



MONTGOMERY *Sister Cities*

CONNECTING OUR COMMUNITY TO THE WORLD

October 2016

Montgomery County Welcomes Xi'an Mayoral Delegation

Montgomery County Executive Ike Leggett recently hosted a meeting with Sister City Xi'an, China Mayor Shangguan Jiqing and Lu Hegjun, Director of Xi'an Bureau of Commerce. The reception and meeting were attended by representatives from Montgomery College and Montgomery County business leaders.

The newly created Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation (MCEDC), a private-public group seeking to attract businesses to the County, signed a memorandum of understanding to help promote business between the County and Xi'an. "As you can imagine, their government finance structure is entirely different from the United States, so to have a friendly government in each place is essential to establishing a new operation" said Robby Brewer, vice president of the board of directors for the MCEDC.

The trip followed one made by a delegation led by Mr. Leggett to Xi'an in 2013 in preparation for the signing of a Sister City agreement between the two jurisdictions in 2014. A delegation to Xi'an is planned for late 2017.

Brewer explained that MCEDC hopes to attract technology businesses from Xi'an to Montgomery County, a significant driver of interest in pursuing the sister city relationship. While the memorandum is not binding, Mr. Leggett said the



County Executive Ike Leggett and Mayor Shangguan Jiqing are joined by Xi'an and Montgomery County representatives

agreement with Xi'an could reinforce the County's \$47 million commitment to public-private development in the East county, specifically the planned science gateway Viva White Oak, which would include new headquarters for the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), new space for Washington Adventist Hospital and offices for private biotechnology companies.

"What we are trying to do as it relates to our new economic development initiatives is to align our economic cooperation with some of the things that they are doing there," said Mr. Leggett. He went on to explain his hope that the significant County investments in White Oak combined with strong schools, proximity to Washington, DC and the large Chinese community will motivate businesses from Xi'an to locate to Montgomery County, and to promote business between Xi'an and Montgomery

County overall.

Assistant Chief Administrative officer for Ike Leggett Lily Qi expressed confidence that the visit will extend beyond technology into tourism and hospitality. She explained that with the largest Chinese community in the Washington Metropolitan Region, Montgomery County is a logical partner for Xi'an – and a destination for Chinese tourists visiting Washington, DC.

Mr. Brewer said that as the replacement for the former Montgomery County Department of Economic Development Corporation, MCEDC offers many unique services to facilitate business relocation to the County. "We're facilitators so we can facilitate orientation, introductions (and) problem solving. All it takes is to bring businesses here."

MISSION OF MONTGOMERY SISTER CITIES, INC.

Montgomery Sister Cities, Inc. was established to connect Montgomery County to the world by encouraging and fostering friendship, partnership, and mutual cooperation through educational, cultural, social, economic, humanitarian, and charitable exchanges between the people of Montgomery County and people from various nations around the world.

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Letter from the Board Chair

William B. Nance

This has been an active year for Montgomery Sister Cities (MSC), during which we focused on intensifying activities with our partner volunteer committees and Sister Cities from the January Montgomery College sponsored trip to the University of Gondar for 14 students and 10 faculty/staff members to hosting more than 100 guests at our Sister Cities Annual Meeting held in March.

Later this year, we expect to conclude a formal agreement with one of three cities that submitted proposals to join the roster of MSC, and expect the County Executive to sign the agreement on behalf of Montgomery County during a trip in 2017.

With the addition of a fifth sister city together representing the countries of origin of the largest number of foreign born residents in Montgomery County, we will be well-positioned to continue strengthening relationships between our communities and sharing experiences in meaningful ways. To support these efforts, we have established dual priorities for the coming year: Identification of sustainable income streams – both individual and corporate while working to increase active engagement in the work of country committees, implementing at least one substantive activity a year for each Sister City. We welcome your participation, ideas and support in successfully addressing these priorities.

Finally, on behalf of the Board, I want to recognize Theresa Cameron, Carol Rhees, and Tom Raffa who recently left the Board. I am especially appreciative for Theresa's leadership in taking over as board chair at such a critical juncture in our development. Together, these volunteer leaders helped us to establish a sound footing. I am also pleased to welcome five new Board members: Larry Colbert, Tracey-Alexis Dixon, Michael Gruenberg, Darwin Romero, Roman Santillan and Dr. Clemmie Solomon, and look forward to the many contributions they will make.

Thank you for your continued support. Come join us!



William B. Nance

MONTGOMERY SISTER CITIES BOARD OF DIRECTORS

William Nance, *Chair*
Dianne Smith, *Secretary*
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Mumin Barre
Larry Colbert
Tracey-Alexis Dixon
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William Kaschak
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Montgomery Sister Cities Welcomes New Chairman and Board Members

The board of Montgomery Sister Cities is proud to announce the election of founding board member and former treasurer William Nance as Chairman, succeeding Theresa Cameron who resigned following the expiration of her two-year term. He is joined by new board members Larry Colbert, Tracey-Alexis Dixon, Michael Gruenberg, Darwin Romero, Roman Santillan and Clemmie Solomon.

An international development specialist with more than three decades of experience in international development issues, nearly half of them in Asia and Africa, Bill continues to consult on international development through the AMIDA Group, Inc. He is joined on the board by *Larry Colbert*, a former Peace Corps volunteer and 30 year veteran of the United States Foreign Service; *Tracey-Alexis Dixon* is an active volunteer with organizations serving immigrants with special interest in Ethiopia; *Michael Gruenberg* is a seasoned sales executive and president of his own consulting firm specializing in sales source analysis, market research, executive coaching and best practices advice for sales negotiation; *Darwin Romero* is a native of El Salvador and president of AIRE Group, LLC, a consulting firm focused on helping small to medium size business secure government procurement opportunities at both the state and local levels; *Roman Santillan* is an accomplished teacher and writer who currently works with the Montgomery County Library System after working as a librarian in New York and the District of Columbia; and *Clemmie Solomon* is the College-wide Dean for Student Engagement and Takoma Park/Silver Spring Student Affairs at Montgomery College.

"We heartily welcome each of these very impressive volunteers who bring unique talent and strengths to Sister Cities that will help to pursue our mission to embrace and celebrate the diversity of Montgomery County and our relationship with the world," said Chairman Nance.

Gondar Committee Holds Update Reception

The Gondar Sister City Committee announced the cancellation of their long anticipated trip to Gondar and Addis from 23 September through 2 October due to political unrest in the city.

"We are especially disappointed to miss the opportunity to bridge the gap the gap between Montgomery County's African community and Gondar through the events and service projects planned, but we look forward to future opportunities to share with our Sister City," said Yasin Yamin, Chairman of the Gondar Sister City Committee.

A private reception will be held to update the delegation on the political situation in Ethiopia and upcoming committee sponsored local events.

Morazán and Xi'an Committees Host Summer Events

Volunteers for Xi'an and Morazán Sister Cities held summer celebrations in August.

The Northwestern Chinese American Association of Greater Washington (NCAAGW) hosted nearly 400 people at their annual summer picnic at the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal National Historical Park in late August. Live music, dancing, Taiji performances, outdoor games and delicious food of Northwestern China taste were enjoyed by those attending. It was a great event for participants to make new friends and celebrate the richness of the diversity in Montgomery County.



Representatives from the Chinese Embassy and Bruce Adams, Director of Montgomery County Office of Community Partnerships (OCP), joined the festivities where Bruce shared information about the recent visit by the mayor Xi'an and expressed appreciation for NCAAGW's continuing contribution to the success of the Montgomery Sister City partnership with Xi'an.

Braving the record breaking August heat, the Morazán committee welcomed Ena Pena, General Counsel of the Embassy of El Salvador and her colleague Gustavo Argueta to a special Asado at the Takoma Park home of Sonia Umanzor. Co-chairs Piola Bichara and Yenny Miranda led committee members in an "all hands on deck" effort to share grill duties, prepare side dishes, decorate the patio, prepare refreshments and plan musical entertainment.

Morazán Committee Honors Montgomery College Student at Hispanic Gala

Pursuing their mission to preserve and celebrate the culture of El Salvador, the Morazán Sister City Committee sponsored a scholarship for a promising student at the annual Montgomery County Executive Hispanic Gala.



Leslie Martinez was one of 50 students honored at the gala held on 22 September at the Filmore in Silver Spring. She is a graduate of Clarksburg High School and is currently attending Montgomery College. "We were so proud to learn of Leslie's many accomplishments and aspirations and are truly honored to lend this vital support to such a deserving student," said Yenny Miranda, co-chair of the Morazán Committee.

"The Hispanic Gala is the most significant and marquee social, political and philanthropic event in Montgomery County and the State. We bring together elected officials, the business community, philanthropists and the Hispanic community to support and promote post-secondary education in our community. We are so proud to welcome the Morazán Sister City Committee to our impressive list of sponsors," said gala co-founder Claudia Canales.

Sister Cities Holds Annual Meeting



The Silver Spring Civic Building provided a beautiful setting for the second annual meeting of Montgomery Sister Cities. Led by the volunteer committees of sister cities Morazán, El Salvador; Gondar, Ethiopia; Hyderabad, India; and Xi'an, China, the gathering of over 100 guests enjoyed food from Sister City countries, learned about volunteer opportunities and shared in a joyful celebration of the accomplishments of these dynamic committees and their vision for the coming year.

Among the special news shared was the successful delegation trip to Morazán where a contribution of \$11,000 raised under the leadership of Councilman George Leventhal was presented to the San Francisco de Gotera Hospital. The Gondar committee announced their plans for a delegation to travel to the city on late 2016, followed by an announce-

ment by the Xi'an, China committee to return to China in 2017. The Hyderabad committee shared their efforts to welcome the new mayor of that sister city and continue to nurture the special bond between the city and Montgomery County.

Highlights of the evening included remarks by County Executive Ike Leggett who made a special presentation to The Honorable Mari Carmen Aponte, former U.S. Ambassador to El Salvador. Ms. Aponte made moving remarks about the importance of cultural awareness and diversity: "Nothing. Nothing. Nothing is more important than people to people democracy."

The evening ended with a lively presentation by Ethiopian dancers who got the audience on their feet and on the dance floor! Sister Cities is proud to bring the world to Montgomery County.

Join Sister Cities at Annual World of Montgomery Festival

Once again, Montgomery County will celebrate its world renown diversity at the eighth annual World of Montgomery Festival on Sunday October 16, 2016 from noon to 4pm at Montgomery College in Rockville, and Montgomery Sister Cities invites you to join us for this unique event that highlights the uniqueness of our community.

Montgomery Sister Cities committees representing Morazán, El Salvador, Gondar, Ethiopia, Xi'an China and Hyderabad, India will be featured at the festival, including live performances on stage. Planned offerings include Ethiopian coffee ceremonies, a dancing Chinese dragon, henna art painting and craft-making, and hands-on adult and children activities will be available.

The theme for this year's World of Montgomery Festival is "A Place Called Home." "Montgomery County is made up of so many different cultures and people, each with their own traditions, foods, dance, music and perspectives. And yet, we all come together here—we all call Montgomery County home. This theme directly mirrors the spirit of the World of Montgomery Festival," says Emma Starr of Kid Museum, a major sponsor of the festival.



8th Annual **WORLD OF MONTGOMERY** 2016 Festival



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**Montgomery Sister Cities, c/o Cynthia Morris
21 Maryland Avenue, Suite 330, Rockville, MD 20850.**

Name

Preferred phone

Email address (please print)

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City/State/Zip

SAVE THE DATE!!!

Morazán Sister City Committee Annual Fiesta

Friday, November 4 • 6-11 PM

Silver Spring Civic Building
1 Veterans Plaza, Silver Spring

For more info, visit www.montgomerysistercities.org

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