



**VLADIMIR CANTERBURY  
SISTER CITY ASSOCIATION  
OF BLOOMINGTON-  
NORMAL**

**COMMUNICATOR  
FALL 2025**



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**Dear VCSCA Members,**

It is still summer while I am writing this, but the VCSCA board is looking ahead to our fall schedule of events. Until we can once again enjoy the exchange visits to and from Vladimir that have been at the heart of our people-to-people diplomacy, we continue to share the cultural richness of our sister cities with each other and maintain our relationship with sister city friends.

This fall we will be honoring the legacy of William L. White with an exceptional guest speaker; we will be continuing our Zoom conversations and lectures with Vladimir and Canterbury; and we are scheduling a film night with a showing of the Russian film, *Wings* in conjunction with our Annual Meeting. **Read on for more information about these activities and mark your calendars.** I look forward to seeing you all at events this fall.

Elaine Cousins, President

**FALL 2025 EVENTS**

**The William L White International Peace Forum** will be held on **September 15<sup>th</sup>** on the campus of Illinois State University in the Bone Student Center's Old Main Room. The speaker will be Dr. Alexis Peri and the talk will be preceded by a reception in the same location. You are all invited. The reception will begin at 5:00 pm and the talk will begin at 6:30 pm. A dinner for members and Professor Peri is planned for Sunday, September 14<sup>th</sup> at the Bloomington Country Club. Watch for your invitation to the dinner which will be arriving soon.

“Alexis Peri is an Associate Professor of History at Boston University. She has published *Dear Unknown Friend: The Remarkable Correspondence between American and Soviet Women* (Harvard University Press, 2024), and *The War Within: Diaries from the Siege of Leningrad* (Harvard University Press, 2017), winner of the Pushkin House Book Prize and

named by the Wall Street Journal as one of the ten best books on the Soviet home front. She is also a recipient of the 2024 Metcalf Award for Teaching Excellence from Boston University.

In the tense years of WWII and the Cold War, American and Soviet women struck up a remarkable pen-pal correspondence that enabled them to see each other as friends rather



than enemies. Their letters - initially tolerated by censors on both sides — revealed the humanity of the enemy and inspired the women to reexamine their own societies more critically.

In this talk, which draws from the research for her most recent book *Dear Unknown Friend*, Professor Alexis Peri tells their rare and poignant tale. Writing against the political current, she will demonstrate, the pen-pals approached each other with curiosity and empathy.”

Alexis Peri photo by Cydney Scott

**On September 13 at 7:30 pm** in Kemp Recital Hall on the campus of Illinois State University, the **Duo MemDi**, consisting of Igor Kalnin, Artist-Teacher of Violin at Illinois State University (ISU) and VCSCA board member, and his wife, Rochelle Sennet, Professor of Piano at the University of Illinois, will present a recital. The program will feature works by **Bach, Hailstork, Pirce, Sarasate, and Tchaikovsky. Admission is free.**

The mission of Duo MemDi is to perform music that embraces the diversity of world cultures, with a particular focus on commissioning and performing works by composers from underrepresented groups. Uniquely, all of the Duo’s live performances are played from memory—an uncommon feat in the world of chamber music. They believe this approach fosters a deeper, more holistic connection to the composers' ideas.

While not a program sponsored by the VCSCA for our members, we are delighted to publicize and promote VCSCA attendance at what promises to be a wonderful recital by our board member and his wife. Those of us who heard Igor Kalnin’s presentation last spring, know what a treat is in store for the audience.

**On October 18th at 11:00 am, via Zoom: *Women Called to Action*** Presented by Rochelle Gridley of the McLean County Museum of History, this illustrated lecture will feature the contributions of women from McLean County who volunteered and enlisted with the U.S. military during World War II, their challenges, the work they performed, and where they served. A link for the Zoom will be sent to members in October.

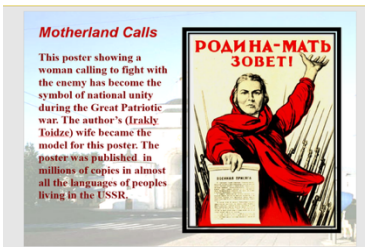
**On November 3, the Annual meeting** will take place at 5:30 pm followed by the showing of the Russian Movie *Wings* from 1966 by Russian film maker Larisa Sheptika. The film will begin at 6:00 pm. This movie is about a female WWII fighter pilot who becomes a school principal after her exciting life as a pilot. An interesting note about this film is that one of the minor roles in the movie was played by an actor who started his career in the Vladimir Drama theatre. Vladimir sister city looks forward to learning how we enjoyed the movie. Popcorn and beverages to be served at the movie.

## PAST 2025 EVENTS

**On March 15<sup>th</sup>,** we celebrated International Women’s Day with a potluck lunch.



**On April 26<sup>th</sup>,** we had a Zoom meeting to discuss Easter Traditions. We were delighted to learn about the Canterbury tradition of cheese rolling and learn about Easter traditions in Vladimir. Google cheese rolling UK for some fun videos.



**On May 17<sup>th</sup>,** we had a Zoom meeting on WWII posters in Russia. Here is an example from the Vladimir’s program.



**On April 27<sup>th</sup>,** Professor of Violin at Illinois State University, Igor Kalnin gave a presentation at Bloomington Country Club for our members. His remarks centered on his experience growing up in Soviet Russia in a town not far from Vladimir, his musical studies and his journey to the United States. Igor also performed several violin pieces. We are most pleased to have Dr. Kalnin serving on our Sister City Board. It was a most enjoyable evening.



**On August 15** we held our annual picnic.



### **PLANNED WINTER 2026 EVENTS**

**January - Sunghir Zoom presentation** from Vladimir. This will be a lecture presentation on Zoom about an amazing archaeological site near Vladimir.

See <https://www.sapiens.org/archaeology/paleolithic-burial-sunghir/>

**February - Kickapoo Zoom presentation** by the McLean County Museum of History.

### **SISTER CITY GARDENS**

The Vladimir Sister City garden is located behind the berm off of Vernon Ave at the Constitution Trail entrance off of Angela Drive. While visiting the Russian Garden, walk along the Trail about 65 yds. to the East where you will see the new Canterbury Garden and the sign which shows the location of three English native type trees: English Oak, Horse Chestnut, and Copper Beech. There is need for additional workers to do garden work. Please contact Orly Edge ([edge@ilstu.edu](mailto:edge@ilstu.edu)) if you are interested in helping to maintain the garden.

### **MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS**

The 2026 membership renewal mailing will be sent in March 2026. Be sure to send your 2025 dues if you haven't already.

### **VCSCA BOARD NOMINATIONS**

If you would like to be a candidate for the 2026-2028 VCSCA Board or would like to nominate someone, email Nominating Committee Chair Margaret Ann Hayden at [mhayden@ilstu.edu](mailto:mhayden@ilstu.edu).