



MONTGOMERY Sister Cities

CONNECTING OUR COMMUNITY TO THE WORLD

February 2016

Sister City Delegation Trip to El Salvador Strengthening Our Friendship with Morazán

Bruce Adams, Director of Community Partnerships

In stark contrast to the horror of Paris, a group of three dozen county residents traveled to El Salvador to celebrate and strengthen our Sister City relationship with Morazán on November 7-10. El Salvador is the number one country of origin of Montgomery County’s immigrant population. Appropriately, Morazán became Montgomery’s very first Sister City when County Executive Ike Leggett penned the agreement on July 26, 2011. Morazán is in the eastern part of El Salvador where the Salvadoran Civil War raged from 1979 until the peace accords of 1992. Many of the Salvadorans who fled the violence settled in the Washington region.

Our delegation, led by County Council President George Leventhal and Salvadoran native and Maryland Delegate Ana Sol Gutierrez, included representatives from COTSA (Comunidades Transnacionales Salvadoreñas Americanas), Montgomery College, county government, and leaders of nonprofits serving the Salvadoran community including Identity, MCAEL, LEDC, Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and CASA de Maryland.



Council President Leventhal joins Dr. Orellana and nurses on November 8, 2015 at Hospital de Gotera after donation of medical supplies and \$11,000.

It was an uplifting visit. The highlight was a presentation by Council President Leventhal to the main hospital in Morazán of medical supplies he had collected from hospitals and health companies in Montgomery County as well as a check for \$11,000 donated by Montgomery businesses and residents. The financial donation will help modernize the hospital’s neonatal care center.

In addition to the donations to the hospital, the Montgomery County Department of Technology Services donated 150 com-

puters that it had retired from the county system. We were warmly welcomed by the students and teachers of Centro Escolar Felipe Soto, the first school to establish a computer lab with the DTS computers. We also had an opportunity to visit the rural El Barrial community in the gorgeous mountains of Morazán where our Metro Maryland Habitat for Humanity has nearly completed a four year project to build 24 houses and repair 18 others. I had the honor of presenting our “World of Montgomery” framed print

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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.

www.montgomerysistercities.org

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Letter from the Board Chair

Theresa Cameron

On behalf of the board of Montgomery Sister Cities, I am delighted to share our vision and news from our volunteer committees for sister cities in Morazán, El Salvador; Gondar, Ethiopia; Hyderabad, India and Xi'an, China as we continue to build on the vision of County Executive Leggett to bring the world to Montgomery County!

2015 was a great year for Montgomery Sister Cities as we realized our goal of helping our country committees build sustainable and meaningful sister city relationships. The fundraisers and friend raisers you will read about reflect not only cultural pride, but generous spirits that joyfully share this pride with fellow Montgomery County citizens from all backgrounds.

The delegation trip to Morazán led by County President George Leventhal was a shining example of the importance of sharing our resources as we exchange ideas that benefit communities in El Salvador and in Montgomery County. The generosity of donors to the Hospital de Gotera that will help to make a much needed neo-natal unit available is just one example of how our collective efforts can change lives thousands of miles away. We are looking forward to hearing about their progress as we explore new ways to support them.

As we enter a new and exciting year for Montgomery Sister Cities, I would like to express my deep appreciation to two of our founding board members, Evelyn Gonzalez-Mills and Neftali Granados who are leaving the board after years of hard work starting our organization. Both Evelyn and Neftali will continue to support the work of Montgomery Sister Cities, and we are delighted to have their perspective and experience available to us.

This year also promises many exciting events and activities among our volunteer committees, and we hope you will look out for details about a third delegation trip to Gondar, Ethiopia this fall. This trip is just one of the many things you can learn more about by attending our annual meeting Thursday 24 March at the Silver Spring Civic Building.

In these times of uncertainty and unrest throughout the world, the programs and activities of our committed county committee volunteers and dedicated board remind us of our common bonds and desires to contribute to the betterment of both our local and world communities. I am especially grateful for the time and effort they so willingly give reaching out to diverse communities throughout the county while working to stay connected to our friends around the world. We hope you will join us in this exciting adventure and look forward to seeing you in March!



Morazán Volunteers Sponsor Annual Fiesta

Nearly 200 people celebrated Salvadoran culture at the annual Fiesta held by the volunteer Morazán Committee on Saturday evening October 24 at the Silver Spring Civic Building.



The crowd enjoyed traditional Salvadoran pupusas, tacos and carne asada as they danced to the music of Mario Sol. Committee members Neftali Granados and Isis Salmeron were quick to remind attendees that the party had a purpose: To keep the spirit of Salvadoran culture alive and to galvanize the Salvadoran community to get engaged with the work of the committee to provide support and assistance to so many in need in Morazán and beyond. “We want to celebrate our culture and give back to the place that gave us a start,” said Paola Bichara.

The committee was delighted to have the support of major sponsors like Miller & Long, Friends of Ike Leggett, State Farm, Montgomery College and Latino Economic Development Center (LEDC) and looks forward to expanding the list next year.

In addition to Mr. Granados and Ms. Salmeron, committee members included Jorge Granados, Claudia Canales, Yenny Miranda, John Leary, Paola Bichara, Rebecca Kahlenberg, Evelyn Gonzalez, Ken Weiss, Shelly Jones, Ernesto Pineda and Neftali Benitez.

Proceeds from the evening will help to fund the committee's work to support education, health and philanthropic work in communities throughout Morazán.

Look for Xi'an, China and Hyderabad, India updates in our next edition. For information, contact Diane Vu at Diane.vu@montgomerycountymd.gov.

Rockville Sister Cities Plans for Sixtieth Anniversary

Plans are underway for the commemoration of the sixtieth anniversary of the Rockville Sister City relationship with Pinneberg, Germany in May, 2017. The two cities will exchange delegations of thirty people to celebrate the special cultural and educational relationship that began in November, 1957. Anyone interested in hosting should contact Rockville Sister City President Brigitta Mullican at rockvillesistercities@gmail.com.



Gondar Sister City Committee Hosts An Evening of Ethiopian Culture



TV personality Nunu Wako was the headliner at the October 11 “An Evening of Ethiopian Culture” fundraiser sponsored by the Gondar Committee held at the Silver Spring Civic Building.

Ethiopian music was offered by singer Fekadu and DJ Gideon. The Kinknesh Eskista Group performed traditional Ethiopian dances and Mystical Poets Productions offered a selection of readings evoking the culture and traditions of this African nation. Delicious Ethiopian cuisine was served by Abyssinian Restaurant of Silver Spring. Videographer Melkamu Tesfa circulated among the crowd sharing stories about Ethiopia and the importance of staying connected to the community. Among the many guests were the Ethiopian Student Association of the Takoma Park Campus of Montgomery College and the Ethiopian/Eritrean Student Association of Towson University.

Major sponsor of the evening Reemberto Rodriguez spoke of the importance of the support of Montgomery Sister Cities and Daniel Koroma, Outreach Manager for the Community Partnerships Office of Montgomery County, described the thoughtful process in choosing Gondar as the African city for the program.

A highlight of the evening was the raffle of a round trip ticket to anywhere on the continent of Africa donated by Ethiopian Airlines. Winner Maruye Ayalew was excited, but plans to give some thought to where her venture will be.

Committee chairman Yasin Yamin and event chair Tracy Dixon expressed their deep gratitude to the committee that included Abdul Mohammed, Daniel Koroma, Nunu Wako, Terrence Dupree, Soffie Cessay, Fatmata Barrie and Maruye Ayalew for the hard work and energy they gave to the event. The committee is hoping that in addition to funds raised for service and philanthropic projects, the event will raise awareness about Sister Cities and bring more volunteers to the committee.

The committee plans to hold more events in 2016, and looks forward to welcoming back previous volunteers and welcoming new ones. Interested volunteers should contact Daniel Koroma at daniel.koroma@montgomerycountymd.gov.

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to the new Governor of Morazán, Luis Enrique Salamanca Martinez. We visited the moving memorial in El Mozote, scene of a 1981 massacre, and attended a rodeo with the governor and mayor.

In San Salvador, we met with the vice president of El Salvador, Óscar Ortiz. Ortiz spent the morning with Bill Clinton and the afternoon with us. Then we visited with the leadership of the University of El Salvador to press for bringing higher education to Morazán. We toured the Salvadoran Assembly building and the fabulous US Ambassador to El Salvador, Mari Carmen Aponte, a long-time friend of County Executive Leggett, hosted us for breakfast in her residence.

For a photo album of the trip, and more information about Montgomery County’s Sister City program, please visit the Montgomery Sister Cities website at www.montgomerysistercities.org.

Note to taxpayers: all County government employees on this trip paid their own way and took vacation time.



Montgomery County Executive Isiah Leggett and the County’s Office of Community Partnerships hosted the County’s Diwali Celebration on October 28 at the Executive Office Building. The “Festival of Lights,” Diwali is observed worldwide between mid-October and mid-November by people of Indian and South Asian heritage to mark the beginning of the Hindu New Year and celebrate the victory of good over evil and light over darkness.



The Office of Community Partnerships hosted a delegation led by Superintendent Dong Ho Sul from Daejeon Metropolitan Office of Education in South Korea during their two day trip to Montgomery County. JG Business Link International coordinated the visit that included visits to Montgomery County Public Schools, Rockville Town Center, Strathmore and the Gilchrist Center in Wheaton. Signing of a memorandum of understanding formalizing a teacher exchange program with Montgomery College and Montgomery County Public Schools was the highlight of the trip and the program will start in January with a cohort of 17 teachers from Daejeon participating in a month-long training program at Montgomery College.

Sister Cities Featured at World of Montgomery Festival



WORLD OF MONTGOMERY Festival

The 2015 annual World of Montgomery Festival celebrating Montgomery County's diversity was held on October 18 at Montgomery College in Rockville. A crowd of more than 6,000 people braved the brisk weather to enjoy exhibits and activities from countries around the world. The KID Museum, in collaboration with Montgomery Sister Cities, offered a cultural enrichment experience that included food, entertainment, arts and crafts from China, El Salvador, Ethiopia, India and many other countries represented among county residents. Everyone in attendance was truly a citizen of the world for the day!

Montgomery Sister Cities expresses its deep appreciation to sponsors KID Museum, Fund for Montgomery, Montgomery County, Montgomery College, Montgomery County Public Schools, City of Rockville, Mid-Atlantic Federal Credit Union, Southern Management Corporation and Verizon for bringing the world to Montgomery!



SAVE THE DATE!

The 2016 World of Montgomery Festival will be held on Sunday October 16, 2016 from Noon until 4 PM.

Mark Your Calendar!

MONTGOMERY SISTER CITIES ANNUAL MEETING

THURSDAY MARCH 24, 6-8 PM
SILVER SPRING CIVIC BUILDING AT VETERANS PLAZA!

Please join us and meet Sister Cities volunteers, learn about our programs and plans and explore ways you can get involved!

For more information, contact Cynthia Morris at cynthia.morris@montgomerycountymd.gov

MONTGOMERY SISTER CITIES BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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

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