

THE BURLINGTON/ (BILWI) PUERTO CABEZAS SISTER CITY PROGRAM
15 BEECH STREET, BURLINGTON, VT 05404
WWW.UVM.EDU/SISTERCITY

2016 ANNUAL REPORT TO THE CITY OF BURLINGTON

Board Members:

Tina Escaja, Dan Higgins, David Hutchinson, Richard Kemp, Jane Kramer, Charlie Delaney, Anne Scheffler

MISSION

The Burlington/ Puerto Cabezas Sister City Program was established by the Burlington City Council in 1984 to support interaction between residents of Burlington and residents of Puerto Cabezas, a municipality on the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua. While strategies have changed over the years, the sister city focus continues to be the creation of partnerships between like-minded groups and individuals in Vermont and Nicaragua.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR 2015-2016

A COMEDOR FOR ESCUELA IRMA CAJINA

The Irma Cajina School, in Barrio Cocal, has been a focus of the sister city relationship for several years. Last year the board supported construction of a roofed-in area at the school where students would be able eat their lunches. Long-time sister city partner Dixie Lee made arrangements with the ministry of education, and master builder Jose Veles designed the structure, welded rafters, and organized the construction. Funds were raised in Burlington to pay costs of materials, and it was students of the school, parents, and community members who during two weeks in February provided volunteer labor for construction. (www.vimeo.com/159069870)

ASAMBLEA GENERAL

The region that includes Puerto Cabezas is delineated in Nicaraguan Law as an Autonomous Region, with land ownership held exclusively for indigenous communities living on those lands. In February, under the auspices of YATAMA, a general assembly of indigenous people took place in Bilwi in response to violations of the law and invasion by settlers from outside regions. Board-member Charles Delaney, in collaboration with the Alliance for Global Justice, led a fact finding delegation that visited several of the autonomous communities where indigenous land is being invaded by settlers from outside. Dan Higgins, working with anthropologist Laura Herlihy, videotaped individual stories of many of the participants attending the assembly.

ALCALDIA DELEGATION VISITS BURLINGTON

In June, a delegation from the Mayor's office in Puerto Cabezas visited Burlington on a fact-finding mission to learn about Vermont's Community Garden and Cooperative Farm projects. Mayor Reynaldo Francis, Vice-Mayor Anicia Matamoros, and Executive Director Rodolfo Spear arrived in Burlington on Friday June 17th for six days. The municipal administration in Puerto Cabezas is initiating an incubator project distributing vegetable seeds to women in Bilwi neighborhoods as a way of improving family diets, producing

extra income, and enhancing community cooperation. While in Vermont the group met with participants of several gardening projects, as well as with Mayor Miro Weinberger and municipal officials, renewing the relationship between the alcaldia and Burlington City Hall.



Nicaraguan delegation visits Intervale Community Farm

OUTREACH

The Sister City board continues to promote sister city relationships through web site, community television, and photographic exhibitions. In January, Burlington's FlynnDog Gallery featured Bilwi portraits by Dan Higgins covering a time frame of 30 years. Of special interest were photos that included a QR code, allowing viewers with smart phone capability to scan a print and watch a one-minute video relating to the image.

(www.vimeo.com/151321352)

During a visit to Bilwi in February, Dan presented his exhibit of photographs at Bilwi's CASA CULTURA during the annual recital by poets and writers. Jane Kramer and Dan Higgins renewed contacts with the Alcaldia, URACCAN, local TV groups, and the organization Mujeres Creativas. In March, board member Richard Kemp dedicated an episode of his Channel 17 TV show NEAR AND FAR to a report about the trip.

UPCOMING PROJECTS

With renewed relationship between the municipal administrations of Puerto Cabezas and Burlington, we are discussing ways that the cities might cooperate in support of mutual projects. The Alcaldia's community gardening project seeks technical assistance, and the Mujeres Creativas organization has requested support for their "Art for Kids" program.

DELEGATION 2017

The Sister City program will be organizing a trip to Puerto Cabezas sometime in February/March, and we invite any residents of Burlington who'd like to participate to contact us. Whatever someone's interests - arts, music, women's issues, media, or community gardening- we can arrange contacts with appropriate counterparts.

IN SUMMARY

The Burlington/ Puerto Cabezas partnership offers Vermonters a unique opportunity for exploring global issues through the perspectives of a long-term sister city relationship. We are always looking to expand the board and seek members with new interests. Meetings take place at board member Jane Kramer's house in Burlington, and we can be contacted through our web site:

www.uvm.edu/sistercity

DONATIONS

The Sister City Program is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization. Tax exempt donations can be earmarked for specific purposes. We are currently fundraising in support of Bilwi's "Community Gardening projects" and Mujeres Creativas' "Art for Kids" program.

**The mailing address for donations is:
The Burlington/ Puerto Cabezas Sister City Program
15 Beech Street, Burlington, VT 05401.**



Anicia, Rudolfo, and Reynoldo with Burlington Mayor Miro Weinberger

Report submitted: Dan Higgins, Program Coordinator
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