



ASCI Newsletter

April 2020

Promoting International Partnerships

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Students (31) from SAUMUR in Asheville
 Staying with Franklin School families
 Arrived Feb 8, in the area for a 10-day visit

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<http://ashevillesistercities.org>

Message from the President

by Ken Nelson



What a Short, Strange Trip It's Been! As I "hunker down" here in North Asheville and reflect on the first three months of my term as ASCI president, I am even more convinced of the importance of our organization in connecting our city to the broader world beyond our mountains. As the articles in this newsletter have highlighted the first two months of the year showcased how much we can accomplish when we all work together:

A festive celebration of the 261st birthday of Robert Burns hosted by the Dunkeld and Birnham Committee in conjunction with the Robert Burns Night Supper Committee.

A fabulous outgoing delegation to Valladolid to recognize the Tom Jones fan project.

An incredible ten day visit from 31 French students and their two teachers, hosted by our Saumur Committee in conjunction with the Franklin School of Innovation.

These events were made possible only thru the efforts of many of our members, and I wish to personally thank everyone connected to them. In just two months you demonstrated what ASCI is all about, and I was excited to continue working with our Committees on expanding membership and build upon these successes.

And then...despite a snowstorm cancelling our February meeting, our Board was looking forward to getting together in March to plan out the balance of what promised to be an exciting year. We were expecting to send a group of Asheville high schoolers to Saumur, delegations to Karpenisi and Osogbo, a weaving delegation to San Cristóbal, and had even been working with the mayor's office in Vladikavkaz about sending a representative to their ceremonies commemorating the 75th anniversary of VE Day.

But unlike a snowstorm, pandemics aren't minor inconveniences that can be rescheduled – and they affect both us here in Asheville as well as our friends and connections in our seven sister cities. As we are learning more and more every day, pandemics know no boundaries, and nor should we in our response. We are blessed to live in a time when "social distancing" does not mean "social isolation", and I am heartened that our Committees have been reaching out to their cohorts to share each other's stories and let them know that we are all in this together. And there is no better hope for our common future than this fall's student art project and exhibition – let the children of our sister cities share their talents and their vision of what lies ahead for all of us. More than ever, we really are all in this together!

Xplore USA looking for host families

Xplore USA students are in need of host families this summer for three to four weeks! Students—typically from Spain, Italy, France, and Germany between the ages of 12 and 17—participate in a day camp alongside their American peers. This is a great way for students to study a foreign language, make new friends both locally and globally, and learn about other cultures while having summer fun! The Xplore USA Intercultural Day Camp is held M-F 9am-5pm at Hanger Hall, 64 W.T. Weaver Blvd., Asheville. Weekly sessions are available from June 27 to July 25 for kids ages 8 to 18. Host families with interested campers receive a free week of camp as a thank you from us! For more information, please email kristina.lunsford@xploreusa.org or go to xploreusa.org.

VISIT of 31 students and 2 teachers from SAUMUR!

by Jessica Coffield

From February 8-19, a delegation of 31 French students and two professors, Elise Guillemet and Vincent Liothaud, from Lycée Duplessis-Mornay in Saumur, France visited Asheville on cultural and academic exchange with students from the Franklin School of Innovation, Asheville High, Early College and Enka High. *In the photo below – Saumur students and their hosts.*



Stephanie Hellert, the French teacher at Franklin School, worked with ASCI to coordinate the exchange along with cultural events during their stay. It was an incredibly memorable experience for all those involved and the impact was far-reaching for both communities. TV station WLOS even featured the exchange on the news back-to-back nights.

Upon their late-night arrival on Saturday, February 8th at the Asheville Airport, host families greeted their French students with open arms, welcome signs, balloons and flowers! The following evening ASCI, in partnership with UNCA, hosted a Welcome Dinner for all students, families, teachers and ASCI members.

Saumur teacher Elise and students on the visit to the Biltmore farm

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and Stephanie Hellert with help from ASCI members, and assistance of Saumur teachers Elise Guillemet and Vincent Liothaud. Vincent had previously visited the USA, having family in Washington, DC, but this was Elise's first trip to our country.



Visiting the Chocolate Lounge

Events included tours of the RAMP's Revolve and Redirect Studios. One group even had a surprise talk from artist Mel Chin, known for Wake, which was being redesigned in the studio at that time. Students toured French Broad Chocolate Factory, visited the Folk Art Center and hiked along the Blue Ridge Parkway. American cooking classes were offered on two of the days for instruction on cornbread, chili and brownies! Students had the opportunity to go on UNCA campus tours lead by UNCA French studies

students and meet up with the university students once again for their French conversation night at Trade and Lore in downtown Asheville.

On Valentine's day the whole group visited Biltmore Estate. Sights included Downton Abbey costume exhibit, two pregnant Biltmore goats at the petting stables, the blacksmith's shop, the house itself and the beautiful conservatory and gardens. The following day, the group headed back to UNCA for the women's and men's basketball games. Cheering on the Bulldogs with special attention from the mascot, Rocky, seemed a highlight for many.

On Sunday, February 16th Franklin School of Innovation hosted a Farewell Potluck and BBQ Dinner with support from ASCI. Seeing the spread of American dishes was certainly a treat for many French students. A touching thank you



*Members of the organizing committee,
L to R: Stephanie Hellert, Vincent Liothaud (from Saumur), Jessica Coffield, Alison Weems.*

was performed on stage by the visiting students and their teachers. Through a generous donation by Ken Nelson, ASCI was able to purchase and give each French student a memento of Asheville to take home in the form of t-shirts, jerseys, scarves and baseball hats from the Asheville Tourists and the Asheville City Soccer Club.

On Monday, February 17th about 50 students and a few ASCI members attended the Sister Cities Film Night at the United Way featuring the movie, *Tuskegee Airmen*, in honor of Black History month and American and European history.

While students said *à bientôt* (see you soon), many goodbyes were said among the teachers and ASCI members. Over the course of the visit, ASCI was able to meet with the teachers from Saumur to discuss ongoing programming and ways to strengthen our relationship. While the trip of American students to Saumur has been postponed due to the COVID-19 outbreak, plans are in the works to reschedule a visit for the 2020 winter break or 2021 spring break.

News from the San Cristobal Committee

By Gwen Hughes

Our proposed Weaver Delegation Trip in May has been postponed, possibly until late fall or early next year. An excellent group of local weavers are planning to travel to San Cristobal and surrounding villages to study backstrap loom weaving techniques with Maya teachers. We have written to our coordinator in San Cristobal to ask for possible new dates. We are in contact and send them best wishes. Meetings will be in the form of electronic communication for the near future. If you wish to be added to our email list, please let me know.

VALLADOLID REPORT

by Janell Cooper / photos by Gwen Hughes

A small delegation of 8 members from Asheville traveled to our sister city, Valladolid, Mexico the first week of February 2020 to celebrate the culmination of *what has now become Phase 1* of the Tom Jones Fan Project. Our initial goal was to raise money to purchase 70 ceiling fans for 5 schools in Valladolid, however, we raised enough funds to purchase over 150 fans for 10 schools! These funds were raised in addition to both committees' efforts, with the help of Asheville Breakfast Rotary, Mars Hill Rotary, the City of Valladolid, and Bepensa.



We enjoyed a beautiful welcome dinner upon our arrival to Valladolid. The following morning we all gathered at one of the elementary schools to formally recognize the success of this amazing project. Both Sister City Committees were in attendance, as well as numerous rotary members, representatives from each of the 10 schools and important figures in Valladolid City Government, including the Mayor. It was incredible to witness the delivery (*at left*) of the actual fans to each group. The warmth and energy that warm morning was palpable.

Some members of our delegation attended a breakfast with the Club Rotario de Valladolid, where club banners were exchanged with Rotary members from Asheville. The entire delegation group, along with the Valladolid Sister City Committee, enjoyed an authentic luncheon with the Mayor at Cenote Zaci. A few Asheville sister city members met with Rick King, executive director of Chosen International Medical Assistance, a US based organization, about potentially collaborating on some future projects, especially another wheelchair project next year. On our final day we were sent off with an absolutely fantastic, authentic brunch at Casa de los Venados, complete with a mariachi band; where Sister Cities, Rotary and City members all gathered together.

We also immensely enjoyed the other activities that were arranged for us in our Sister City of Valladolid. We visited Ek Balam, (*at right*) nearby ancient Mayan ruins, that also included a swim in a cenote onsite. We had so much fun playing Loteria, a traditional Mexican game similar to Bingo, with both committees and





some others at Casa Hamaca, one rainy night, to benefit the Valladolid English Library! A couple of tourist activities were also super interesting and informative: Choco-story, a museum about the history of chocolate in Mayan culture and Xkopek, Parque Apicola, a beekeeping farm and educational center. Cesar and Lisa at Luum Ayni, a permaculture ranch, also invited us to see their amazing, working home. On our last day, a few of us also went to visit a couple of small farms including an herbalist, in a small village outside of Valladolid.

Upcoming news:

Phase 2 of the Tom Jones Fan Project: Asheville brought a remaining \$350 raised for the project to kickstart this second phase! Goal and timeline to be announced.

The Committee in Valladolid is very anxious and excited to come and visit us here in Asheville. We discussed a potential delegation in the Fall of 2020, however this will greatly depend on the global circumstances with the current pandemic.

We have a potential opportunity to do another wheelchair project for both Mexico - Asheville Sister Cities in 2021 - stay tuned!

NOTES ON A SAUMUR FRIEND

by Ken Richards

André Daheullé was one of the original organizers of the Saumur SCI /Asheville twining program started in 1996. Recently retired from the French National Police, his family hosted me when I was a member of our first delegation. His wife Marie-Claude is recovering from recent surgery. It was a real treat for our delegation and several subsequent to be hosted for an afternoon wine in their courtyard at the foot of the Chateau. A tour was then led under the Chateau where the Crusaders' hospice was cut into the mountain. André and Marie-Claude led a delegation to Asheville around 2008. He also coordinated and hosted the first International Conference of Saumur and Asheville Sister Cities in Saumur. *Editor's note: hospice is a medieval word for a hospital.*

OSOGBO NEWS

by Eboné Graham

Due to the global impact of Covid-19, the Osogbo Committee has regretfully canceled its delegation trip for this year. The unknown factor that we face worldwide has also affected communications between the Chairs of Asheville and Osogbo. At this moment in time, Nigeria has reported 139 cases of Covid-19, 9 discharged and 2 deaths. It is believed that the devastation of Ebola upon Nigeria has allowed for more systematic preparation in the case of pandemics. My prayer is that our brothers and sisters in Osogbo are well and that we continue to rally together in community here in Asheville to ensure that everyone's needs are met during these challenging times.

VLADIKAVKAZ NEWS

by Constance Richards

The Children's Art Project and Exhibition. Mayor Manheimer of Asheville received an invitation from the Mayor of Vladikavkaz to come help celebrate Victory in Europe Day, thanking the United States for its help during World War II. A date will be set for the celebration.

KARPENISI NEWS

by Sophie Mills

Greece, as are all our sister cities, is taking COVID19 very seriously. Seventeen people signed up for a trip to Karpenisi, but very reluctantly, to keep everyone safe, we have decided to postpone. We are, however, planning to make the same trip in May 2021, and there is room for more participants, so if this year was inconvenient for you, there is now another opportunity to be part of the delegation. Watch this space for more details or contact Sophie Mills (smills@unca.edu)

Our Annual Meeting in January Was Quite an Event!

By Karon Korp, Past President

Thanks to all the members and friends who turned out for our Annual Meeting on January 12th at the YMI Center. We were so excited to unveil our 2020 Event Calendar, and introduce our new President, Ken Nelson. As you'll read more about in this issue, we had an ambitious start to the year, with the Valladolid Fan Project and the Saumur Student visit. Of course, much more was in the works, now changed with the current situation we are all facing together.



Many exciting programs and projects were shared and discussed by our Board and City Committee Chairs. What really made the day special was our opportunity to recognize people in our organization who've gone the extra mile, organized special efforts, and have made a tremendous impact over the past year, and in some cases, for many years!

ASCI's Volunteer of the Year is Alice Keller, Secretary, and number one supporter of all things sister cities! The Special Recognition Award went to Bunny Cabaniss, Membership Chair and Past President for her many years and activities. The Award for Service went to George Keller, who heads the Giving Society, thanking him for his leadership. Our Community Partner Award went to Cam MacQueen, owner of the BLOCK off biltmore, for her support of our World Wide Wednesdays programs.

And our sister city Committees thanked special members of their teams as well. Julie Hettiger was recognized by Saumur for her help with the Saumur Dinner and planning; Valladolid recognized both Sybil Argintar and Gary Boyer for their long time support of projects; San Cristobal honored Jane Goldthwaite, a founding member of the committee, for her many dedicated years in support of our relationship and programs; Karpenisi recognized both Andrew Craig and Jackie Craig for their many contributions to events and projects with Karpenisi; Osogbo honored Sandra Frempong for her work as past Chairwoman (along with co-Chair Katie Ryan, now in Rome); and the Dunkeld and Birnam committee expressed their deep gratitude to Cary Findlay, for all his work on the Burns Supper event.

Yes, some of our plans have been postponed, but there are other exciting things happening later this year! Pick a committee, or a project, and lend your support, however you can.

OUR 2020 CORPORATE MEMBERS

Earthart Network, Kudzu Brands, Purplecat Networks, Spaceplan

President - Ken Nelson	knelson (at) bluedeltaenergy.com
Vice President – Andrew Craig	kurmugon (at) bellsouth.net
Secretary – Alice Keller	gakeller (at) gakeller.com
Treasurer – Jackie Craig	appcraft (at) bellsouth.net

ASCI COMMITTEE CONTACTS

- ASCI Board Meeting 3rd Thursday of each month – 6:00 pm
United Way Office Conference Room, 50 S. French Broad Ave
- Dunkeld-Birnam Committee time and date TBA – Contact Committee Chair
Rick Lutovsky – rlutovsky (at) gmail.com
- San Cristóbal Committee 2nd Thursday, 5:30 pm
Gwen Hughes – gwengh (at) charter.net
- Saumur Committee 4th Monday of each month – 5:30pm
Jessica Coffield – jeallen8 (at) gmail.com
- Karpenisi Committee 1st Monday of the month
Sophie Mills – smills (at) unca.edu
- Valladolid Committee 4th Wednesday of the month – 6:00pm
Janell Cooper – janellcooper7 (at) gmail.com
- Osogbo Committee 1st Monday of the month (contact Chair for time and venue)
Eboné Graham – ebone.graham9 (at) gmail.com
- Vladikavkaz Committee Time and Date TBA – Contact Committee Chair
Constance Richards – schtanzi (at) aol.com
- Global Outlook Committee *Jay Harris – jayharrisglobal (at) gmail.com*



USA



France



Greece



Mexico



Nigeria



Russia



Scotland

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