



*Sister City Association of Bloomington-Normal*

Vladimir  
Canterbury

# *Communicator*

Spring 2020



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

A lot has changed since I first thought about what I would write in this message. We live in uncertain times. I had planned on writing about all the exciting events we have planned for this spring and summer. And, hopefully some of them will still occur. But we also need to be able to adapt to the times. Originally, we were planning on having Dr. Grigory Volchenkov, Chief Doctor of the Vladimir Regional TB Control Center visit us in early April as the guest speaker for our William White Peace Forum. However, due to the Corona virus situation, the visit and Forum have been postponed.

Other events planned for the spring and early summer (see details inside this newsletter) include: the annual ISU School of Kinesiology and Recreation exchange with Vladimir State University, the ISU Mennonite College of Medicine exchange with the Vladimir Medical College, and the early June Museum exchange. In September, we plan to host another Open World exchange.

Time will tell what goes on and what gets cancelled, but in any case, 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!

## **William White Peace Forum**

The William White Peace Forum mentioned above has been cancelled for spring and will be rescheduled. Our speaker Dr. Grigory Volchenkov cannot travel at this time.

Newsletter Editor Margaret Ann Hayden  
mhayden@ilstu.edu

## **Museum Exchange**

In the previous newsletter, the VCSCA excitedly announced that Bloomington-Normal, as well as our friends in Sarasota, Florida, would be co-hosting a small delegation of museum professionals from Vladimir, Russia in the association's first museum-specific exchange. In preparation for their June visit, let us introduce to you our four delegates and their two interpreters.

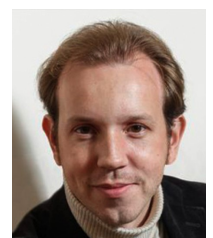


**Svetlana Melnikova** has served as the Director General of the State Vladimir-Suzdal Museum-Reserve since 2010, and has been working with the Museum-Reserve since 1978. She is an Honored Cultural Worker of the Russian Federation,

an Honorary Member of the Russian Academy of Arts, and a graduate of Vladimir State University in the departments of German and English.

As a result of her participation in the museum exchange, Melnikova would like to gain new knowledge and experience in the following areas: museum management, museum economics, working with special needs visitors, children with autism, educational programs for school children. She is also interested in how museum collections are stored and preserved, and what it takes to put together an exhibit. This will be Melnikova's second visit to Bloomington-Normal, following her previous visit with an agricultural exchange.

**Alexander Kapustkin**, with a degree in law and a Master's in history from Vladimir State University, has been working at the State Vladimir-Suzdal



Museum-Reserve since 2015. In 2019, he was promoted to the position of Deputy Director General on Museum Development. He is an Honorary Member of the Russian Academy of Arts and a member of the Union of Writers of Russia.

As a result of his participation in the museum exchange, Kapustkin would like to gain new knowledge and experience in the following areas: museum management and economics, museum collections storage and preservation, museum displays exposition, cooperation with museum sponsors, educational programs for children, festivals and events management, exhibitions and museum events advertising, design of museum space, museum literature, and scientific research in the spheres of history and law.

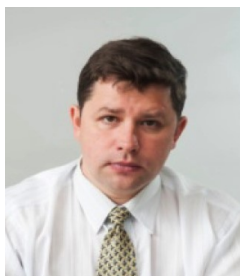


**Olga Sorokina**, a graduate of Vladimir State University in the departments of History and English, has been working at the State Vladimir-Suzdal Museum-Reserve since 2003—and as the Head of the Museum Educational Center since 2016. In collaboration with the Vladimir Regional Public Organization, Sorokina coordinates

programs that aid in the socio-cultural rehabilitation of museum visitors on the autism spectrum and/or with kinetic disabilities, and regularly participates in a variety of professional development programs on museum pedagogy.

As a result of her participation in the museum exchange program, Sorokina would like to gain new knowledge and experience in the following areas: working with special needs visitors and children with autism, educational programs for schoolchildren, developing exhibits for special needs children, and getting acquainted with effective means of museum displays in terms of exposition, storage, and preservation.

**Denis Dudenkov**, a graduate of Vladimir State University in the departments of geography and biology, has been with the State Vladimir-Suzdal Museum-Reserve since 2002—serving as since Head of the Nature Museum since 2011.



In the spirit of professional growth and development, Dudenkov has taken two retraining courses at the State Darwin Museum in Moscow, as well as a retraining course on Museum Studies in Erlangen, Germany. Dudenkov's research has been featured in 36 scientific publications, and he was awarded an honorary diploma from the Russian Geographical Society for his scientific work. He has collected and catalogued the reptiles and amphibia of the

Vladimir-land, as well as created visual aids for lessons in the Nature Museum classroom and a touch album for blind museum visitors. In his time with the Museum-Reserve, Dudenkov has been in charge of 22 exhibition projects.

As a result of his participation in the museum exchange, he would like to study the experience of working with blind museum visitors, get acquainted with visual aids used in American nature museums, learn about effective means of museum displays in terms of exposition, storage, and preservation, and visit nature reserves in the Sister City communities.

**Marina Semenova** is a graduate of the history and English departments of the Vladimir State University. She has 29 years of US and UK Studies teaching experience and 26 years experience working as a museum educator. For a number of years, Semenova has supervised high school students' research work and museum projects in collaboration with the Vladimir-Suzdal Museum Reserve.



She has been a participant of the Age of Lincoln, Lincoln Speaks, and Cold War summer seminars of Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History. Semenova is an alumna of the 3TP program organized by the American Councils for International Education.

**Tatyana Semenova** has worked as a secondary school teacher of English, US, and UK Studies for more than 30 years. She has supervised her students' research work on themes related to Russian, US, and UK culture.



She also works as a museum educator and tour guide with Russian and foreign visitors of the Vladimir-Suzdal land. At present, she is actively researching the topic, "Museum Pedagogy as a Means of Developing Secondary School Students' Socio-Cultural Competence." Semenova has experience facilitating visiting groups through the Open World Leadership Program.

## Fulbright Experience in Vladimir

### By Karen Dennis

My 16-year old son Collin and I arrived in Vladimir seven weeks ago. I am teaching a health/wellness/fitness course at Vladimir State University this spring semester.

The semester here began the first week of February, however my classes did not begin until the second week. I am teaching two sections of the same class. One section is to linguistics students who are studying English and are very proficient at reading/speaking; and the other section is to students at the Institute of Physical Culture and Sports. The English proficiency of most of the Sports Institute students is not very strong, so this has allowed for the linguistics students to also gain internship opportunities by attending the Sports Institute students' classes with me and interpreting/translating. I am hopeful that the linguistics students will not only learn more about healthy lifestyles, but that they will also gain meaningful experiences with interpretation and translation.

One of the professors of the linguistics students is Oxana Seliverstova. She was one of the delegates that visited Bloomington-Normal last April (2019) with the Open World Exchange "Best Practices in Education." The professor that is helping the Sports Institute students with their studies (helping them outside of class with their understanding/reading of English and the course materials) is Lilya Udalova. She was the interpreter/translator that accompanied the first exchange group from Vladimir State to Illinois State in 2015. It is wonderful for me to work with incredible people that I have known for a long time and to be able to continue to build our relationships.

The course I am teaching here is essentially identical to one that I teach at Illinois State University. As you can see from the pictures, we just completed our pre-fitness testing assessments. We will repeat these assessments again at the end of the semester, anticipating positive changes. We have just started with Russian-student led discussions whereby my Russian students post content-related questions to students taking this same course at ISU. Questions are posted in ISU's "ReggieNet" – a Sakai learning management system that ISU uses. We have a Discussion shell that includes both Vladimir State and ISU students. The discussions are written and asynchronous (not live or through video), so the time difference does not impact discussions. You can see in the other pictures where students are using laptops or cell phones to access the course materials and complete assignments. Although I have taught this course for over twenty years at ISU, teaching in a different country has opened my eyes to aspects of teaching and learning that I had not thought of before, such as access to Internet or Wi-Fi in classrooms or at home.

Collin is attending School #23 for English and German classes. He has met so many wonderful teachers and students. When he is not at school #23 he is home working on his online US studies or enjoying an active social life. He goes to a gym to exercise several times a week with Alex and Max Ericson, the sons of Polina Ericson. Polina has provided translation and interpretation multiple times for Medical Partnership Exchanges. He also enjoys meeting with friends from school and going to cafes' for tea or hot chocolate.

I have been overwhelmed at the warmth and generosity from so many people in Vladimir. Collin and I have been invited to so many family's homes or dachas for dinner, as well as invited to holiday celebrations. This past week was Maslenitsa <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maslenitsa>. We went to a friend's dacha and ate a LOT of Russian pancakes (my favorite!) and played "silly games" to say farewell to winter and hello to spring. So many of our dear Sister Cities friends here in Vladimir have asked me repeatedly if we needed anything or if there was anything they could do to assist us. It is wonderful knowing we are not here alone, and if we need anything, even a trip to the grocery store, someone is there to help. I am incredibly grateful to the VCSCA for the history we have with this beautiful city and to the Fulbright Program for this incredible experience.

Two Russian students who have been most helpful to Karen



Karen in the classroom





## Exchange Year 2019-2020

My name is Anna Filimonova. I'm an exchange student from Russia. My American adventure started in August 2019 when I first came to Bloomington-Normal, IL. I have never been to the US before, so for me it was a whole new world.

Now I'm a senior in NCWHS. I have a lot of interesting classes in my schedule such as International Relations, German, Psychology, and Molecular and Structural Biology. To be honest, I don't find American High School hard unless you are taking a lot of AP classes. In my opinion, school here has a goal to make students creative and unique, whereas Russian schools teach you how to follow the rules. Another big difference between Russian and American schools is how students treat their teachers. Back home the relationships between students and teachers are very formal. It's not common to talk about funny things in class because it is distracting. Russian school is a place where you go to study while American schools have many other opportunities. For instance, students get a chance to try many different sports which is great. Personally, I did Cross Country in the first semester of school, and now I'm in the Track team. I absolutely enjoy running, especially because everybody on the team is very involved and enthusiastic and always ready to help.

Speaking of people I met during my exchange, people here are different in a good way. I find Americans more cheerful than Russians. People smile more, which would be considered weird in Russia by the way. We even have a saying that "smiling without a reason is a sign that you are crazy". Also American people are more talkative and open even with those who they have never met before. In Russian culture it's more common to be open with your friends and family only which is good too.

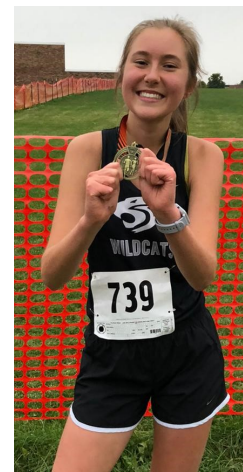
I think I was very lucky to become an exchange student to Bloomington-Normal. But my biggest luck was to find my second family - Andre, Desiree, and Asia Quizon-Colquitt. These people basically opened a whole new world for me and continue making my American adventure more and more amazing. Over the last few months we had a couple trips to Chicago where we enjoyed going to museums, watching Hamilton, visiting sightseeings and a car show. Also I got a chance to meet my extended host family who even gave me a nickname "Pancake girl" after I cooked Russian pancake for them. I may keep it as my American middle name because Russians don't have one.

Over the last 7 months I've made friends with people from all around the world beginning with the US and finishing with Japan. I think America is a perfect place to make these acquaintances because here there is a mix of cultures from many counties which makes America a very interesting

place to explore. However, I realized how different cultures can be and how exciting it is to share your own culture with people around.

My exchange is not over yet but it has already taught me that different doesn't mean bad. It taught me that if you get a chance to be on the other side of the world you should take it as a great luck and appreciate every moment spent here.

Normal Community  
West track award



With my host  
family

## May 2020 ISU School of Kinesiology & Recreation and VSU Institute of Physical Culture and Sports Exchange

From May 7 through May 23, a group of 3 students and faculty sponsor (and VCSCA President), Dave Thomas plan to continue the annual ISU School of Kinesiology & Recreation and VSU Institute of Physical Culture and Sports exchange. Chris Koos, Mayor of the Town of Normal, and Tari Renner, Mayor of the City of Bloomington plan to join us for the first half of the trip.

We will depart from O'Hare on Thursday afternoon and after an overnight flight (with a stopover in Helsinki) arrive in St. Petersburg. The group will spend two nights in St. Petersburg visiting cultural and historic sites including: St. Isaac's Cathedral, the Hermitage and Catherine's Palace. Saturday, May 9<sup>th</sup>, is Russia's Victory Day, celebrating the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of World War II (the Great Patriotic War). Exciting times are expected. On Sunday, we take a 9.5-hour overnight train ride from St. Petersburg to Vladimir.

Upon arriving in Vladimir early Monday morning, we will be met by our hosts from Vladimir State University's Institute of Physical Culture and Sports. That afternoon, we will meet with Rector Anzor Saralidze of VSU. The mayors will spend the next three days meeting with the Mayor and City Administrators of Vladimir, and touring cultural/historic sites. The mayors will travel to Moscow on Thursday evening and return home on Friday.

The KNR group will spend ten days visiting classes, laboratories, sports facilities, hospitals, rehabilitation clinics, and schools, in addition to touring Olympic training facilities (Greco-Roman wrestling, gymnastics, powerlifting) and meeting many Olympic competitors and coaches that train in these facilities. We will participate in special individualized Masterclass trainings in Tabata and martial arts at fitness facilities. A highlight will be our participation in the "Last Bell" ceremony, which is like our commencement ceremony, at the Institute of Physical Culture and Sports.

The students will partake in several round-table discussions with students at Vladimir State, discussing everything from "Family and Healthy Lifestyle," to "Myths and Stereotypes of Russians and Americans." We will also meet Medical Partnership colleagues, Dr Grigory Volchenkov and Dr. Alexey Volchenkov, and tour the Regional TB Dispensary, the Regional Blood Transfusion Station, the Regional Center of Physical Therapy and Sports Medicine, and the Regional Oncology Dispensary. We will team up with students from Mennonite College of Nursing who will be visiting Vladimir Medical College during an overlapping time frame.

We will have great opportunities for cultural immersion as we visit several historical sites, many that are UNESCO World Heritage Sites. We plan excursions to nearby villages and towns in the "Golden Ring" of Russia, tours of cathedrals and museums, and a traditional Russian banya. We will visit the American Home where we will meet with the Vladimir Sister Cities Board and learn about the history of our Vladimir-Canterbury Sister Cities Association.

Following the wonderful experience in Vladimir, we will travel to Moscow for two and a half days before flying home. We will visit Red Square, tour the Kremlin, and the city of Moscow!

**The KNR exchange trip was cancelled right before press time.**

## **Musical Theater Open World Program for Fall 2020**

We look forward to hosting a new group of visitors from Vladimir beginning September 23, 2020.

Our newest group of visitors will be faculty and students from Vladimir State University's Musical Theater program as well as arts administrators and performers from Vladimir. While complete details of the program have not yet been finalized we expect the group to take part in classes at Illinois State University and perform for the general community and local universities.

The group will also take part in discussion and workshops on best practices in music and theater training, financial support for the arts, community engagement, and the role of volunteers in supporting the performing arts. The group will also visit local elementary and secondary school music classes and meet with school drama teachers

## **Bylaws Update**

The by-laws were reviewed and minor changes were made at our March board meeting. The revised bylaws will be placed on the web site.



## MEMBERSHIP FORM

Is Your Membership Up to Date? If you have not sent in your 2020 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 1262  
Bloomington, IL 61702