxi chieftain, along with the queen, princesses, and princes, living in this magnificent palace. The tallest building in Lijiang Ancient Town is the Sanqing Tower, from the top of which you can enjoy a bird's-eye view of the entire ancient town.

I visited Lijiang Teachers College, and on behalf of RVSCI I extended congratulations on its upgrade from a vocational college to an undergraduate institution. Lijiang Teachers College's art program offers courses in oil painting, Chinese traditional painting, watercolor, printmaking, sculpture, and various craft-making techniques that are closely tied to the local culture of Lijiang.

When it comes to art, I must mention Naxi embroidery, which is known for its vibrant colors. The patterns typically draw inspiration from nature, featuring motifs like flowers, birds and fish, as well as symbols linked to Naxi culture and religious beliefs. These designs are often rich in symbolism, reflecting the Naxi people's deep reverence for nature and the divine.

*As Jessie and her daughter stood atop Sanqing tower, the rain cleared, and a rainbow appeared. The vibrant colors of the rainbow illuminated the ancient town and seemed to Jessie like a bridge symbolizing the friendship between Lijiang and Roanoke.*





**Left:** Jessie Lu (right) poses with Zhang Liwei of the foreign affairs office in front of Lijiang Ancient Town's iconic waterwheel.

**Above:** Naxi clothing is very beautiful, and the embroidery on women's garments is particularly exquisite, thanks to the exceptional skills of traditional Naxi embroiderers.

We also visited Lijiang Yaojia School, which is a private school that offers education from elementary to high school. We are delighted that children from Roanoke continue exchanging letters as pen pals with students from Yaojia School. This letter exchange enhances cultural interaction among the students and strengthens the friendship between the two cities.

On the final day of our trip, we visited Jade Dragon Snow Mountain. Known for its stunning, snow-covered peaks all year round, it is celebrated as the "Alps of the East." As the southernmost snow-capped mountain range in China, it is one of the most iconic natural landmarks of Lijiang. As a sacred mountain for the Naxi people, Jade Dragon Snow Mountain holds a central place in their religion and culture. It is considered the dwelling place of the protective deity, "Sanduo God," embodying the profound spiritual beliefs of the Naxi community.

Jade Dragon Snow Mountain consists of 13 peaks, stretching from north to south, resembling a giant silver dragon in flight, hence its name. The highest peak, called Fanziduo, reaches an elevation of 5,596 meters, making it the second tallest peak in Yunnan Province. To avoid altitude sickness, during the climb it is necessary to carry a small oxygen tank to breathe from as needed. The cable car takes you up to an altitude of 4,506 meters. If you are able, you can continue climbing along the mountain trail to an elevation of 4,680 meters.

Although I was born in China, this trip to Lijiang brought me many cultural shocks. Geographically, Lijiang is located in a transitional area where the altitude gradually rises. Historically, it has served

as a hub for trade activities connecting Tibet to Myanmar and Laos. The ancestors of the local Naxi people, in adapting to the environment, developed their unique traditional culture, which includes a distinct language and writing system, cuisine, clothing, art, dance, and more. There, I experienced the blending of diverse cultures, the integration of traditional and modern cultures, and the fusion of new immigrants with the local indigenous Naxi people. Isn't this exactly what America is going through? The world is vast, yet it is also small. No matter where you are, the people who live there are always the most important, because it is the people who carry the past, present, and future of these cultures.



*Just off the cable car at 4,506 meters on Jade Dragon Snow Mountain are (from left) the director of the General Affairs Department of Khon Kaen, Lijiang's Thai sister city; Jessie's daughter Armani; and Jessie.*



Ramona Kirsch (back row, in pink) poses with the mayor of Wonju (back row, center) and the delegation at the Wonju column in Century Plaza.

## EXCITING ACTIVITIES AND TRANSITIONS IN THIS BUSY FALL AND WINTER

By Ramona Kirsch, Ed.D.  
Outgoing Roanoke-Wonju chairwoman  
kirschrr@hollins.edu

As we approach the close of 2024, the Wonju Sister City Committee is happy to reflect on an eventful year. From language classes to international delegations, our programs continue to strengthen the bonds between Roanoke and its oldest sister city.

This fall, the Wonju Sister City committee again offered free intermediate Korean language classes to foster greater cultural understanding and connection with our sister city. Thanks to Silvia Lee, the instructor, the classes were well-attended and provided a wonderful opportunity for members of the Roanoke community to dive into the Korean language and culture. Classes continue in 2025.

When a Wonju delegation was in Roanoke in May, we discussed planning a Roanoke delegation visit to Wonju in 2025 or 2026. We are in the early stages of planning and hope to include a diverse group of Roanoke Valley residents in the delegation, including Mayor-elect Joe Cobb, a longtime friend and board member of RVSCI.

As the year draws to a close, I would like to share that I have decided to step down as chair of this committee. The board has asked me to continue as an at-large member. My involvement with Roanoke Valley Sister Cities began shortly after I moved to Roanoke in fall 2019. Having been an active participant in Sister Cities programs in Florida, I was eager to connect with the local community and continue my passion for international exchange. It was at the October 2019 K-Pop event at the Taubman Museum of Art that I first crossed paths with Mary Jo Fassié and Brian Counihan, then the chair of the Wonju committee.

Recognizing my enthusiasm and background in Sister Cities work, Mary Jo and Brian quickly invited me to get involved. It wasn't long before I was asked to serve as the co-chair of the Wonju Sister City Committee, alongside Brian. This was the beginning of what would become a highly impactful chapter in my life and the history of the Wonju Sister City relationship.

Over time, I transitioned into the role of chair. During my tenure, the committee achieved significant milestones, including offering free Korean language classes and organizing a visit to Wonju. One of my most memorable accomplishments was organizing the 60th anniversary celebration of the Roanoke-Wonju relationship.

Once I knew that I would be stepping down, I suggested that Cherry Bell Damasco-Farrington be asked to step in as chair. She is a long-time friend of RVSCI and has worked behind the scenes in many of our events.

Cherry Bell, a teacher at William Byrd High School, is a passionate advocate for global cultures and education. Born in the Philippines, she arrived in the United States at age 7. During high school, she spent four years in Mexico. Cherry Bell has actively supported Roanoke's connection to Wonju, hosting Silvia Lee's Korean language classes and assisting with the 2019 K-Pop festivities at the Taubman Museum of Art. In May 2024, she joined in welcoming the Wonju delegation. Additionally, she leads students and community members on international trips, inspiring others to explore and embrace diverse cultures. We are all confident that under Cherry Bell's leadership the Wonju Committee will continue to thrive.

As we head into the New Year, we are filled with optimism for the future of RVSCI and the Wonju sister city connection. Thank you for your continued support of Roanoke Valley Sister Cities and especially our South Korean sister city!



Incoming Roanoke-Wonju chairwoman Cherry Bell Damasco-Farrington (in red) poses with some of the Korean language students at William Byrd High School.

# ARTISTS' RESIDENCIES OFFER INTRODUCTION TO KOREAN TRADITIONS



At a workshop at the Taubman Museum of Art: (from left) Roanoke College history professor Stella Xu; Park In-Ja, director of the Federation of Korean Tea Masters Society; RVSCI president Mary Jo Fassie; Kim Chin-hi, Hanji Art & Culture Foundation president; and Hanji master Jang Eung-yul.

A unique cultural exchange hosted by Roanoke College allowed students and community members to get a firsthand look at the ancient arts of Hanji papermaking and Korean tea ceremonies.

In a grant-funded residency led by Roanoke College history professor Dr. Stella Xu, three artisans from Wonju, South Korea, traveled to Roanoke and led hands-on workshops in these beautiful and complex traditions.

Hanji, a handcrafted form of paper with centuries of history in Korea, is made from mulberry bark and renowned for its exceptional quality and versatility. It can be used not only for writing but for wall coverings, umbrellas, artwork, clothing and more.

Korean tea ceremonies are likewise steeped in history with each step of the process interwoven with meaning and symbolism. The workshops allowed people to be immersed in ceremonies led by the director of the Federation of Korean Tea Masters Society, Park In-Ja.

Participants also got to create their own sheets of Hanji paper under the tutelage of Hanji master Jang Eung-yul, whose family has been experts in the art for three generations, and Hanji Art & Culture Foundation President Kim Chin-hi. For most students, it marked their first time creating their own paper.

The three artisans also gave a workshop at the Taubman Museum of Art.

—Roanoke College

# MEET 3 NEW MEMBERS OF OUR BOARD



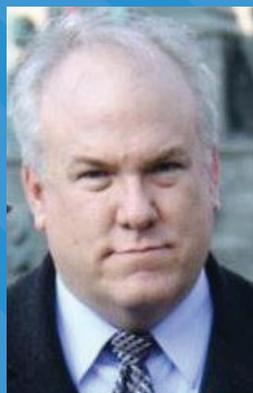
## DEBRA BOULÉ

New corresponding secretary Debra Boulé joined RVSCI in 2018 and joined the Roanoke/St-Lô Sister Cities executive committee in March 2023. She moved to the Roanoke area in January 2017 before retiring from the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Md. Debra has a BS in Computer Information Systems. She loves to travel and has been to Canada, Central and South America, Europe, the Middle East and Asia. She was part of the 2019 delegation to St-Lô to celebrate the 20th anniversary of twinning.



## DAVID TRINKLE, M.D.

New member-at-large David Trinkle, M.D., is a practicing geriatric psychiatrist, an associate clinical professor of psychiatric medicine and medical director of the Center for Healthy Aging at Carilion Roanoke Memorial Hospital. In 2006 he served as vice mayor of Roanoke and on the Roanoke City School Board for the 2003-06 terms. At Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine, he serves as associate dean for community and culture and is responsible for community outreach and relations, international student electives, and assists in the development and implementation of the health systems science and interprofessional practice curricular domain.

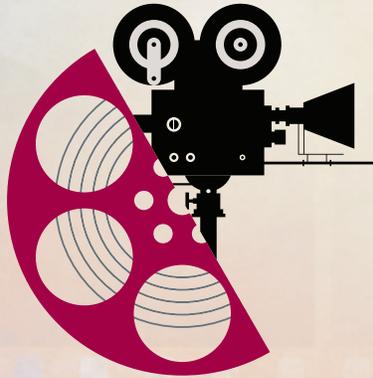


## JEFF VICK

New member-at-large Jeff Vick served as a U.S. diplomat on four continents over 25 years, including two tours in Poland. Serving in 10 countries abroad in the U.S. Army and the State Department, Jeff participated in many exchange programs in Russia, Chile, Uruguay, Poland, Pakistan, and the United Kingdom. In fact, participation in a military exchange with the Polish Army in Partnership for Peace in 1994 led Jeff to pursue a career in diplomacy. Jeff earned a MS in National Resource Strategy from the National Defense University and a BA in English from Texas Tech University. In Roanoke, Jeff is an active member of the Kiwanis Club and the Unitarian Universalist Church of Roanoke.

# INTERNATIONAL FILM SERIES

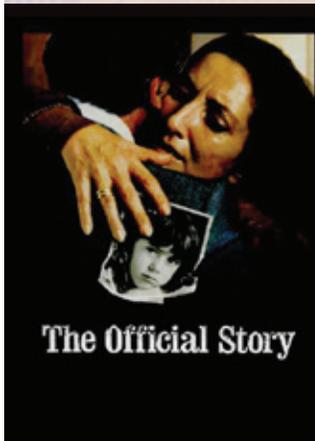
IN COLLABORATION WITH HOLLINS UNIVERSITY



## February 11–23, 2025

The Department of Modern Languages is pleased to present the 7th annual Roanoke College International Film Series, co-presented by Hollins University. This year's theme is Truth & Lies. Each film will be followed by a post-screening, panel-led discussion.

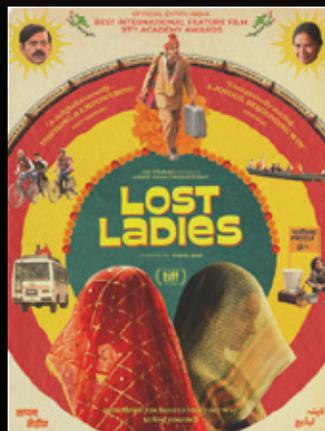
The year's film series is sponsored by Roanoke College, Hollins University, Roanoke Valley Sister Cities, the Grandin Theatre, and the Taubman Museum of Art. Roanoke College sponsors include the Jordan Endowment; Offices of Community Programs and Global Engagement; Fintel Library; Center for Studying 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.



SPANISH

**The Official Story**  
February 11, 7:00 p.m.  
Wortmann Ballroom at Roanoke College

Luis Puenzo  
1985, NR, 2 HRS



HINDI

**Laapata Ladies**  
February 12, 7:00 p.m.  
Grandin Theatre

Kiran Rao  
2023, TV-14, 2HRS



CHINESE

**Infernal Affairs**  
February 14, 7:00 p.m.  
Visual Arts Center Auditorium at Hollins

Andrew Lau and Alan Mak  
2002, R, 101 MIN



RUSSIAN

**The Cranes are Flying**  
February 16, 2:00 p.m.  
Taubman Museum of Art

Mikhail Kalatozov  
1957, NR, 96 MIN



ITALIAN

**Pinocchio**  
February 17, 7:00 p.m.  
Antrim Chapel at Roanoke College

Matteo Garrone  
2019, PG-13, 2 HRS



GERMAN

**The Lost Honor of Katharina Blum**  
February 19, 7:00 p.m.  
Visual Arts Center Auditorium at Hollins

Volker Schlöndorff and Margarethe von Trotta  
1975, R, 106 MIN



JAPANESE

**Paprika**  
February 21, 7:00 p.m.  
Antrim Chapel at Roanoke College

Satoshi Kon  
2006, R, 90 MIN



FRENCH

**8 Femmes**  
February 23, 2:00 p.m.  
Taubman Museum of Art

François Ozon  
2001, R, 103 MIN

# OFFICERS/DONATION/MEMBERSHIP

## RVSCI Corporate Board Members

### RVSCI Corporate Board Members

**President:** Mary Jo Fassié

**Recording Secretary:** Bill Modica

**Corresponding Secretary:** Debra Boulé

**Treasurer:** Bill Bestpitch

### Members at large:

Joe Cobb, D.Min.

Archie Freeman

Ramona Kirsch, Ed.D.

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

John Makay

Andreea Mihalache-O'Keef, Ph.D.

David Trinkle, M.D.

Jeff Vick

### Sister City committee chairmen and chairwomen:

**Florianópolis, Brazil:** Linda Harrison

**Kisumu, Kenya:** Bill Modica

**Lijiang, China:** Jessie Yu

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

**Pskov, Russia:** Relationship paused

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

**Wonju, S. Korea:** Cherry Bell Damasco-Farrington

**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](http://www.rvsci.us) | Like us on Facebook!

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

**ROANOKE VALLEY**



## Thank you to our generous supporters!

A big thank you to our Patron and Benefactor donors  
and to the All-Cities members whose donations and  
dues we received from Aug. 1 through Dec. 31, 2024.

### **PATRON**

Jonathan Murrill

### **BENEFACTOR**

Atlantic Technical Consultants Inc.  
David Bowers & Margarita Cubas  
Rupert Cutler

Ann E. DeLong & Christian Dobreiner  
Dr. Mary Dana Hinton  
Dr. William E. Jefferson III

### **ALL CITIES MEMBER**

Mary Ann Conrad  
Kimberly Lowe



## Mark your calendars!

- Feb. 1:** Lunar New Year at the Taubman, 12-2 p.m.
- Feb. 4:** RVSCI board meets at CITS, 5 p.m.
- Feb. 11-23:** International Film Festival (with Roanoke College & Hollins University)
  - Feb. 11:** "Official Story," Spanish, Roanoke College
  - Feb. 12:** "Lapataa Ladies," Hindi, Grandin Theatre
  - Feb. 14:** "Infernal Affairs," Chinese, Hollins University
  - Feb. 16:** "The Cranes are Flying," Russian, Taubman
  - Feb. 17:** "Pinocchio," Italian, Roanoke College
  - Feb. 19:** "The Lost Honor of Katharine Blum," German, Hollins University
  - Feb. 21:** "Paprika," Japanese, Roanoke College
  - Feb. 23:** "8 Femmes," French, Taubman
- March 4:** RVSCI Presentation to the Junior League of Roanoke, 7 p.m.
- March 8:** Roanoke Arts Pop, Taubman Museum, 10-4 p.m.
- March 21:** RVSCI Young Artists Showcase deadline
- April 1:** RVSCI board meets at CITS boardroom, 5 p.m.
- April 30:** Medical students' presentations of abroad rotations, VTCSOM
- May 10:** Daisy Art Parade, 12 p.m.
- May 17:** Local Colors, 10-4 p.m.
- June 3:** RVSCI annual dinner at Roanoke College, 5:30 p.m.
- July 13:** Rke/St-Lô potluck picnic, Longwood Park, Salem, 5:30 p.m.

