

ASHEVILLE SISTER CITIES INCORPORATED



Building Global Connections

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ASCI Newsletter December 2015

Promoting International Partnerships

The Annual Meeting And Memories of flooding

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

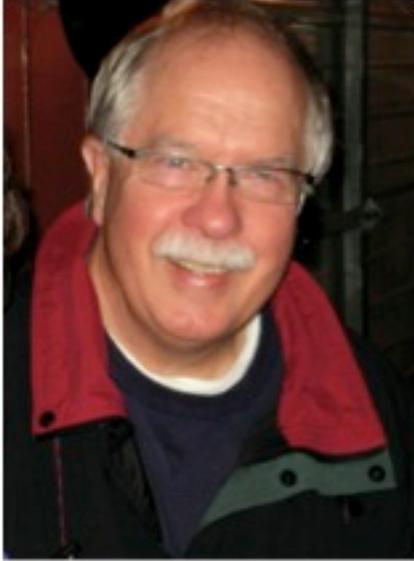
Like us on Facebook - keep up with ASCI news.

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: From where I sit

By Andrew Craig

Days before Christmas and all through the house...I hope this finds you either prepared for Christmas or over it and ready for the new year! I hope you have been by to see the window, decorated by the Committees for Christmas.



We have a Planning Committee that has been at work writing a proposal for a Sister Cities State meeting here in Asheville in February. By the time you get this they will have the proposal but we may not have an answer! We asked that they meet February 27th, but come to an opening reception at Asheville Area Arts Council space in the Grove Arcade on the 26th. The reception will be in honor of art and artists from our sister city, Vladikavkaz, and will be 5-6:30 pm on the 26th. So, whether or not the state people come, we are doing the reception and each and every one of you is invited and invited to bring friends! IF we get the state meeting here, I encourage you to attend. I went last year to the meeting in Cary and was delighted to find that our Asheville Sister Cities organization is one of, if not the, most active in the state. It is really good to see what other organizations are up to and the state meeting is the place to do that. No matter where the meeting may eventually be, we will send out the information regarding the where and when

and I encourage your attendance.

This city has inspected 33 Page and **declared it unsafe**. We have been required to move out and that we have done, quickly and efficiently with great volunteers. We have met with the city twice now in hopes they might have another space for us, but it seems they do not at this time. Also, we have expressed a desire for the city allow us to repair the building to habitable status and rentable (upstairs, etc.) so the city can get income and we can have our meeting space. We wait and see.

Ending on a positive note, the ANNUAL MEETING will be January 31st in the downstairs board room of the Grove Arcade; the same facility as last year. I invite all of you to come and hear and see what our committees have done and plan to do. Trust me, our committees are busy people! If you are not an active member of a committee, it is time you joined one and added your considerable talents to their efforts!

I hope each of you will accept best wishes from the board and me for a Happy Holiday Season and a Prosperous New Year!

WANTED: Dedicated Committee Chair

Osogbo Committee, Asheville Sister Cities

Preferred: current member of Osogbo Committee, but not necessary.

MUST BE: enthusiastic, dedicated, focused, and willing to regroup this committee and move forward with projects, to include delegation visits to *Osogbo, Nigeria*, as well as receiving delegations from Osogbo. If interested, please respond to: [gakeller \(at\) gakeller.com](mailto:gakeller@gakeller.com)

Greetings to members and supporters of ASCI. The following is intended to give you an update on our move from 33 Page, as well a little of our 25-year history.

By Gwen and Carroll Hughes

Over the last two months, our office space at 33 Page Avenue has been overwhelmed with water issues, caused by two very large rain events. This has prompted the City to post our building as “unsafe to occupy” as water was discovered inside one of the electrical panels. So with heavy hearts, we packed up our things and physically moved our international “treasures” to a storage unit on Sweeten Creek Road in hopes that this will be a short term and that we will soon find a new home for meetings and for hosting delegations. As international representatives of the City of Asheville, we often receive delegations from our Sister Cities and also visitors from other countries, and will often fly the flag of our Sister City’s country in honor of their visits to Asheville.

The building on Page Avenue was provided to us when we hosted a “World Congress” in 2005 for our Sister Cities, as well as visitors from other countries. We took occupancy in 2004 in order and began the task of cleaning, painting, code compliance and general maintenance so that planning could begin to make ready for our visitors from France, Mexico, Greece, England, Germany and Italy. The lease agreement was to be short term, as plans were being made by the City to demolish the building and to prepare for a new project on the site. But, as years passed, opinions on the use of the building/land have changed and community support has wavered, so we were allowed to stay on. We are very grateful to have had this opportunity to grow and develop our organization in such a wonderful place! OUR SINCERE THANKS TO THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE for the use of the building all these years.

Over the years, so many incredible things have developed around the boardroom table at 33 Page. Delegations from San Cristobal Mexico; Saumur, France; Karpenisi, Greece, Valladolid, Mexico, Vladikavkaz, Russia and Osogbo, Nigeria have been entertained and cultural and educational projects developed. Each delegation is introduced to our City Council, if possible during their stay. ASCI delegations to those cities have included students and adults who might be traveling out of country for the first time to have a life changing experience. Thousands of pen-pal letters have gone back and forth with students from Asheville City and Buncombe County Schools sharing pictures and short messages with schools in our current six Sister Cities. Also, songs have been sung via cell phones with 4th graders in Asheville and Mexico both singing along.

Each of our Sister Cities has in place an official agreement document, signed by the then- current Mayors of both cities. When possible, re-affirmation agreements are signed when new mayors are elected, in either country, to encourage continuing support of the relationships. Mayor Ken Michalove signed our first agreement with Vladikavkaz, Russia in 1992. And, likewise, our current Mayor, Esther Manheimer, recently signed a re-affirmation agreement with Presidente Roger Alcocer of Valladolid, Mexico during his delegation visit. By signing similar agreements, Mayors in both cities give permission to the Sister City organizations and their members to proceed with projects of mutual interest. Each current Mayor of Asheville is Honorary Chair of our board of directors. This is typical for each of the 1,400 US cities that have international Sister Cities relationships (over 3,000 international cities), formed to promote the theme of the founder, President Dwight D. Eisenhower, as “promoting world peace through citizen diplomacy.” The arms to embrace are more powerful than the arms to resist.

ASCI takes its responsibility as the unofficial “International Arm of the City of Asheville” very seriously. We provide opportunities for cultural learning, student exchanges and pen pals, art exchanges, medical interactions, city and public services exchanges, performance groups and many other avenues to share our lives in each country. We are very proud of the work accomplished and the

outstanding membership who work very hard to ensure the success of our projects and our mission. THANKS TO ALL OF OUR MEMBERSHIP FOR YOUR CONTINUED DEDICATION AND SUPPORT.

A new home will be found, and meanwhile, we will look forward to our Annual Meeting and our NC/SC State Conference – both to be held in the boardroom of the Grove Arcade. Committees will continue to meet to develop their plans of action for 2016 and we will continue to do great things!

RINGING THE BELL FOR WHEELCHAIRS FOR PEACE

Article by Ken Richards, September 2015



Now deceased, Principal Chief of the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Nation, Leon Jones was opening keynote speaker at the Sister Cities Conference of the Carolinas held in Beaufort, North Carolina.

His introduction went something like this. “Chief Jones, it would certainly feel more Cherokee-like to introduce a chief with the name of Falling Water, Dragging Canoe or even Hungry Bear, but you stand as a giant among the chiefs of your nation as a man of humility with the name of Jones... a chief who gets things done.” The chiefs reply, “Thanks for the introduction. You’re most fortunate that my colleague, Principal Chief of our Oklahoma tribe, isn’t here today as his name is Smith.”

Moments after his presentation the announcement was made that Asheville Sister Cities member, Carroll Hughes would ring the nautical bell where the meeting was being held in the Maritime museum in Beaufort, NC every time a donation was made to purchase a wheel chair for someone in need somewhere in the world.

The chief was the first to stand and present his personal check. He then produced a second check on behalf of the Eastern Band of the Cherokees. From that beginning Carroll was delighted to wear his bell ringing hand out as throughout the two day conference the checks came pouring in from the delegates from the Carolinas, including checks from Sister Cities then executive director, Tim Honey.



*Ken Bering, a successful businessman who once owned the Seattle Seahawks football team, began a philanthropic organization, **Wheelchairs for Peace**.*

Asheville Sister Cities has played a role in this project. The local organization pays half the cost of a customized wheelchair built specifically for the terrain in which it will be presented. Bering’s organization pays the other half, has the wheelchair built and when a shipping container is filled, it pays to get the chairs to their destination.

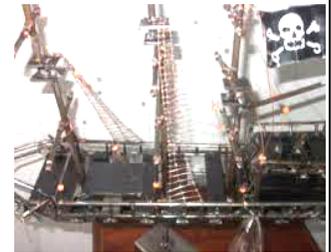
Thus far ASCI has brought sunshine into shut-ins’ lives in our sister cities in Russia, Mexico and in Greece. Asheville Sister Cities Delegation to the Sister Cities Conference of the Carolinas in Beaufort with friends.



ASCI delegates in front row Carroll Hughes, Yolanda Hall and Gwen Hughes. Second row is Sister Cities International coordinator from Washington and behind her Dennis and Barbara Hodgson, Irene Dillingham Richards and Bonnie Hobbie. Back row: Ken Richards and Dick Hall. Also, in attendance was North Carolina Secretary of State, Elaine Marshall and Sister Cities International President, Glen Gray from Alaska and SCI Executive, Tim Honey.

during the dinner at sea, Queen Anne's Revenge replica appeared and fired a broadside across the bow of the conference's ship. This vessel was built by a Beaufortite who legally changed his name to Sinbad and uses the ship as a teaching tool.

The group viewed the burial site of Otway Burns, privateer who operated off the coast of Beaufort on their tour of the town. His statue stands in the center circle at Asheville's neighboring town of Burnsville.



Happy Holidays from the San Cristóbal de las Casas committee!

By Dr. Greg Clemons, committee chair

We hope you and yours have a Feliz Navidad and a Próspero Año Nuevo for 2016! The fall photo and art show, in collaboration with the Asheville Sister Cities Valladolid committee, was highly successful and very enjoyable! Thank you to all the volunteers from both Mexican committees who helped make this event a success! We were able to return profits from the sales of photographs and art work to the COBACH school and to students who submitted the incredible paintings. Some of the profits also went to Casa de Flores whose students also sent art for the show. Plans for 2016 are already starting! We will be preparing to help Western Carolina University with their upcoming trip in May. Dr. Paul Worley, assistant professor of English at WCU, will be taking students for language and culture studies in San Cristóbal. Our committee is also planning for the theatrical production in the fall of 2016 of a work called *Tzakbu*, produced by Hiram Marina. About the Red Queen of the Maya, this work will be performed at WCU and at the Diana Wortham Theater in Asheville. Please watch for fund raising events to help with these projects and learn more about San Cristóbal de las Casas. In addition to these efforts by our committee be on the lookout for more activities! 2016 will be a fun and busy year for the San Cristóbal de las Casas committee. If you haven't already done so, please email me with questions and any queries about how to get involved with our group. Again, Feliz Navidad y Próspero Año Nuevo 2016!

ASHEVILLE SISTER CITIES, INCORPORATED

INVITES ALL MEMBERSHIP

and

INTERESTED FRIENDS TO ATTEND

ITS ANNUAL MEETING

January 31st in the Board Room of the Grove Arcade

Lower level

Arrive at 2:30pm - meeting from 3:00pm-5pm

Agenda will include:

State of the organization report from

President Andrew Craig

Reports from Committee Chairs

NC/SC State Conference

Awards and recognitions

Celebration of the year 2015

Rsvp to [gakeller\(at\)gakeller.com](mailto:gakeller(at)gakeller.com); by January 27th, 2016

Annual Dues are payable at the Annual Meeting

Sincere thanks to the 27 Founding Members of our newly formed Giving Society, whose gift will help to provide a life changing experience for a student or deserving adult by traveling with one of our exciting delegations coming up in 2016. San Cristobal will welcome a group of students from Western Carolina University for 4 weeks in May. Karpenisi will be sending a group of interested adults to Greece for 10 days. Valladolid will be assisting with ABTech’s internship program in that sister city. And there may be other opportunities! By contributing to our Giving Society, we all help make this experience possible for these young people and enthusiastic adults. Scholarships will be awarded within the next few months, and we need your help. Please go to our website, download the form, fill it out and send in your check to become a member. Your regular membership dues may be included as well. You may also join this group while attending our Annual Meeting on January 31st and hear from scholarship recipients from 2015. Many thanks to all.

Please contact any of the Giving Society Team for more information:

Rick Lutovsky – rlutovsky@gmail.com

George Keller – gakeller@gakeller.com

Paige Hansen – vphansen@prosperafinancial.com

Gwen Hughes – gwengh@charter.net

President - Andrew Craig	kurmugon(at)bellsouth.net
Vice President – Marjorie McGuirk	marjoriemcguirk(at)gmail.com
Secretary – Alice Keller	gakeller(at)gakeller.com
Treasurer – Inge Robert	irobert68(at)bellsouth.net
Past President – Russ Martin	rmandkk(at) attglobal.net

Karpenisi Committee Chair Andronikos Falangas	<i>Androfal(at)yahoo.com</i>
Osogbo Committee Chair (vacant)	<i>Marjoriemcguirk(at)gmail.com</i>
San Cristóbal Committee Chair Greg Clemons	<i>Ncchamo(at)gmail.com</i>
Saumur Committee co-chair Allison Weems	<i>Weems.allison(at)gmail.com</i>
Saumur Committee co-chair Jerry Plotkin	<i>Plotkingb(at)gmail.com</i>
Valladolid Committee Chair Karon Korp	<i>Karonkorp(at)gmail.com</i>
Vladikavkaz Committee Chair Constance Richards	<i>Schtanzi(at)aol.com</i>

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ASCI CALENDAR OF COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

ASCI Board Meeting	3 rd Thursday of each month – 5:30 pm, 33 Page Ave.
San Cristóbal Committee	2 nd Thursday of each month – 5:30pm, 33 Page Ave.
Saumur Committee	4 th Monday of each month – 5:30pm, 33 Page Ave.
Karpenisi Committee	Oct. 19, 6:00 pm, 33 Page Ave.
Valladolid Committee	Last Wednesday of the month - 5:30pm, 33 Page Ave.
Osogbo Committee	3 rd Tuesday of each month – 6:00 pm, 33 Page Ave.
Vladikavkaz Committee	Time and Date TBA – Contact Committee Chair.

If you have a particular interest in a committee, please email the chairperson to confirm time & place.



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