Special Newsletter

Summer Edition
Save the Date!

ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL LUNCHEON & SILENT AUCTION

October 6 12pm - 2:30pm

For Norfolk Sister City Association summer is always an exciting time, especially when we get to host students from one of our Sister Cities. This year we had 32 students and chaperones from 3 countries over a period of seven weeks. These students not only got to see what makes Norfolk and Hampton Roads such a culturally rich community, but they also got to interact with local schools and students. This person to person activity is a core of the Sister City initiative of person to person diplomacy. My favorite quote of this year was from a young schoolboy at Ingleside Elementary who proudly exclaimed after the students from Kitaykyshu left “one day I’m going to Japan”. If that doesn’t sum up a successful exchange, I don’t know what does. More importantly you too can be a partner by supporting our scholarship fund which allows us to send students from Norfolk on one of our out bound trips. We anticipate four scheduled exchanges for 2019/2020. You can easily donate or plan to attend our Annual Luncheon which supports this initiative on Oct. 6, 2019 at Norfolk Yacht.

Gary
Gary Bonnewell
President, Norfolk Sister City Association
Kitakyushu Committee had two major events to celebrate our 60th anniversary of our long-standing friendship during this summer.

First was a commemorative tree planting ceremony held at Norfolk Botanical Garden on Monday, July 22nd. The inbound mayoral delegation from Kitakyushu included Mayor Kitahashi, chairman of city council, Mr. Murakami, and five other city officials partook in the emblematic celebratory occasion. We had Mayor Alexander, council lady McClellan, Mr. Gary Bonnewell, the new president of NSCA, Mr. Desplaine, president of Norfolk Botanical Garden, and over 200 guests from our community.

Very talented 113 items of youth art from both cities were displayed in the foyer/hallway at the entrance toward the reception room and the slide show of them was projected throughout the event which added an additional rich relationship of both cities.

During the official ceremony, Mayor Alexander and Mayor Kitahashi delivered their speeches beautifully and Honorary Citizenship Award was presented to Mayor Kitahashi. The city of Kitakyushu received a hand-made coral sculpture created by a local artist, and the city of Norfolk received a steel art which collaged the highlights of the city of Kitakyushu.

Under the 100 degrees of heat with perfect summer blue sky, a bronze plaque of the 60th year commemorative friendship between the two cities was unveiled. Six Yoshino cherry trees were planted by representatives from the both cities including youth. The “Kitakyushu Sakura Harmony” was created just next to the newly renovated rose garden area along a well-designed canal pathway. We hope plethora of visitors will discover the Kitakyushu Sakura Harmony and enjoy the splendid blossoming of cherry trees every spring. The reception was followed with a cheer/kanpai of councilman, Mr. Murakami and GSA students sang impressive acapella song. The hearty and happy occasion of 60th anniversary event was concluded by ending remarks of former president of NSCA, Dr. Hamada with his reflective message.
We hope people who joined in this signature event were able to share and enjoy the long-lasting active friendship between Kitakyushu and Norfolk and we wish to extend our sincere appreciation to those people who support us continuously.

The other event was an inbound youth exchange program. The 12 students ages 12 to 17 plus 2 adult chaperones from Kitakyushu had really many priceless experiences during their visit to Norfolk for 8 days. They stayed with host families, participated in the tree planting ceremony, and visited various facilities in Hampton Roads. However, the major event for these students was a school visit. Ingleside elementary school led by Dr. Balthazar kindly welcomed the Japanese students to have a cultural exchange program. The positive effects given to all participating students were immeasurable. Our committee appreciate Dr. Gloria Hagans to make this program possible. We intend to publish a youth program report book to distribute to the all participants, host families, staffs, and some organizations. Kitakyushu committees appreciate all people who participated and supported our programs.

In this fall, the end of October to early part of November, 38 GSA students will visit Kitakyushu to have a commemorative musical performance as outbound youth exchange. We would like to appreciate the scholarship from NSCA which has given to the three students who reside in Norfolk. Our committee will report about it once the program is completed.
Summer 2019 was a busy year for our Toulon, France Committee. We received two exchange students this summer, Mila Lucchese and Anne Victorie. The arrived June 24 and departed July 9. This was an informal exchange with only one structured event. The time was spent with their host families, experiencing life as an American teenager would.

Thank you to our host families Randall & Diane Galley and Peter & Reina Woudsma for opening their homes and their hearts.

If you have a high school student (or are a high school student) with at least one year of French, consider applying to be part of our outbound exchange next summer. Information should be on our website by mid-February. www.norfolksistercities.org
"This summer our Wilhelmshaven Sister City Committee and our fabulous host families, Bahrs; Crouchs; Mays; Janine Romans; Jose Romans; Steinhoff – Snowdans; Trevinos; Wegeners, received a 16 member inbound delegation. Despite a harrowing experience of flight cancellations and an unexpected sleepover in Minneapolis, the group finally arrived on July 7 and departed from Dulles Airport on July 28 after two days in DC and Northern Virginia.

Group activities included tours of the Chrysler Museum, Nauticus and Stihl. While in DC, our Germans and some of their American hosts had a docent led tour of the Capitol and lots of time exploring the National Mall. Thank you Bruce and Connie Johnson for always opening your home / pool for our welcome and / or farewell parties.

We are indebted to Dieter Steinhoff and Petra Snowden for their faithful support of this exchange, celebrating 41 years in 2019! If you have high school aged students who have at least one year of German, please encourage them to apply for our outbound delegation this summer. The application and trip details will be on our website by late February.
"Over the past two years, I have hosted exchange students from Germany and the Philippines through the Norfolk Sister Cities Organization. I think my parents wanted to bring the world to me since I have never actually been out of the country, or off the east coast. So, I was excited to learn that I had been chosen to represent Norfolk Sister Cities at the 2019 Sister Cities International annual conference in Houston, Texas. Though I love traveling, the best part of the conference was all the new friends I made.

Upon first arriving at the conference I met the Ecuadorians. They were very nice and invited me to eat with them. The more we talked the more we got to know each other (their English was very good), and explained our different cultures and ways of living. It was interesting to learn how most Ecuadorians learn English in school. By the end of the fourth day we were all very good friends and are still in contact today.

I can’t wait to go to Ecuador and visit them!

The second best part of the trip was staying on the campus of Rice University. Not only is it a beautiful campus (I took a ton of pictures), staying on campus made me feel like an adult. I especially liked the freedom of walking around campus, eating at the dining hall, meeting up with friends, and just chilling in the dorm room. Living that close together brought us closer together very quickly too. Unfortunately, I didn’t get to see a lot of the Houston area but am excited to go back soon. Participating in the Sister Cities International conference was the best part of my summer. I can’t wait to go back!"