



*Sister City Association of Bloomington-Normal*

Vladimir  
Canterbury

# *Communicator* Spring 2018

Newsletter Editor Margaret Ann Hayden@ilstu.edu

## **Presidents Letter** by **Dave Thomas**

Dear VCSCA Friends,

For my first newsletter message as President of the Vladimir Canterbury Sister Cities Association, I would like to say that I am honored and excited about being in this position. Over my years of involvement in the VCSCA, I've come to appreciate the history, accomplishments, and fundamental need for the Association. I've also come to appreciate the efforts of the dedicated board members (current and past) who have volunteered their time to make this Association successful.



The Board has been hard at work planning an exciting year for the VCSCA. As you read through this newsletter, please let us know what you think and let us know if you would like to get involved.

We have a very strong exchange relationship with our sister city in Vladimir. Currently, we are hosting a high school student (see article) and have several university exchanges planned for the year (see articles). Although our efforts have been somewhat hampered by the difficulty for our Russian guests to obtain visas, we hope to continue with these valuable exchanges. There will be a record number (11) of ISU – KNR students travelling to Russia in May. The Department of Agriculture at ISU has begun a research collaboration with colleagues from Vladimir State University. We have a medical program exchange planned for September (see article). To strengthen our ties with our sister city in Canterbury, we are attempting to initiate a short-term summer exchange for high school students to and from Canterbury.

Our program committee is once again planning many exciting events for the year, including the William White Forum. Please stay tuned for details about these

events. We are also going to establish a junior board for the Association to involve younger people (mainly students involved with the exchanges) in planning events.

In order to accomplish all of the great activities of the VCSCA, it takes money. One of my priorities as President is to engage in several fundraising events. We certainly hope that you will renew your membership and make any donation to the VCSCA that you deem appropriate. Plans are underway for a Russian dinner night (perhaps with vodka tasting), Russian cooking classes, a visit to the Russian Tea Room in Chicago, and many other exciting activities. We hope you participate and help us strengthen the Association.

Please contact me if you have interest in our Association and would like to get involved in any way.

## **Photo Exhibit**

Please visit our website to see the full display of photographs from the spring 2017 photo exhibit of three sister cities. The prints were displayed at both Illinois Wesleyan University in the spring 2017 and then at the Normal Public Library through November 2017. Prints have been taken down but may now be viewed in electronic format on our Sister Cities website.

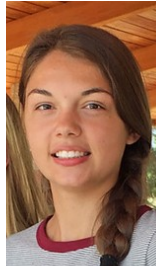
## **Travel to Vladimir**

The sister cities of Canterbury and Bloomington Normal plans to travel to Vladimir to attend Vladimir City Day celebration in late August. In addition a tour of St Petersburg and Moscow is planned. The trip is being organized by one of the original founders, Vladimir Musatov.

**Olya Zhrebkina**  
**Russian Exchange Student**

**My experience in the U.S.**

So far I can call my experience here life-changing. I feel like I am a completely different person now with different views, goals, and interests. Here's why. For the first few months, I had to learn different kinds of work that teachers ask us to do, how to make friends speaking a different language and how to understand Americans and their culture. It may seem like a lot things to deal with when you're seventeen, but actually it was actually easy. It was easy because of all the help I got and still get every day from my host family, my teachers, and my coordinator.



I spend most of the time here at school where classes, teachers, and students are very different from what I'm used to. For an example, in my Russian school a teacher usually gives a lecture while students are taking their own notes, and on the next day, a teacher asks a few students to summarize yesterday's lesson in front of the class. Here it's completely different: we read a lot, fill out worksheets, do different activities and labs, which is much more interesting. My two favorite classes in NCHS are U.S. History and Sociology. In my history class my teacher expressed his critical opinion on American history and American politics now, which helped me get a better picture of what actually happened in the past. Also, I learned a lot of things about Russian history that I wouldn't learn back home. For an example, I was taught only good things about Stalin. In Russia they don't really talk about all the bad things that he's done. Here I got to learn about them, which gave me a fuller picture of the past. Also, during one of class discussions about civilization in my sociology class I decided to quit eating meat. I've been vegetarian since the end of this fall. That's how school influenced my life here.

I believe that generally an exchange student's experience in a foreign country depends on her/his host family a lot. Fortunately, I was very lucky to get the best host family you can possibly think of. I've got very supportive, understanding and kind parents, and three very cool siblings. I started feeling like I was a part of the family from very beginning, and they introduced me to people as their daughter/sister from the very first day of my stay. Although host family is something that I had to adapt to, as well. I had to learn their rules, their traditions, and beliefs. For an example, here we usually have dinner together as a family and

talk about our day. Back at home we rarely eat dinner together. But as I said, my family is the reason why I'm having such a good experience here for the most part. One of my favorite things that we do together here is traveling because I love exploring the parts of this country and getting to know to my family better.

Also, I am very thankful that my host family brought me to a church one day because church is one of the most important experiences here that I got. Religion is a big part of American culture, so it was interesting how churches here are different from churches at home. Russian churches are really conservative and not very accepting, and here you have much more liberal churches. But most importantly, I got to go to youth group where they give me an opportunity to ask questions about religion, which literally changed the way I looked at the world and helped me understand people here better.

In conclusion, I would like to say that I can't even imagine having a better experience because of the people around me, which I'm very grateful for.

**School of Kinesiology and Recreation at  
Illinois State University Exchange**

Eleven students and two professors from the School of Kinesiology and Recreation at Illinois State University are excited to travel to Vladimir, Russia as part of a short-term student/faculty study abroad program with the Institute of Physical Culture and Sports at Vladimir State University. Dr. Karen Dennis and Dr. Dave Thomas are the faculty directors of this program. The group plans to leave on May 10 and fly to St. Petersburg where they will enjoy the sights there, including Catherine's Palace, the Hermitage, St. Isaac's Cathedral, and Peterhof Palace. They will take an overnight train from St. Petersburg to Vladimir where they will spend the next ten days visiting classes at the university, hospitals, clinics, and facilities where students of the Institute of Physical Culture and Sport work and complete internships. They plan to complete their Russia Study Abroad experience by spending a couple of days in Moscow and then return home. The group is excited to be joined by Vladimir-Canterbury board member and treasurer, Karen Fleming.

Unfortunately, there will not be a delegation from Vladimir State University visiting Illinois State University in April, as has been the tradition. Due to problems obtaining visas in time, the Vladimir State delegation instead plans to visit Bloomington-Normal in October.

## Medical Partnership

A delegation of four nurses, one physician, and one medical student are planning to travel to Vladimir in September, 2018. The focus of this Medical Partnership exchange is Oncology Care, and is a reciprocal exchange to the Russian oncology delegation that visited Bloomington-Normal in 2016. Members of the delegation include Dr. Noel Kerr – Associate Professor of Nursing at Illinois Wesleyan University; Dr. Amy Funk – Assistant Professor of Nursing at Illinois Wesleyan University; Megan Rappleyea, Lung Cancer Navigator with OSF HealthCare; Dr. Patrick Gomez – Medical Oncologist with Illinois Cancer Care; and Ms. Christine Gomez – medical student at UMKC School of Medicine. The group will be led by Dr. Wendy Woith, Professor of Nursing, Mennonite College of Nursing at Illinois State University. While in Vladimir, the delegation will present their research at an Oncology Conference that will be hosted by the Regional Oncology Dispensary. The group will also have an opportunity to visit other hospitals and clinics, in addition to having a cultural program.

## International Seminar Series

Dr. Christine Varga-Harris delivered a talk on Russian History at the ISU International Seminar Series on Wednesday, February 21. The event took place at noon in the Bone Student Center Prairie Room. Her talk was entitled “Exporting the Russian Revolution—Soviet Women and Cultural Outreach to ‘Developing Countries’ During the 1950s and 1960s.”

Dr. Varga-Harris examined cultural outreach to peoples transitioning from colonial rule in Africa and South Asia. Set against the backdrop of Cold War competition, it focused on various activities that Soviet women undertook to show their counterparts in “developing countries” the advantages of the communist system in areas deemed of special interest to them: national revival, economic development and female liberation. The talk also addressed how messages about the Revolution—conveyed through propaganda material, but also personal correspondence and touristic experiences—resonated with women in the non-aligned world.

Dr. Varga-Harris is the author of *Stories of House and Home: Soviet Apartment Life During the Khrushchev Years*, a social and cultural history of Soviet housing policy of the 1950s and 1960s and its intersection with official ideology, society, and identity. Among her other publications on this subject are chapters in the volumes *Divided Dreamworlds?* and *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization*.

## 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the First Trip to Vladimir 1988 and 2018 Joe Grabill

In 1988 twenty-five citizens of Bloomington/Normal, including teenagers and senior citizens, left for the Soviet Union to search for a sister city. Bill White and I led the group. We travelled through Helsinki, Finland, and visited three prospective sister cities: Chernigov in Ukraine, Orel south of Moscow, and Vladimir east of Moscow. Our goal was to help end the nuclear arms race and to use arms for embracing Soviets and Americans in citizen diplomacy. When we returned home, we chose Vladimir as our sister city. This link became official in 1989.

In 2018 a group of local citizens, under the direction of Elaine Cousins (see separate article about details if you are interested), are planning a trip to Vladimir, which will include visits to St. Petersburg and Moscow. Without an effort to imitate the 1988 trip or celebrate its anniversary, Elaine has set up a trip with parallels. Both 1988 and 2018 trips:

1. Go through Helsinki
2. Connect with a significant person, Vladimir Musatov, who in 1988 was a vice-mayor of Vladimir and in 2018 is head of the sister city association in Vladimir.

In 1988 we spoke with Musatov in a room at the Vladimir State University. Musatov impressed us with his unusual vision of citizen diplomacy. He had already visited Canterbury and suggested what became reality: that we have a three-way connection among Canterbury, Vladimir, and Bloomington/Normal.

In 2018 Musatov is coordinating the Russian itinerary for Elaine. Members of this year’s delegation will have a chance to talk to a significant founder of our sister city relation and to feel something of what happened 30 years ago.

## Members View Russian Film

Dr. Christine Varga-Harris, faculty advisor of the Illinois State University History Club, was gracious to invite sister city members to a viewing of the 1927 silent movie “Bed and Sofa” on March 7 at ISU.

### Storyline

In this one-of-a-kind satire of the Moscow housing shortage, a married construction worker invites an old pal to stay with him. The friend not only accepts the worker's hospitality, but the favors of his wife as well. Impregnated, the wife tires of being a pawn for two rampaging male libidos and leaves both men, seeking a

new life of her own. Bed and Sofa, also known as The Third Meschanskaya, is considered a landmark film because of humor, naturalism, and its sympathetic portrayal of the woman.

Dr. Varga-Harris adds that the film rhetoric on sex, revolution, and legalization of abortion is new. The woman is portrayed as a prisoner of domesticity. The film has no clear heroes and does not promote the state using propaganda. As such, the film was banned by the Soviet Union in 1936.

Genre: Comedy, Drama

[http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0018505/?ref=fn\\_al\\_tt\\_1](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0018505/?ref=fn_al_tt_1)

## MEMBERSHIP FORM

Is Your Membership Up to Date? If you have not sent in your 2018 membership, please use the form below.

### MEMBERSHIP LEVELS:

___ CHAUCER LEVEL / STUDENT	\$15- 39
___ TOLSTOY LEVEL / FRIEND	\$40 - 99
___ SHAKESPEARE LEVEL / PATRON	\$100 - 199
___ CHEKOV LEVEL / BENEFACTOR	\$200 - 499
___ BOLSHOI LEVEL / CORPORATE	\$500 - 999
___ GOLDEN RING / LIFE MEMBER	\$1000

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY/STATE/ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

Return completed form with check payable to:

Vladimir/Canterbury Association  
P. O. Box 6048  
Bloomington, IL 61702