



*Sister City Association of Bloomington-Normal*

Vladimir  
Canterbury

# *Communicator* Spring 2021



## **President's Message** by Dave Thomas

Greetings from your Sister City Association. As we enter our second March under covid-19, there is light at the end of the tunnel. Infection, hospitalization, and death rates are all dropping. Although face to face meetings are still not being held, we are making progress on the virtual front and have some exciting news to share.

On March 23<sup>rd</sup>, in conjunction with the US Congress sponsored Open World Program, we will be involved in an Open World Alumni event. This event will feature panel presentations by alumni (Russian and American) involved in the Open World, May 2019 exchange that focused on "Best Practices in Education". Featured in the program will be Desiree Quizon-Colquitt, VCSCA Vice-President, who will be talking about being a host family for exchange delegates, Karen Dennis, VCSCA Board Member, talking about what occurred during the exchange and what has grown out of the exchange in the intervening years, and Oksana Seliverstova and Vladimir Gorbатов, two Russian delegates from the exchange who will speak about the Russian experience of participating in an Open World exchange and how they benefitted by participating. Greetings will be given by Irina Lapshina, President of the Vladimir Sister City Organization, myself on part of the VCSCA, and others involved in the exchange. I am pleased to announce that Illinois State University President, Larry Dietz, and Vladimir State University Rector, Anzor Saralidze, will be joining us live and will talk about the importance of connecting Illinois State University with Vladimir State University and the Vladimir Medical College of Nursing.

Newsletter Editor Margaret Ann Hayden  
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The event will take place virtually from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm CT. Open World will be arranging the event. They have asked that we collect emails from people who want to participate so they can be sent the zoom link via email. This is being done for security purposes. In addition to the panel of speakers, we will have an invited audience (that's you) who will have the opportunity to ask questions of the panelists. The event will be offered in both Russian and English with interpreters provided by Open World.

We are also planning for life after covid-19. We are hoping to get our museum exchange rescheduled, reinstate our Open World music/theater exchange, and renew our education exchanges for the spring of 2022. More information on these events can be found in the columns below.

Although these are troubling times, the relationship between the Sister Cities will endure. Please follow our website to see what events are ongoing and what have been cancelled/postponed. Stay safe and healthy!  
Dave Thomas, VCSCA President

## **US-Russian Social Expertise Exchange**

Amy Funk was selected as a member of the U.S.-Russia Social Expertise Exchange Team COVID-19 Response Public Health Working Group (PHWG). Four Americans and four Russians were selected for participation in this Initiative. US participants are from Washington, D.C., Ann Arbor, MI, New York City (originally from Chechnya), and Bloomington, IL. Russian participants are from Moscow, with roots in Tomsk, Canada, and Samara. The goal of the group is to "develop ideas for a bilateral project aimed at addressing the following health priorities in the US and Russia:

- Promoting safety and self-care among at-risk populations in both countries
- Developing innovative solutions for disease detection and case management
- Providing health-related services to vulnerable populations”.

This link will provide additional information. <https://www.usrussiasocialexpertise.org/>

## University Education Committee Report

The university education committee reports that no educational exchanges have taken place since the onset of covid-19. We are planning for that to change in the spring of 2022. Efforts are underway to recruit student participants for exchanges in 2022 and hopefully everything will work out. More information will be forthcoming as we move closer to the exchange timeframe.

In the meantime, we have striven to maintain connections between students at Illinois State University and Vladimir State University. Twice each month, starting in the fall of 2020, groups of students from classes at both universities have joined together to hold zoom discussions on a variety of topics. These have ranged from life under covid-19, to education, health, wellness, and fitness. We’ve also discussed family, pets, favorite foods, and fun activities. These discussions have proven to be very popular and a great way to get the students to learn a bit about Russia and the US.

## Zoom brings Canterbury and Bloomington-Normal Sister Cities Closer Together

Our sister city organization in Canterbury (Canterbury Three Cities Association) together with the Canterbury Friends Meeting House sponsored 3 talks on Zoom to which members for the VCSCA board and then the VCSCA membership were invited. How nice that in this year of COVID-19, we were able to connect in a meaningful way with our sister city colleagues. Before COVID-19, these lectures would have been held in person in Canterbury.

Two lectures by local historians were given on the history of Canterbury and one on US Inauguration Ceremonies given by George Conyne, an American professor who teaches at The University of Kent in Canterbury.

The Canterbury history lectures focused on how the city changed over time including the role of pilgrims to the shrine of Thomas Beckett, the effect of the Plague in the middle ages, the Bayeux tapestry that was woven in Canterbury, the role of French-speaking Protestants from the Low Countries and France, and the growth of

Canterbury as a center of tourism, a University town, and the site of Canterbury Cathedral, the cathedral of the Archbishop of Canterbury, in the present time.

We learned from Dr. Conyne about the power of custom in defining the inauguration ceremonies of US Presidents. The ceremony and swearing in of the new President on a Bible is not a necessary prerequisite to taking office. Although the oath is defined by the US Constitution, it is not a requirement that the oath be sworn on a bible.

Following the lectures, time was available for catching up with members of the Canterbury Three Cities Association and discuss plans for a possible future lecture on Quakers in Central Illinois to be zoomed from Bloomington.

## Bill Miller



William “Bill” Miller was a founding member of the Vladimir/Canterbury Sister City Association in 1988.

Bill, an engineer with General Electric, had been working internationally for many years. A man with a global vision, Bill knew that people were people regardless of their government’s policies. Bill was fluent in several languages but lacking the Russian language became one of the first students acquiring the name “Constantine.”

Bill was instrumental in obtaining medical equipment for the 1992 and 1993 Humanitarian transports to Vladimir using his business and personal contacts within the industry and was a leader in the first three-way meeting in Canterbury in 1990.

Bill and his wife Martha were always willing to host our guests from Canterbury and Vladimir and the Millers participated in visits to both cities gaining broad knowledge about culture and people.

Bill was always curious about learning something new and loved to tell stories of past experiences with our international friends. Bill was an idea person but equally one who would work the plan bringing joy and life for all participants.

## Museum Exchange

As our membership is aware, a three-city exchange—including Bloomington-Normal; Vladimir, Russia; and Sarasota, Florida—of museum professionals was planned for June 2020. That exchange would have introduced our Vladimir-Suzdal colleagues to the robust cultural sectors of central and southern Illinois and the state of Florida. But in light of having to postpone that in-person visit, our participants have simply embraced the technological tools and virtual space that would have facilitated their continued working relationship following that trip.

In that spirit, staff of the McLean County Museum of History (MCMH) and the Vladimir-Suzdal Museum Reserve convened via Zoom in late November 2020 to converse on current and future opportunities for collaboration between both sites and their community partners. From that conversation emerged plans to engage in online discussions centered on outreach and engagement with audiences on the Autistic spectrum and their families, a proposed reciprocal presentation on the ecology and natural history of our respective locales, and other ideas by which to cross-promote and explore each other's new and existing digital resources.

On April 2, in acknowledgement of World Autism Awareness Day, staff of MCMH, the Vladimir-Suzdal Museum Reserve, and partners including Outspeak—a Vladimir nonprofit that works to unite parents of children with an Autism spectrum disorder, Autism McLean—McLean County's own Autism awareness organization, Normal Public Library, and the Children's Discovery Museum in Normal, will meet to exchange ideas and strategies to learn more about how our museums, libraries, and nonprofits actively reach and support our countries' Autistic communities.

We look forward to this first of many intentional and impactful dialogues that will continue to foster growth, understanding, and friendship between our sister cities.

**In December 2020, Olga Sorokina, head of the Museum Educational Center at the Vladimir-Suzdal Museum Reserve, created a specially recorded program for the McLean County Museum of History to share in celebration of the winter solstice.**



**McLean County Museum of History**  
Published by Hannah Johnson · December 21, 2020

Happy Winter Solstice! The longest nights are behind us, and our Sister City friends from the Vladimir-Suzdal Museum Reserve in Vladimir, Russia have sent us an early Christmas present. That is something to celebrate! Join Olga in making a Russian Angel craft just in time for the holiday season.

For more information about the Vladimir-Suzdal Museum Reserve, visit <https://vladmuseum.ru/ru/>

Happy holidays everyone! And с Новым Годом!

**Olga Sorokina**  
Head of Museum Education Center

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## MEMBERSHIP FORM

Is Your Membership Up to Date? If you have not sent in your 2021 membership, please use the form below. VCSCA is a 501 (C)(3) not-for-profit, dues are tax deductible.

### MEMBERSHIP LEVELS:

___	AUSTEN LEVEL / STUDENT	\$15- 39
___	TOLSTOY LEVEL / FRIEND	\$40 - 99
___	AKHMATOVA LEVEL / PATRON	\$100 - 199
___	CHEKOV LEVEL / BENEFACTOR	\$200 - 499
___	PUSHKIN 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 1262  
Bloomington, IL 61702

VCSCA has a new website!

Stay in the know at:

[www.vcsistercitybn.org](http://www.vcsistercitybn.org)

and follow us on Facebook at:



@vcsistercitybn

### **Museum Collaborates with Local Groups to present New Series on Immigration, Food and More**

Beginning February 9, 2021, the Museum, in partnership with BN Welcoming (a coalition of the Immigration Project, Not In Our Town/Not In Our Schools, and West Bloomington Revitalization Project together creating a supportive environment for immigrants to McLean County), and Design Streak at Illinois State University, will launch a 10-part program series exploring stories of migration, immigration, adaptation, assimilation, appropriation, preservation, contribution, and sustenance in McLean County.

Breaking Bread in McLean County will highlight the shared and disparate experiences of local migrant communities from the Kickapoo to the Congolese, seeking to disrupt the historical chronology in order to promote a deeper understanding of the ways McLean County has traditionally treated its migrant communities.

“When originally approaching the Museum to partner on the immigration series, the motivation was the current poor treatment of immigrants in McLean County,” said program partner Mike Matejka. “The hope was that if we talked about how previous immigrants and migrants were treated, we could help people see the connectivity between what current immigrants endure and what previous generations of immigrants faced in their time...by being reminded of this history, perhaps it would conjure a less judgmental and more welcoming attitude toward today's voyagers to McLean County.”

From February to November 2021, Breaking Bread in McLean County will take audiences through the migration stories of the Kickapoo, Irish and Upland Southerners, Germans, Swedes, African and Black Americans, Italian, Mexicans and Central Americans, Japanese, South Asian Indians, and Congolese, emphasizing shared elements including food, family, tradition, trauma, and exchange. Each program will incorporate a multitude of voices from the community who can speak to the migrant experiences of these varied cultural groups, relying on scholarship, expertise, and firsthand accounts.

Program collaborator Archana Shekara noted, “As an immigrant, cultural researcher, and Creative Director of Design Streak Studio at ISU, I am excited to be a part of the planning and designing of the Breaking Bread in McLean County series. The project brings together diverse communities of people to share their migration and adaptation stories, celebrating their rich cultural history and traditions through cuisine. The collaboration has brought new cultural understandings and sensitivity into the studio-lab this semester. I am looking forward to learning about my community and home.”

The program series will alternate Tuesday evening and Saturday afternoon dates. Programs through June will be held over Zoom, with the hope that subsequent programs may be held in person at locations yet to be determined.

### **Breaking Bread in McLean County Program Schedule (February-June, 2021)**

Tuesday, February 9 at 6:00 p.m. Zoom *It's All in the Salsa: Mexican Stories of McLean County* (Carolyn Nadeau, Byron S. Tucci Professor of Hispanic Studies at Illinois Wesleyan University; Constantina Navarete, owner of Taqueria El Porton in Bloomington)

Saturday, March 13 at 1:00 p.m. Zoom *Johnny Cakes to Paddy Cakes: Irish Cookery* (Greg Koos, McLean County Museum of History Executive Director emeritus)

Tuesday, April 13 at 6:00 p.m. Zoom *Ça va, Cassava? The Roots of Congolese Cooking* (Chris Callahan, Professor of French at Illinois Wesleyan University; Patrick Lubala, Multicultural Leadership Program alum)

Saturday, May 8 at 1:00 p.m. Zoom *Kaffē, Knäckebröd, & Coal: Swedish-Americans in Central Illinois* (Hannah Johnson, McLean County Museum of History; Edgar and Virginia Lundeen and other members of the local Swedish community)

Tuesday, June 8 at 6:00 p.m. Zoom *Kickapoo Food and Remedies* (Lester Randall, Tribal Chairman of the Kickapoo Tribe in Kansas)

Saturday, July 10 at 1:00 p.m. TBD *Soul, Greens, and Savory Things: Local African American Food Traditions* (Willie Horton Halbert, NAACP, author of *Cooking with Love*; Jeff Woodard, McLean County Museum of History)

Tuesday, August 10 at 6:00 p.m. TBD *Hot Dog! It Could be Wurst: German Cookery* (Greg Koos McLean County Museum of History Executive Director emeritus)

Saturday, September 11 at 1:00 p.m. TBD *Garam Masala Box — Hot, Spicy, & Sexy: Indian American Cooking* (Archana Shekara, Associate Professor of Graphic Design at Illinois State University and Art Director of Design Streak Studio)

Tuesday, October 12 at 6:00 p.m. TBD *America Meets East Asia: Mayonnaise in the Sushi* (Nobuko Adachi and James Stanlaw, professors of Sociology and Anthropology at Illinois State University)

Saturday, November 13 at 1:00 p.m. TBD *Sunday Sauce: An Italian Staple* (Jack Capodice, formerly of Capodice Produce; Greg Koos, McLean County Museum of History Executive Director emeritus)