

# **SANTA BARBARA SISTER CITIES BOARD**

## **Annual Report to Santa Barbara City Council**

July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021

Fiscal Year 2020-21 has been an interesting year with the cancellation of several programs, exchanges and changes in meeting venues, however, each of the Sister City committees has met the challenge with creative and interesting ways to continue their programs. The Sister Cities Board has continued to meet the first Wednesday of every other month through Go to Meeting. Many thanks to Holly Perea for setting-up the meetings. One benefit has been that more people have been able to participate in the virtual meetings and programs than in the past. The Puerto Vallarta Sister City Committee held monthly virtual meetings with their counterparts in Mexico that provided interesting programs about Puerto Vallarta and programs being sponsored by the Santa Barbara/Puerto Vallarta Sister City Committee. The Toba Sister City Committee held joint celebrations with their counterparts in Toba. The San Juan Sister City Committee participated in the Philippines Round-Table sponsored by the Sister Cities International (SCI) Global Awareness Team. Kotor, Patras and Weihei were able to hold their meetings and other celebrations virtually.

Unfortunately, the annual 9/11 Concert and the United Nations (UN) Dinner were both cancelled in the fall of 2020 and the 2021 9/11 Concert was cancelled as well. Planning is underway for the annual Festival of Sister Cities Dinner scheduled for October 14. The name has been changed from the UN Dinner in order to focus on a celebration of the Santa Barbara Sister Cities' programs and achievements.

The Sister Cities Board has received two proposals for new Sister Cities that are being evaluated according to the Guidelines for New Sister Cities. The committees were able to meet and develop a plan for the Sister City. The two candidates are Miraflores, Peru and Kinsale, Ireland. Each committee has been able to hold virtual planning meetings with their counterparts in Peru and Ireland and are looking forward to the time each can have in person delegation visits.

Santa Barbara is a member of Sister Cities International and is well represented by former Mayor Helene Schneider, a member of the SCI Board of Directors and the SCI Executive Committee; Pat Fallin and Gil Garcia are members of the SCI Honorary Board; Pat Fallin also serves as the SCI State Representative-SoCal; Gil Garcia received the 2020 SCI Chairman's Award for his dedication and volunteer service to SCI. Santa Barbara also participates in the SoCal Chapter of SCI which is a network organization of all of the SCI member cities in SoCal. Marti Correa de Garcia and Margaret Saavedra serve on the SoCal Board of Directors'. Gil Garcia and Santa Barbara Councilmember Oscar Guterrez are members of the SoCal Board of Governors. The Santa Barbara-Puerto Vallarta Sister City Committee received the 2020 Best Overall Award for cities 25,000-100,000.

The six Sister City Committees have submitted their individual Annual Reports and I encourage you to read them. There are exciting programs happening and the Santa Barbara Sister Cities continue to be champions for Peace and Prosperity by fostering bonds around the world through people-to-people Citizen Diplomacy.

The Santa Barbara Sister Cities express their gratitude to the City of Santa Barbara for the support of the Sister Cities program.

Pat Fallin, Chair  
Santa Barbara Sister Cities Board

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## **Santa Barbara/Kotor, Montenegro Sister City Committee**

As most of our activity centers around young people from the world of Culinary, Classical Music and Water Polo traveling to and from Santa Barbara and Kotor the COVID-19 Virus caused the cancellation of almost every exchange we had scheduled for this past year.

We had planned on three students from The Institute for Children with Disabilities in Kotor to intern in one of our most prestigious restaurants in California while four students from Santa Barbara City Colleges Culinary School were offered paid internships to work at the Regent Porto Montenegro.

In addition, we had planned on a gifted musician from The University of California's Music Department to perform at the KotorArt International Music Festival in August followed by an invitation for two of the musicians from KotorArt to Perform at UCSB and the Music Academy of the West in January.

These exchanges, along with the planned trip of a team of U-18 Water Polo players from Santa Barbara's Primer Water Polo Club to train and compete with some of the best coaches and young water polo players in the world in Kotor in July/August 2020, we're all cancelled because of COVID - 19.

We were able to schedule a fund-raising program via Zoom in support of the 2020 KotorArt International Music Festival which, although modified, did run that summer. In addition, we have held numerous meetings with our counterparts in Kotor to continue these exchanges as soon as the virus permits. Our best estimate is that things will return to normal in 2022.

For information on our past exchanges and what we hope to build upon in the future please look at our website: [www.sbkotorsistercity.com](http://www.sbkotorsistercity.com) and for any questions or additional information please contact me.

Prepared by George Lilly, Representative

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## **Santa Barbara/Patras, Greece Sister City Committee**

The Santa Barbara/Patras Committee continuously worked to expand our membership.

Due to Covid-19 we did not hold our yearly fundraiser in March.

Our communication with Patras is staying strong considering the strict restrictions they had to face due to the Pandemic. A zoom meeting with Patras will be held in a few weeks to discuss future plans.

We have been holding Zoom meetings this past year and keeping all communications via email.

Prepared by Georgia Gastuniotis, Representative

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## **Santa Barbara/Puerto Vallarta Sister City Committee**

### NEW EXECUTIVE BOARD:

The Santa Barbara/Puerto Vallarta Sister City Committee elected a new Executive Board in January of 2021. The following are the officers:

- President – Sebastian Aldana
- 1<sup>st</sup> Vice-President – Mike Hernandez
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-President – Aileen Chambers
- Recording Secretary – Margaret Saavedra
- Corresponding Secretary & Treasurer – Gil Garcia
- Ex-Officio – Carlos Velasco

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

- Jacqueline Duran
- Yvonne Pedersen
- Cheli Hidalgo
- Tony de Paco
- Carmen Flores
- Alma Vaja

### MEMBERSHIP:

Surprisingly, our membership has increased during the pandemic.

### ZOOM MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS:

Monthly membership meetings have been held monthly. These monthly meetings provide the opportunity to interact with our sister city in Puerto Vallarta and expands programs to our local members.

#### IN-PERSON MEMEBERSHIP MEETINGS:

Our first in-person membership meeting was held in June. The event was held at a member's home. Over 40 people attended, our new membership event chair, Yvonne Pedersen had several activities, enjoyed by all.

Our second in-person membership meeting was held at Toro Canyon Park in July. It was a patriotic BBQ, honoring our veterans. Again, our membership event chair made this a heartwarming program enjoyed by over 85 people attending.

The following is a glance of our Sister City activities:

#### AID FOR FAMILIES OF CHILDREN WITH CANCER:

\$2,814.00 was raised to support "Aid for Families of Children with Cancer" program in PV \$800.00 will go Puerto Vallarta Volcanes community food bank to provide meals for 22 families for 2 months. \$500.00 is for cancer children with special needs. Families of Children with Cancer (AFCC) is an organization that supports 22 families who have a child diagnosed with cancer in the Puerto Vallarta region. Donations support the loving care services by community volunteers to improve family quality of life by helping families with economic relief support that includes many special high-cost needs for the children.

#### VOLCANES FOOD BANK:

Over \$30,000.00 was raised throughout the past year to support the Volcanes Food Bank that supplies meal ingredients to over 500 families that have been economically devastated by loss of tourist related jobs due to the pandemic.

#### "OPERATION BUST OUT":

\$2,000 was raised by a member offering free baton classes to children outdoors (strictly following State Covid-19 guidelines), giving the children an opportunity to "bust out" of confinement and "bust out" some cool baton and dance moves. Optional donations were accepted, and the program was a great success for those who participated. All proceeds were contributed to the Volcanes Food Bank project.

#### DAVID "MARIN" GARCIA ZUNIGA'S DISABILITY ASSISTANCE FUND:

\$1,000.00 was raised for the David "Marin" Garcia Zuniga's Disability Assistance Fund. This fund was started to help Marin and his family during the financial stress this recent disability has caused. Marin and family are long time active members of the PV/SB Sister City program in Puerto Vallarta. His kind,

loving service is and has been an exemplary example of the sister city citizen diplomacy goodwill mission.

#### A DOG'S NEW LIFE:

\$7,000.00 has been raised for A Dog's New Life (ADNL) solar panels project in PV. This project will start in August. This rehabilitation site for dogs is currently off "the grid" and has no electricity to run lights, refrigerator for medicine storage, washing machine, cooling fans, etc. ADNL mission statement is: The rescue of sick, injured, and abused animals in the Puerto Vallarta region. Providing food, health recovery care, shelter, and vet care. Promote spray and neutering to end problem of overpopulation and unwanted animals. Adoption of healthy animals back into loving homes in U.S. and Mexico. Provide education and assistance to the community for the health and welfare of their animals.

#### BOCA de TOMATLAN HEALTH CLINIC:

Provided a monthly stipend totaling \$1,500.00 total for 6 months to a nurse at the Boca Health Clinic. Thanks to the generosity of sister city members Guy de Mangeon and Connie & Don Goertz. A grant from the Rotary Club of Santa Barbara North Charitable Foundation funded a computer and printer to assist with medical records at the clinic.

#### STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS – CLUB ROTARIO de PUERTO VALLARTA SUR:

Ten Sister City Members continued to sponsor elementary and high school students with yearly scholarship support.

#### SANTA BARBARA I.MADONNARI FESTIVAL:

Sponsor square created by Puerto Vallarta artist Ayde Juarez Guadalupe in Puerto Vallarta. The square was done in Puerto Vallarta and posted on the I.Madonnari Festival website.

#### PUERTO VALLARTA BOTANIC GARDENS:

After a ZOOM Sister City membership meeting where the Puerto Vallarta Botanic Garden presented a slide show, \$575.00 was raised in support of the gardens. The Puerto Vallarta Garden is sister garden with the Santa Barbara Botanic Gardens.

#### INTERNATIONAL FIRE TRAINING ASSOCIATION (IFTA):

SB/PV Sister City provides continuous support to our partner, IFTA to send equipment to Puerto Vallarta that will be distributed to fire departments after their firefighters have attended a training symposium. IFTA is an all-volunteer, nonprofit foundation. IFTA has donated thousands of life-saving emergency tools and equipment to many cities and communities, fire and rescue departments, and the Red Cross throughout Mexico, after providing the proper training.

We collaborate with U.S. and Mexico Rotary Clubs, So Cal Sister Cities International, and Santa Barbara/Puerto Vallarta Sister City Committee as well as many cities and county fire departments throughout the U.S. With this collaboration, we are able to provide high quality training and excellent volunteer instructors from fire departments all over the nation. In just the last 12 months, IFTA has donated a fire engine to Comala, Colima, Mexico (thanks to the Beckwourth Fire District, CA) and an ambulance to Puerto Vallarta, Mexico (thanks to the Albuquerque, New Mexico Fire Department), along with delivering 6 training symposiums, consisting of emergency medical response, fire suppression, search & rescue, haz-mat, vehicle extrication and rope rescue.

We are now developing and building the first "IFTA Emergency Equipment Donation Distribution Center" in Puerto Vallarta. The center will enable us to directly supply needed lifesaving gear and equipment to the cities and rural areas throughout the states of Nayarit, Jalisco, and Colima. An ambulance was donated and delivered to the Puerto Vallarta Fire Department a few months ago.

#### 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY MOSAIC BENCH:

\$5,892.00 has been raised (this exceeds our \$5,700.00 goal) for the SB/PV Sister City Mosaic mural, 50th Anniversary, bench project (see attachments for anniversary plaque and bench sample).

Next year 2022 is the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of first contact to establish the Santa Barbara/Puerto Vallarta Sister City relationship. In the beginning, City Councilman Richard Hidalgo on March 3, 1972, wrote a letter to the Honorable Municipal President of Puerto Vallarta, C. Marcelo Alcaraz Guereña, asking that he seek approval for the Puerto Vallarta City Council to formally recognize the Sister City designation for our two cities.

To memorialize this golden anniversary, SB/PV Sister City members are fundraising \$5,000.00 USD plus about \$700.00 for donor tiles for a Commemorative 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Mosaic Bench to be constructed in Lazaro Cardenas Mosaic Park, which is located in PV Romantic Zone, a short block from Playa Los Arcos Hotel. Lazaro Cardenas Mosaic Park is becoming known worldwide for the beautiful and creative use of mosaic tile murals on all surfaces of the park.

The artist in charge of the project, Natasha Moraga will construct the mural, designed by local SB artist and Sister City member, Ann Hefferman. The mural design will integrate Santa Barbara and Puerto Vallarta images that celebrate 50 years of the long enduring and award-winning Sister City relationship.

#### REHABILITATION CLINIC IN PUERTO VALLARTA:

\$2,500.00 was donated to the Sta.Barbara-Pto.Vallarta Rehabilitation Clinic for partial installation of solar panels. The Santa Barbara/Puerto Vallarta Sister City Committee, along with support from the Rotary Club of Santa Barbara in founding the building of the clinic in the early 1990's.

Prepared by Gil Garcia, Corresponding Secretary and Treasurer

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## **Santa Barbara/San Juan, Philippines Sister City Committee**

Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, there were no in-person activities reported. The only significant event was the appointment of Dr. Alexander Tang as the new San Juan representative.

1. The proposed visit to San Juan in 2020 was deferred.
2. The proposed construction of the Dolphin fountain in the San Juan city hall was delayed due to Covid-19.
3. The proposed visitation of the San Juan city mayor Francis Zamora to Santa Barbara was postponed because of the Covid-19.
4. The submission of the YASS (Young Artists and Authors Showcase) couldn't be done because there were no students available.
5. The following local activities were not held:

(A.)Valentine's Day

(B) Filipino-American Friendship day postponed until 2022

(C)Annual picnic and BBQ postponed. The next activity might be this September.

Prepared by Albe Dumlao, Alternate

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## **Santa Barbara/Toba, Japan, Sister City Committee**

The Santa Barbara/Toba Sister City Committee was fairly quiet this past year, but we did take the opportunity to use Zoom to connect, and even to hold a first-time joint celebration together with Toba.

Our student exchange program was cancelled again this year, meaning that perhaps only one of the Santa Barbara students we selected almost two years ago now, will still qualify to travel next summer, when we trust circumstances will allow us to re-start our long-standing program.

In August, we held the first-ever Atomic Bombing memorial Zoom commemoration together with our friends in Toba. Our Mission bells rang out together with Toba's temple bell; our leaders offered words of friendship and healing, and Japanese national television recognized the efforts of our two cities--sisters now for 54 years, to continue to bring forth efforts in healing and developing closer relations between two former foes.

Currently we are developing together with our Toba colleagues, an effort to create pen-pal and other relationships between Santa Barbara and Toba schools through folding, sending and receiving origami cranes in the Peace Crane project together with Founder Sue diCicco. Toba youth will fold cranes, write on them messages of peace and friendship, and send to Santa Barbara schools this

September. The following month, Santa Barbara schools will follow suit. Obviously, we are hoping that as many school children as possible, as well as teachers, will be motivated to follow up with: letter-exchange, friendship bonding, teaching units dedicated to post-war relations, even invitations to visit each other. We sincerely hope that Santa Barbara teachers will use this opening to explore themes of peacemaking in their ongoing programs.

Our Shinnenkai New Year's meeting and dinner this January was equally creative. We partnered with Yoichi's traditional Japanese restaurant to offer attendees a free small bottle of sake with each Obento take-out box they ordered. Our program was held over Zoom, where Sue diCicco discussed her career as a Disney animator, and eventual development into a peace advocate with Japan.

We were able to incorporate our Japanese counterparts into this special New Year's program, a "first" which made the evening that much more special.

We resumed in-person board meetings last month, postponing our traditional mid-year potluck until August, so we can all bring our spouses and celebrate another year face-to-face!

Linda Mathews, President

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## **Santa Barbara/Weihai, China, Sister City Committee**

July 2020 - Current officers agreed to continue to serve due to pandemic  
Current Officers:

President-Jill Stassinos  
Vice-President-Anna Kwong  
Treasurer-Roland Lewin  
Secretary-Eliesa Bollinger  
Membership-Sara Wilcox  
S.B. Sister Cities Representative-Peter Haslund  
S.B. Sister Cities Alternate Representative-George Ayoub  
Board Member-Xiaoli Zhang-King (Web Master)  
Board Member-Jessy Lee

Discussed planning next event (Virtual): Santa Barbara/Weihai Sister City & Shandong University Panel

Discussed Dr. Wen Chen's (Cal Tech Professor) offer of a virtual presentation to our association.

August 2020 - Met via Zoom. Combined two separate bank accounts as recommended by Roland (Treasurer) to maximize interest earned.

September 2020 – Met via Zoom. Planned for General Membership meeting in November.

A Subcommittee was formed to assist with planning. A video was posted of Peter and Xiaoli making Dumplings on website. Interactive Blog was discussed to encourage new members to join our association. Discussed Angela Zhang's (UCSB Student) concerns regarding the Chinese government's treatment of Falun Gong members. Secretary, Eliesa, resigned from the position but continued on the board.

October 2020 – Met via Zoom. Guest Sese expressed interest in joining our association and board. Discussed plans for December 5th Virtual Annual General Membership Meeting. Reviewed By-Laws. Discussed participation in Robotics Virtual Exchange Program. Vice-President, Anna Kwong, resigned from the board.

November 2020 - Meeting via Zoom. Elected current board to continue to serve due to pandemic. Peter and Oscar are working on video: Post Pandemic - the Future.

December 2020 - Meeting via Zoom. Board members participated in organizing and hosting Dec. General Membership Meeting. Key Note speaker: Helene Schneider. Greeting from Weihai message from, Director for Weihai's international Office, Helen (Yu Guochun).

January 2021 - Meeting via Zoom. Discussed having a virtual Chinese New Year's dinner Celebration in February. Discussed planning a trip in Sept. or Oct. 2021 to Weihai, China. Annual membership dues were discussed and renewal letters were sent out. Also, discussed cancelling Professional Zoom account, renewing P.O. Box and renewing website subscription. Weihai offered, a college student, a study abroad experience but due to the pandemic it may be difficult to locate interested students.

February 2021 – Held a virtual Chinese New Year's dinner celebration with raffle prizes. Few guests in attendance.

March 2021 – Board meeting via Zoom. Discussed ways to increase membership. Also discussed using Pay Pal and Venmo to collect new membership and annual renewal fees. Discussed writing a statement related to our association's condemnation of anti-Asian discrimination and violence. President, Jill, read a statement, on behalf of the SB-Weihai Sister City Association, at the SB City Council meeting and requested the SB City Council write a resolution condemning anti-Asian violence and discrimination.

The Board discussed ways to encourage new and renewing members. Also, the board decided to have an operational budget. President, Jill, virtually attended Sister Cities International Africa Region's Celebration of International Women's Month.

April 2021 - Board mtg. via Zoom. The board discussed hosting a Santa Barbara 3 Asian Sister Cities meeting to address anti-Asian sentiment and violence in America. Peter shared the Sister Cities International's letter condemning racism, hate, discrimination and violence in all forms and standing in solidarity with the Asian American and Pacific Islander communities fighting against this hatred. The Board endorsed the SCI Resolution. Oscar shared that he and another city council member presented a resolution concerning the violence directed at Asians. Sara chaired a membership committee to come up with ideas to encourage new and renewing memberships. Due to difficulty in obtaining Visas for China - Fall 2021 trip may have to be postponed. Board member George Ayoub resigned from the board.

May 2021 – Board did not meet.

June 2020 - In person potluck dinner meeting at Peter's home. Membership committee shared ideas on how to retain and increase membership. The Board discussed the possibility of a Fall China Trip in 2022 or 2023. The Board also discussed the need for a Program Chair to organize new programs to encourage new members and retain current members.

Other Information:

We have a good reserve in our treasury. We presently have approximately 23 dues paying members on our active roster. Our website has been regularly updated in 2020-2021. Xiaoli Zhang-King is our webmaster. Please check out our website at: [sbweihai.org](http://sbweihai.org). Sister City members are informed by: E-mail and Website (sbweihai.org)

Active Sister City members supporting Sister City Programs:

\*Sister City member Pat Fallin serves as Sister Cities International State Coordinator for Southern California

\*Sister City member Peter Haslund serves on the Santa Barbara Sister Cities Board.

\*Sister City member Jill Stassinis is a member of the Santa Barbara/Puerto Vallarta Sister City Committee and the Santa Barbara/Toba Sister City Committee.

Prepared by: Jill Stassinis, President