



ASCI Newsletter March 2021

Promoting International Partnerships

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ASCI's beautiful new website on display

*Follow ASCI activities on the web
and on Facebook!
<http://ashevillesistercities.org>*

Mission Statement: Asheville Sister Cities, Inc. promotes peace, understanding, cooperation and sustainable partnerships through formalized agreements between International cities and the City of Asheville, North Carolina. Website:

www.ashevillesistercities.org

Message from the President

by Ken Nelson



Our “New Normal”

As more of us receive our vaccinations the prospects are brightening for the upcoming summer. All of us hope that after twelve months of “quarantining with our cohorts” we can begin to travel and get together with friends and family in-person rather than virtually thru “Zoom” (remember when “Zoom” was a tagline for a car company, a running shoe or even a children’s TV show? Now the world knows it both as a noun and a verb meaning only one thing!)

We all look forward to getting out of our bubbles, but we need to reflect on where we’ve been and contemplate where we are likely heading. None of us would have chosen the road we have travelled and the isolation and disruptions we have endured. Many lives were tragically cut short, and the toll on our children’s education and our collective mental health won’t be fully known for years to come. But we have also been inspired by the sacrifice of our healthcare staffs, teachers and other front-line workers who kept our communities running in the midst of the pandemic. And we have all learned to connect with our friends, our families and even our Sister Cities in new ways (including Zoom!) as we reached out to support each other thru these dark days.

So as both the temperatures and our dispositions warm up with the season, let’s be thankful for all of our members and for all of our Sister City partners. While we must continue to be vigilant and to take the necessary precautions to keep our communities safe, let’s also keep these new communication channels open and to use them to tighten our bonds with our colleagues around the globe. May our “new normal” lives be richer, more fulfilled, and more connected lives as we build upon the lessons from this challenging year!

We are pleased to launch the new and improved Asheville Sister Cities Website where we hope to grow awareness and access to our amazing organization.

Named Sister Cities International Best Overall Program for a city with a population of 500,001–100,000 in 2019, we continue to blaze a path forward for citizen diplomacy and friendships worldwide.

We hope this website will be one tool in our continued success by allowing our content to be shared easily, provide new forms of visuals like our YouTube Channel videos, and give access to lots of new resources plus archives and institutional knowledge.

If you would like to discuss ways to help bring awareness to ASCI and/or become a community partner for our organization please reach out to ashevellesistercities@gmail.com

The new Asheville Sister Cities directional sign



For 30 years, ASCI has worked to develop an award-winning, amazing program that has connected Asheville with 7 wonderful cities around the world. And for 20 of these years, we hoped to have a directional sign pointing to each of our sister cities in a prominent spot right here in Asheville.

The directional sign in our sister city, Saumur, France

Asheville Sister Cities has provided opportunities for cultural experiences and meaningful projects of mutual interest that benefit all involved. Some of our recent projects include: student connection/exchange between Saumur and Asheville; a delegation to Karpenisi, Greece; Celebration of our School Fan Project in

Valladolid; a Weaver Delegation to San Cristobal, Mexico; and a delegation to Osogbo, Nigeria in the fall. Collaborating with Rotary, we will have sent 400 wheelchairs to our two Sister Cities in Mexico. Dunkeld-Birnam, Scotland has provided rich cultural exchanges of music and history. And we have so much more to accomplish.

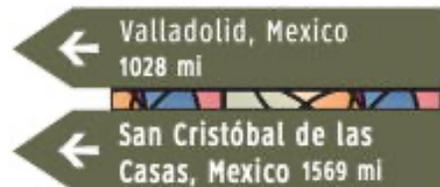
We want every citizen and visitor to Asheville to know that ASHEVILLE SISTER CITIES is an important part of our community fiber. By placing a directional sign in a prominent spot, we hope that everyone can now be more aware of our great organization.

ASCI would be honored to have you listed as a Sponsor for our Directional Sign. Our members and supporters have been an important part of our growth and history. We will be placing your name, and the names of all who contribute, on our website and in the ASCI newsletter once the sign is installed. There will be a celebration on site on that special day.

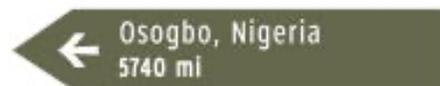
EUROPEAN SISTER CITIES



MEXICAN SISTER CITIES



AFRICAN SISTER CITY



Wheelchair project in Mexico 2021



San Cristóbal de las Casas, Tapachula and Valladolid Committees are turning the wheelchair project into a wildly unexpected success, including distributing a few very specialized wheelchairs to great friends in Mexico

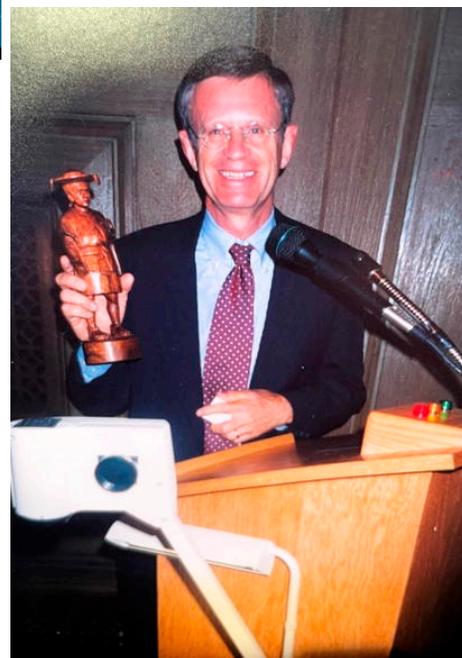
SAN CRISTÓBAL DE LAS CASAS - HISTORY AND WHEELCHAIRS

(san-crees-TOE-bul) by Gwen Hughes



Saludos a todos! A few images of past times with our committee as we look forward to new projects and connections. Photo #1 - students in a home for children, Rancho Caanan, introducing themselves to our delegation in 2015. They each told their own story of how they had arrived at this wonderful home, where they have regular school, sports, gardening and good food. Our group

delivered school supplies and a big picnic lunch to the children. We all cried together and sang songs and played games until we had to leave. Photo #2 - Former Mayor Charlie Worley receiving a carved statue of a Chiapaneca man as a gift from a delegation from San Cristobal. Photo #3 - Ines Paniagua and her husband Alejandro Bermudez - our Sister City Coordinators and Rotary connection in San Cristobal. Alejandro is currently our main contact for the wheelchair project, serving as organizer and coordinator for this amazing distribution.



WHEELCHAIRS FOR SAN CRISTOBAL AND VALLADOLID. ASCI and friends, working with Asheville Breakfast Rotary, Downtown Rotary and Madison County Rotary raised funds to accept the

matching grant to send 280 wheelchairs to 3 cities in Mexico; San Cristobal and Tapachula in Chiapas, and Valladolid in the Yucatan. Tapachula is a city close to San Cristobal and home of Geny Hernandez, a key committee member here in Asheville. We are very excited to be able to include her hometown in our chair distribution. Of the 280 chairs, we had 230 designated and were able to trade the remaining 50 regular chairs for 10 special needs chairs that will be split between San Cristobal and Valladolid. The need is great for children with ALS, MS and Diabetes in most of these areas and we will continue to raise funds to add more special needs chairs for all 3 cities. Special chairs can also be purchased from a medical group in Mexico and easily trucked to each destination. This is great news. The order has been placed and manufacturing and shipping will take 4-6 months. We are not sure, yet, if a distribution team will be able to travel to assist.



Once again, our thanks to all who made donations and the continued support of our local Rotary Clubs. And thanks to Club Rotario de San Cristobal, Valladolid Sister Cities, BEPENSA - Coca Cola Foundation, the City of Tapachula and all who will help to make this WHEELCHAIR grant happen. Gwen Hughes – gwengh (at) charter.net

KARPENISI DELEGATION PLANS IN THE WORKS

Travel forms are being completed, passports are being updated. The Greek trip is planned for May 19-29, 2021. Interest has been expressed in aquaculture, including visiting fish hatcheries.

Dunkfield & Birnam Report

*The two pastors officiating
at the wonderful virtual
D&B/AVL Advent service,
December 20, 2020.*



Next year's Robert Burns Dinner Will

take place on January 25, 2022 / Tartan Day, April 6, Black Mountain

Valladolid's stingless bees *(va-ya-do-leed)*

by Rebecca Ann Robertson



representing the center of the Milky Way Galaxy, balance, duality and unity. Note the photo. It occurred to me that this represents everything that the Sister Cities program was founded to achieve.

In early February 2020, just before the COVID19 lockdown, I traveled as part of a Valladolid delegation to the Yucatan Peninsula. A few days later, I visited the Mayan Temple Ek Balam where I met a young Mayan man strikingly painted. When I asked what the symbols meant, he wound our hands together and created the image called Hunab Ku,

Valladolid is the honey capital of Mexico! I joined the delegation because I'm a beekeeper and I'm also on the BeeCity USA / AVL Leadership Committee. I was home-hosted by Erika Beutelspacher and her father Gotthold, one of Mexico's largest honey exporters.

Rebecca Robertson, Cathy Peerless, Bill Phelps, Francisca Moo Yah, María Luis Rodarte, Consolación Puc Canel, Janell Cooper



*Above, Francisca Moo Yah, her husband and a hollowed-out beehive log.
Right, Melipona beehives*

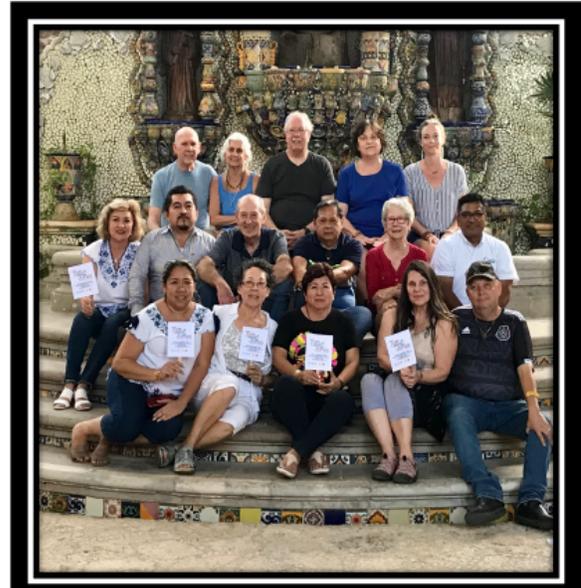
Soon afterwards, our translator María Luis Rodarte introduced me to Francisca Moo Ya from the Mayan village of Tixcacalcupul. She would introduce us to the legendary Mayan stingless bees.

Several of my group and I explored the village. Opportunities for earning a living are limited, thus preserving the Mayan culture is always a challenge. In Francesca's back yard were 60 Melipona (stingless) beehives. The Melipona bee is the critical pollinator of the Vanilla Orchid and other rainforest plants. The honeybee that we are all familiar with is of European origin, imported about 400 years ago by colonists. The Melipona, however, is the only native honeybee to the Americas.

Top row: Bill Phelps, Cathy Peerless, Andrew Craig, Jackie Craig, Janell Cooper

Second row: Yara Baeza Zetina, Dr Victor Sánchez, Carroll Hughes, Adolfo Jesús Cabañas Góngora, Gwen Hughes, Andrés Martínez.

Front row: Elaine Medina Mendoza, María Luisa Rodarte Reyes, Silvia Fernández, Rebecca Robertson, Iván de León



My mission was coming into focus – Let’s help create a ‘Mayan Women’s Melipona Coöperative’ to renew interest in Mayan bee tending and in helping Mayan women stay in their village and earn an income through the sale of Melipona honey. The medicinal Melipona honey is rare and quite expensive, going for ten times the price of ordinary honey. Melipona stingless bees are becoming endangered and their traditional bee-tending practices are being lost. Let’s do this together as Sister Cities. Please contact me at [robertsonrebecca\(at\)yahoo.com](mailto:robertsonrebecca@yahoo.com) for more info about the Mayan Coöperative.

A Melipona honey pot.

Rebecca Ann Robertson lives in Asheville. She's a beekeeper, environmentalist, artist and world traveler. A Rahibe in the College of the Mellisae, she's an active member of Bee City USA and the Center for Honeybee Research.

OUR 2021 CORPORATE MEMBERS
Earthart Network, Kudzu Brands, Purplecat Networks, Spaceplan

President - Ken Nelson	knelson (at) bluedeltaenergy.com
Asheville Sister Cities welcomes the newest member of its executive committee, Vice President Jessica Coffield.	jeallen8 (at) gmail.com
Secretary – Alice Keller	gakeller (at) gakeller.com
Treasurer – Jackie Craig	appcraft (at) bellsouth.net

ASCI COMMITTEE CONTACTS

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

Now is the right time to renew your membership in ASCI!



USA



France



Greece



Mexico



Nigeria



Russia



Scotland

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