



2024-2025 ANNUAL REPORT

and

2025-2026 WORK PLAN





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**Photography credits: Gerald Martineau, ASCA staff and volunteers.*

Letter from the Chair

I am pleased to share our annual report, which celebrates the Arlington Sister City Association's accomplishments over the past year and looks ahead to the opportunities before us. With the energy and dedication of our Board of Directors, Sister City Committees, and part-time Executive Director, ASCA continues to bring Arlington and our sister cities closer together through exchanges, cultural programs, and community involvement.

This year was especially meaningful as we welcomed a delegation from Ivano-Frankivsk and organized a fire-fighter exchange by zoom, marking important steps in rejuvenating that partnership. Our Aachen High School Exchange and Elementary/Family Exchange connected more than 200 Arlingtonians — students, families, and volunteers — in experiences that build lifelong bonds. We marked the 20 year anniversary of our partnership with Reims and deepened our partnership with San Miguel through volunteer visits and conversations with their new mayor.

Looking ahead, our priorities include:

- Strengthening our sister city partnerships and expanding opportunities for cultural exchange.
- Creating meaningful educational experiences through arts, culture, student, and family programs.
- Supporting exchanges that allow Arlington government officials and employees to share knowledge in civic, technical, and economic fields.
- Partnering with local organizations that share our mission of building global connections.
- Building on our signature fundraising event.

The Arlington Sister City Association plays an important role in fostering cultural understanding and citizen diplomacy, offering creative ways for our community to engage both here at home and abroad. We are grateful for Arlington County's continued support and look forward to another exciting year together.

Daphne

Daphne Lathouras
Chair, Board of Directors

Meet the Leadership

ASCA is led by a volunteer Board of Directors elected to three-year terms, plus two ex-officio members: Arlington County's Deputy County Manager, Shannon Flanagan-Watson, and Arlington Public Schools' Assistant Superintendent, Catherine Ashby. The Executive Director also serves as a non-voting member of the Board of Directors. Officers are elected to two-year terms by the Board of Directors at a Board meeting on the same date as the Association's General Membership meeting. Presidents of each Sister City committee may be elected by their respective committees or appointed by the ASCA Chair. Upon ratification by the Board, the Sister City President becomes a member of the Board of Directors.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

OFFICER DIRECTORS

Chair

Daphne Lathouras

Communications Manager

Rebuilding Together Arlington/Fairfax/Falls Church, Inc.

Vice Chair

Arshia Burney

Independent Consultant

Secretary

Vacant

Treasurer

Vacant

DIRECTORS

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Assistant Superintendent, School & Community Relations
Arlington Public Schools

Alyssa Bivins, PhD.

Graduate Professional/Career Development Coordinator
George Mason University

Lily Caballero-Torres

College & Career Counselor
Arlington Public Schools

Shannon Flanagan-Watson

Deputy County Manager
Arlington, Virginia

Carole Lieber

IPMA-CP
Independent HR, EEO and
Human Rights Consultant

Kevin Newak

President, Reims Sister City Committee
Senior Analyst
U.S. Federal Government

Anastasia Orfanoudis

Executive Director
Arlington Sister City Association

Jose Pineda

Transportation Engineer
Virginia Department of Transportation

Sophia Tailor

President, Ivano-Frankivsk Sister City Committee
Senior Analyst
Edelman Global Advisory

Daniel Vasquez

CEO/Founder
Intelliwings, LLC

The Arlington Sister City Association

Vision

Promoting Arlington's international profile and creating lasting relationships. ASCA fosters productive exchanges in government, education, commerce, culture, and the arts with our Sister Cities.

Mission

Arlington Sister City Association (ASCA) is a nonprofit organization affiliated with Arlington County, Virginia. Established in 1993, ASCA supports and coordinates the activities of Arlington County's five Sister Cities of Aachen, Germany; Coyoacán, Mexico (in emeritus status); Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine; Reims, France; and San Miguel, El Salvador. ASCA works to enhance and promote the region's international profile and to foster productive exchanges in education, commerce, culture, and the arts through a series of activities and programming.



Management

Anastasia Orfanoudis serves as ASCA's part-time Executive Director on a contract basis. Reporting directly to the Executive Committee, she acts as both liaison and advisor to the Sister City Presidents and the Board of Directors, supporting programs and activities across the organization. Key Executive Director responsibilities include fundraising, event planning, membership growth and retention, marketing and communications, and overall operational administration. Ms. Orfanoudis has served in this role since September 2023 and has been instrumental in strengthening ASCA's visibility, expanding community engagement, and supporting the success of our programs.



What is a Sister City?



In post-war America, President Dwight D. Eisenhower believed that, to avoid future global conflicts, people could gain a better understanding of each other's beliefs and cultures if they were given opportunities to come together. Thus, the "Sister City" concept was created and, in 1956 at President Eisenhower's Conference on Citizen Diplomacy, his vision was officially realized and the Sister City International (SCI) organization was founded as a result. The President essentially hoped to create a network that would be a champion for peace and prosperity by fostering and facilitating bonds between people from different communities around the world. President Eisenhower reasoned that "people from different cultures could understand, appreciate, and celebrate their differences while building partnerships that would lessen the chance of new conflicts."

SCI defines a sister city as "a broad-based, long-term partnership between two communities in two countries. A relationship is officially recognized after the highest elected or appointed official from both communities sign off on an agreement to forge a sister city relationship and become sister cities."

A city may have any number of sister cities, with community involvement ranging from a half dozen to hundreds of volunteers. In addition to volunteers, sister city organizations can include representatives from nonprofits, municipal governments, the private sector, and other civic organizations.

Each sister city organization, like the Arlington Sister City Association, is independent and pursues activities that are important to them and their community including municipal, business, trade, educational, and cultural exchanges, and projects with their sister cities.

Note: Excerpts from the Sister Cities International website.

Connecting Arlington to the World

Established in 1993, the Arlington Sister City Association (ASCA) is a nonprofit organization affiliated with Arlington County, Virginia. ASCA supports and coordinates activities of its five Sister City Committees that work with their counterparts in Aachen, Germany; Coyoacan, Mexico (in emeritus status); Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine; Reims, France; and San Miguel, El Salvador.

ASCA works to enhance and promote Arlington's international profile and to foster productive exchanges through arts and cultural partnerships, business development, educational and professional exchanges, and government relationships. ASCA helps the people of Arlington form long-lasting partnerships and friendships with the people of its Sister Cities and beyond through its many activities and programs.



ASCA Support for Official Visits

Each year, the mayors' offices of Arlington's Sister Cities invite Arlington elected officials to attend important and prestigious ceremonial events in their communities. This is a highly visible way of demonstrating Arlington's commitment to their sister city partners and officials are strongly encouraged to attend these events and, therefore, ASCA helps support travel expenses.

ASCA

ASCA Pillars:

Best Practices for Sister City Relationships



Government

- ~ Develop government relationships, promote government exchanges, discuss best practices and attend official events in sister cities



Economic Development

- ~ Promote and facilitate open dialog between Arlington business professionals and their counterparts in our Sister Cities through organizations such as Arlington Economic Development and the Arlington Chamber of Commerce
- ~ Create network opportunities and connections for Business Exchanges



Art/Culture

- ~ Partner arts and cultural organizations to create and expand performing & visual arts exchanges, shared exhibitions, cultural linkages, and partnerships
- ~ Host concerts, lectures, other events



Education

- ~ Organize in-person exchanges for Arlington students to visit sister cities and their schools, and to have reciprocal exchanges for students from our sister cities to come to Arlington
- ~ Facilitate teacher exchanges so teachers can observe each other's educational approaches
- ~ Develop virtual exchanges so more Arlington students can meet their peers from our Sister Cities to learn about each other's similarities and differences

2024-2025 ASCA Accomplishments

Standing Committees and Task Forces

Development

Key responsibilities:	~ Undertook new fundraising initiatives through corporate sponsorships
Sponsorship sales	~ Spearheading the new “Event Fundraising Program”
Membership dues	~ Reviewed and proposed updates to the Membership dues program
Board fundraising	~ Researched, wrote, submitted grant proposals
Engagement activities	

Education

Key responsibilities:	~ Newly-established “Education Task Force”
Education activities	~ Serves as hub for local educational activities
	~ Centralizes educational programming
	~ Collaborative effort with Sister Cities

Finance

Key responsibilities:	~ Reviewed and analyzed year-end financials
Financial management	~ Performed budget reconciliation and review of all transactions
Financial compliance	~ Oversaw annual budgeting process
Financial oversight	

Governance

Key responsibilities:	~ Provided Board Orientation and Governance Training for FY2024-2025
Governance	~ Nominated Officers and Directors for the Board for the 2024-2025
Nomination	Board year
	~ Procured insurance needed for international student exchanges





Fundraising

One of the Board and Executive Director's ongoing goals is to diversify ASCA's revenue sources through strategies such as corporate sponsorships, government grants, and community fundraising. With guidance from ASCA's Executive Director, our fundraising efforts expanded this past year in several new directions. Highlights include: securing ASCA's first corporate sponsor; launching a July 4 membership campaign that attracted new members and provided support for our general operating fund; partnering with Sister Cities International to submit a multi-year grant proposal to the U.S. Department of State in support of Ukrainian Sister City programs (decision expected in fall 2025); and expanding the Reims Sister City Committee's sparkling wine event into a fundraiser benefitting ASCA as a whole.

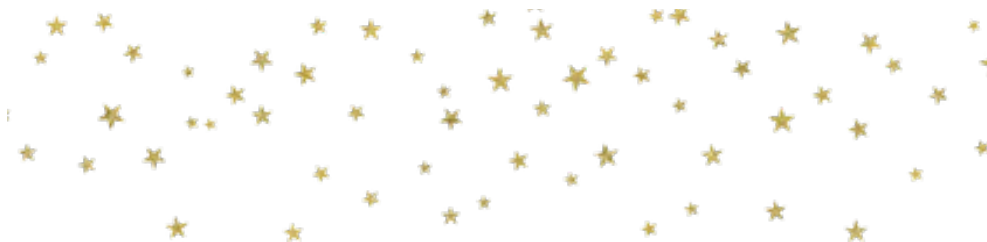
The Aachen Committee successfully introduced program fees for the High School Exchange and the Elementary/Family Exchange, generating new revenue that helps strengthen and sustain ASCA's work across the organization.

Policy Review

ASCA regularly reviews, drafts, and updates its policies and procedures to ensure consistency with the Bylaws, alignment with nonprofit best practices, and overall modernization. Board members and volunteers with access to confidential information complete required disclosures, including confidentiality and conflict of interest policies, as well as photo use permissions.

Website

ASCA's website continues to be a primary resource to members, corporate supporters, prospects, students, and anyone wishing to learn more about the Arlington Sister City Association. ASCA maintains and updates the website to provide current and valuable information about our history, programs, and events in the community.



Membership

ASCA continues to maintain a healthy engagement with its members through its quarterly ASCA newsletter, special e-blasts, social media such as FaceBook and LinkedIn, as well as its events and activities.

Many families join ASCA when their children are participating in one of our high school or elementary (family) exchange programs produced by the Aachen Sister City Committee.

To expand membership and volunteer engagement, ASCA launched two new initiatives this year. In partnership with Volunteer Arlington, ASCA introduced a year-long volunteer recruitment drive. In addition, ASCA hosted its first “Meet & Greet” event, offering interested community members the opportunity to connect with current Board and Sister City Committee members in an informal setting and explore ways to get involved.

Communications

Communications activities remain a key priority for ASCA’s programming. Our quarterly newsletter reaches over 1,800 subscribers and consistently averages a 50% open rate. In addition, nearly 30 special announcements and event invitations were shared with ASCA’s mailing list over the past fiscal year.

ASCA actively uses social media to engage the community, posting updates and announcements on Facebook (including community pages) and LinkedIn. ASCA also regularly places listings with free local media to highlight programs and events.

To expand visibility, ASCA continues to strengthen partnerships with the Arlington Public Schools, the Arlington Chamber of Commerce, Arlington Economic Development, the Business Improvement Districts {Rosslyn, Ballston, and National Landing}, Volunteer Arlington, and the Arlington County Library. These collaborations help publicize ASCA’s events and programs while raising the organization’s profile.

ASCA’s growing presence was further highlighted when *Ar/Now* covered our June 2025 Annual Meeting – a sign of increasing community interest and recognition.

Leadership/ Volunteer Management

ASCA’s By-laws allow for up to 25 Board members, and with 11 currently serving, ASCA sees a clear opportunity for growth. Expanding the Board is a top priority, as it will bring in fresh perspectives, broaden community representation, and strengthen the organization’s ability to deliver impactful programs. ASCA is actively cultivating new leaders who share our commitment to international exchange and community engagement. ASCA is confident that building a larger Board will position the Arlington Sister City Association for long-term success.

ASCA is deeply grateful to its Arlington County Board partners and the Arlington County staff for their steadfast support. Special thanks go to Chair Takis Karantonis and Board Member Maureen Coffey, as well as to past Arlington County Board Chair, Libby Garvey – whose years of dedication helped guide ASCA up to her retirement. ASCA also extends our appreciation to Shannon Flanagan-Watson, Deputy County Manager, for her service as a member of the Board. As a volunteer-driven organization, ASCA relies on the advice and counsel of County leadership, which has been invaluable to our success.

Connecting our Community: *Partnerships & Growth in 2024-2025*

The 2024-2025 fiscal year marked an important period of growth and new initiatives for the Arlington Sister City Association (ASCA). In September 2024, ASCA held an organization-wide program designed to bring together all five Sister City partnerships around themes of cross-cultural exchange and local community interest. The inaugural event featured Arlington resident and travel writer Barbara Noe Kennedy, who shared insights from her recently published book, *100 Things To Do In Arlington, Virginia Before You Die*. The evening included a book signing and a reception supported by food donations from local restaurants that were mentioned in the book.



Later in the year, ASCA hosted a community “Meet & Greet.” This gathering provided Arlington residents interested in citizen diplomacy with an opportunity to meet ASCA’s Board of Directors and Sister City Committee members. The event introduced prospective volunteers to the work of each Sister City Committee: Aachen (Germany); Ivano-Frankivsk (Ukraine); Reims (France); and, San Miguel (El Salvador) – and helped recruit new members for each partnership.

To support these and future programs, the Executive Director launched an “Event Sponsorship” initiative, inviting organizations and business to consider sponsoring ASCA’s annual programming. Through continued outreach and collaboration with Arlington businesses, nonprofits, the Arlington Chamber of Commerce, Arlington Economic Development, and the local Business Improvement Districts, ASCA’s visibility increased significantly this year. These efforts led to ASCA securing a corporate sponsorship from Long & Foster of Arlington and Falls Church. We are truly grateful for their support and look forward to nurturing this partnership while welcoming new corporate sponsors to join us in advancing ASCA’s mission and community programs.

In the fall of 2024, ASCA established the Education Task Force to centralize and expand educational programming – with the goal of increasing community awareness and participation in Sister City activities. Key initiatives undertaken by the Task Force included: launching plans for a “Pen Pal” program with the Arlington Public Schools to connect students with peers in several of our Sister Cities, fostering global friendships and cultural exchange; collaborating with the Executive Director and Sister City Presidents to create a spring panel presentation commemorating the *80th Anniversary of the End of World War II* in Europe (see also page 16 for details) – offering a meaningful educational experience for the community; and, beginning conversations with Sister Cities International (SCI) to promote its annual “Young Artists & Authors” program to Arlington students, encouraging creativity and international engagement.

Connecting our Community: Partnerships & Growth in 2024-2025

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Building upon the Reims Sister City Committee's prior "sparkling wine" event, ASCA hosted its second annual "April in Reims" event in April 2025. As Reims, France is known as the "champagne capital of the world," it seemed fitting to elevate this sold-out event to an annual fundraising event for ASCA. With the continued support and hard work of the Reims Sister City Committee, ASCA hosted its much-anticipated event at Green Pig Bistro/Buena Vida in Clarendon. Guests gathered for a festive evening featuring a curated flight of sparkling wines and engaging presentations that transported attendees straight to the heart of France's famed champagne region.

The evening's special guests—Charlie Dunn (Salveto Imports), Todd Parola (Magruder's Market), and Brinton Rowdybush (Reims Committee member)—shared fascinating insights into the world of champagne, including what sets it apart and the unique characteristics of each wine in the tasting. ASCA is grateful for their time and expertise.

The evening wrapped up with a lively raffle featuring fabulous prizes donated by the Arlington community, as well as others — everything from bottles of wine and champagne to gift certificates for local restaurants and even concert tickets. It was a memorable evening of food, drink, learning, and connection—and we could not have done it without ASCA's wonderful Reims Sister City Committee, Long & Foster corporate sponsor, supporters, volunteers, friends, and guests. Cheers!



2024-2025 Accomplishments: *Aachen (Germany) Sister City*

The Aachen-Arlington Sister City relationship is ASCA's longest standing partnership, established in 1993 between Arlington, Virginia and Aachen, Germany. This friendship between our two cities has included many interactions – educational, artistic, and governmental exchanges that we all value and anticipate continuing for years to come. As a result, many personal friendships have evolved at the student, family, and government official levels. The benefits are too numerous to count.

The Elementary/Family Exchange

The Elementary/Family Exchange is ASCA's most beloved program, bringing lasting impact to families in Arlington and Aachen. In 2024–2025, 26 Arlington families (one parent and one 5th grader) were paired with 26 families from Aachen – though in reality, entire extended families on both sides joined in the experience.

The exchange began with the Aachen families' visit to Arlington in October 2024. After weeks of emails and video chats, families met with excitement at Dulles Airport. Home-stays were the heart of the experience: Aachen students joined their partners at school, discovered American routines, and shared meals and traditions— including pumpkin spice treats and Halloween festivities. Group activities such as a German-language night tour of Washington, DC monuments, a lively welcome breakfast, and a heartfelt farewell party added to the joy and sense of connection.

In spring 2025, Arlington families traveled to Aachen for the outbound portion. They stayed in their partners' homes, discovered Aachen daily life, and enjoyed visits to historic Aachen landmarks, including a warm welcome at City Hall from Mayor Sibylle Keupen. Highlights included exploring the city's whimsical sculptures, sampling Aachen's famous Printen and chocolates, and taking day trips to Cologne, Maastricht, and Monschau.

The program fosters deep, lifelong friendships as children overcome language barriers and discover common ground, while parents build lasting ties that often link families for years to come.



Aachen (Germany) Sister City

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High School Exchange

In October 2024, Arlington welcomed 19 students and two chaperones from Aachen, completing the calendar year exchange that began with Arlington students' visit to Germany in July. The Aachen group quickly settled into their Arlington home-stays, reconnecting with partners and extended families. They were formally welcomed by Arlington Board Chair Libby Garvey at the Bozman Government Center.

Highlights included a day attending Arlington high schools, experiencing differences in curriculum and school life, and a full program of activities from touring the National Mall, U.S. Capitol, and Library of Congress to exploring the Smithsonian Institution museums and engaging in a lively discussion at Georgetown University about German and American universities. Evenings and weekends were spent with host families—enjoying football games, social gatherings, and time around backyard fire pits—before a heartfelt farewell dinner at Lubber Run Community Center.

The impact of these exchanges last well beyond the actual visits. Students stay connected through social media and often weave their experiences into college essays, travel together during their university years, and in some cases, Arlington students pursue graduate studies in Germany or Aachen students come to the U.S. for internships or college studies.



The 2025 Aachen High School Exchange included 17 Arlington students (three from Wakefield HS, eight from Washington-Liberty H.S., two from Yorktown HS, and four from HB Woodlawn Program) accompanied by two chaperones. The Arlington students and chaperones were welcomed by their host students and families and settled in for their home-stays. The entire group was welcomed at the town hall by Mayor H. Scheidt. The Arlington students had many educational opportunities including a tour of the *Centre Charlemagne* where they learned about the history of Aachen from the Neolithic era to the present, a guided tour with the director of the International Newspaper Museum, day trips to nearby cities and lots of time with their exchange partners and families -- learning from each other and strengthening their friendships. After the farewell dinner with all the Aachen parents, the Arlington and Aachen students traveled together by train to Berlin where they toured the city by bicycle; visited the Bundestag; and learned about German government through discussions with a Parliamentarian; as well as visited the Holocaust Memorial, Brandenburg Gate and the Stasi Prison; before returning to their respective cities.

One Arlington student applied for and was awarded a scholarship of \$750 from ASCA's "Ruth White Fund" that made it possible for her to participate in the exchange.

The second half of this annual program occurs in October 2025 when the Aachen students and their chaperones will reunite with their exchange partners in Arlington for a home-stay and educational programs (see also the "Aachen Work Plan").

Aachen (Germany) Sister City

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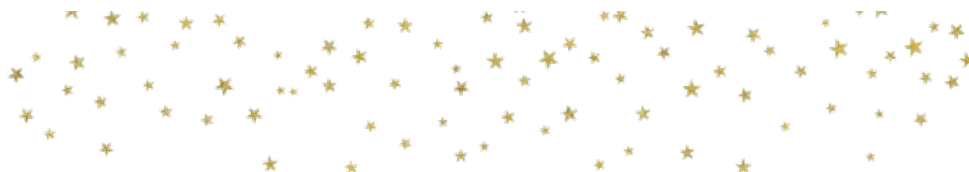
Official Visit for the 80th Anniversary of the Liberation of Aachen

Arlington County Board Chair Takis Karantonis made an official visit to Aachen, Germany in October 2024 to attend the ceremony commemorating the 80th anniversary of the city's liberation by American troops. The event was one of remembrance and reflection, featuring musical performances, film screenings, and a panel discussion for which Chair Karantonis joined government officials and dignitaries. Chair Karantonis also had meetings with ASCA's Aachen Sister City Committee, civic leaders and visited WWII historic sites, as well.



Aachen Cathedral Choir in Arlington

In October 2024, the *Aachener Domchor*, the oldest boys' choir in Germany and one of the oldest in the world, performed in Arlington. Founded in 782 by Charlemagne, it has gained an international reputation. The Aachen Committee was delighted that their tour included a stop in Arlington. The free community performance was held at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington where guests were treated to a rich program of sacred music by Bach, Brahms, Bruckner, and others. The *Domchor* tour also included performances in Washington, D.C. and New York City.



2024-2025 Accomplishments: Reims (France) Sister City

The Reims Sister City Committee has had a busy year of programming, activities, and fundraising. 2025 marked a significant milestone in the history of the Arlington-Reims Sister City relationship: 20 years of friendship and collaboration. Over these last 20 years, the Reims Sister City Committee has engaged in a variety of programming that have included middle school student exchanges, lectures, and other cultural activities that have inspired and engaged.

20th Anniversary

Arlington began communications with Reims, France in 1996. The first Arlington delegation visited Reims in 2000 and established a high school exchange program. A signing ceremony took place at Reims on August 28, 2004, which coincided with the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Reims by U.S. forces in August 1944. A reciprocal visit to Arlington took place in June 2005, culminating with a signing ceremony at Arlington House on June 12, 2005.

As the Arlington-Reims partnership commemorates its 20th Anniversary in 2025, the Arlington County Board recognized this special occasion and the contributions of this relationship last May with the reading of an official Proclamation at George Mason University's Mason Square campus. Maureen Coffey, member of the Arlington County Board, presented Kevin Newak, President of the Reims Sister City Committee, with the Proclamation which not only marked the occasion, but also urged "our residents to celebrate the success of this relationship, and to honor the importance that this partnership has for strengthening the bonds between our local governments and residents."



Holiday Party

The Reims Committee held a holiday party in December 2024 to celebrate the Season, as well as to improve camaraderie and build an *esprit de corps* for our members. All attendees enjoyed the gathering hosted by Vice President Anne-Marie Daris and her husband at their condo building.



A Historical Timeline

Reims Sister City Committee members Elizabeth Schollaert, Anne-Marie Daris, and Muriel Farley Dominguez compiled a timeline of personal recollections noting major events to mark the longstanding Reims and Arlington Sister City relationship. Other Committee members submitted photos of various events over the Sister City's 20-year history. Alyssa Bivins then edited and posted the document on the ASCA website so others could enjoy reading about the history of this relationship.



Reims (France) Sister City

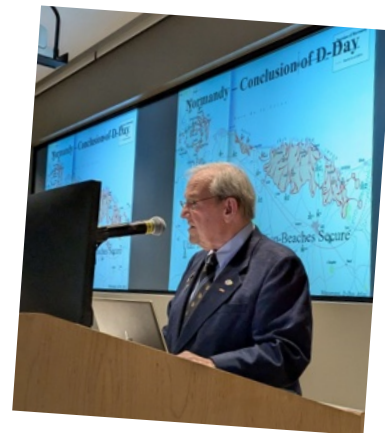
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Panel Presentation on the 80th Anniversary of the End of World War II in Europe

The Reims Sister City Committee continued to promote Reims' history to the Arlington community by working with ASCA's Executive Director Anastasia Orfanoudis to organize a free educational presentation on the *80th Anniversary of the End of World War II in Europe (VE Day)*. The panel presentation took place on May 8, 2025 at George Mason University's Mason Square campus in Arlington. This historic moment in history actually impacted three of ASCA's Sister Cities: Aachen, Germany; Reims, France; and, Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine.

During the event, Reims Committee President Kevin Newak noted that Nazi Germany initially surrendered to the Allies in Reims on May 7, 1945 at Supreme Allied Commander General Dwight D. Eisenhower's headquarters, prior to a second surrender in Berlin the following day. The event's program was coordinated by ASCA Board Member and Education Task Force lead, Alyssa Bivins, PhD. Dr. Bivins invited the panelists and served as moderator of the informative discussion. The guest professors, who discussed the last year of World War II, including the Allies' liberation of Reims, France and Aachen, Germany were: Dr. Steven Brady (Associate Professor of History, George Washington University); Dr. Samuel Huneke (Associate Professor of History, George Mason University; and, Dr. Tom Long (Emeritus Faculty, George Washington University). ASCA is grateful for their participation and for making the look back in history informative and engaging.

The evening's panel presentation concluded with a question-and-answer period which afforded participants the opportunity to discuss how the closing months of World War II continue to influence world events to this day. Approximately 80 were in attendance.



2024-2025 Accomplishments: San Miguel (El Salvador) Sister City

The San Miguel Sister City Committee remains committed to supporting and participating in community events that align with the overarching mission of the Arlington Sister City Association. With its new leadership in place since June 2025, the San Miguel Committee's members have made it a priority to reconnect with the community and raise the visibility of the San Miguel Committee in Arlington.

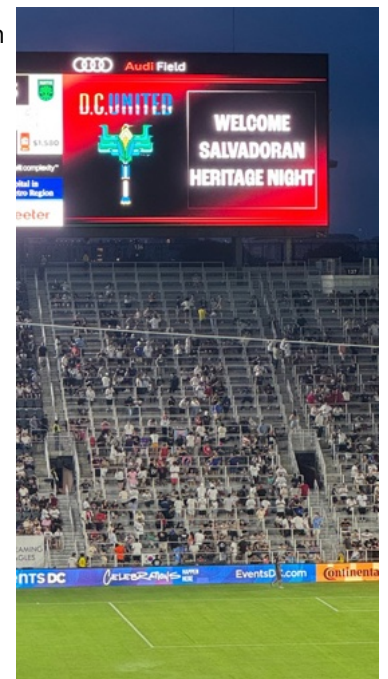
Summer Happy Hour

In June 2025, the San Miguel Sister City Committee held a Happy Hour at *Abi Azteca Grill*. This informal community event provided an opportunity for the San Miguel Sister City Committee's new President, Lily Caballero-Torres, other Committee officers to meet with Arlington residents, introduce themselves, and share the Sister City's plans going forward. The event encouraged new membership and laid the foundation for creating many more fun and educational activities.



Salvadoran Heritage Night with DC United

In collaboration with OrgulloSalviDMV and DC United, the San Miguel Sister City Committee participated in "Salvadoran Heritage Night." The Committee hosted an engaging display during the Salvadoran Heritage Night soccer match. The booth featured fun Salvadoran trivia – allowing attendees to learn more about the Salvadoran culture and ASCA.. This event was a successful platform for outreach to a broader DMV audience.



San Miguel (El Salvador) Sister City

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Annual Legal Aid & Resource Fair

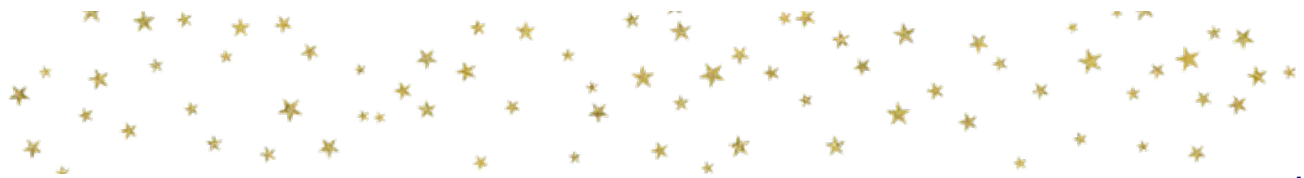
The San Miguel Committee's annual Legal Aid & Resource Fair was held in October 2024 at Kenmore Middle School. The event attracted nearly 200 Arlingtonians of diverse backgrounds, making it a very successful event.

More than 20 businesses, organizations, health, and legal professionals generously offered their time and expertise to provide essential information and services, including consultations on civil, criminal, and immigration matters. A special highlight was the informational table hosted by the Consulate General of El Salvador in Virginia, which provided resources and support for the community.



San Miguel English Language Program Continues

The San Miguel English language program – which was created back in 2022 – continues. Members of the San Miguel Sister City Committee visited the students in the summer of 2025. The students, ranging in age from 12 to 17, are from five different San Miguel high schools. The program has evolved from offering only beginner English language courses to include Intermediate and Advanced levels with an average of 60 students attending these classes. The Advanced students will graduate in November 2025 after completing a 3-year course of study. In addition, approximately 200 books were donated to each of the 4 schools: Colonia Presita II, ADESCO, Nuestro Esfuerzo; Canton Monte Grande; Canton El Zomran; and Sagrado Corazon.



2024-2025 Accomplishments: *Ivano-Frankivsk (Ukraine) Sister City*

This year, the Ivano-Frankivsk Sister City Committee has prioritized revitalizing its relationship with counterparts in Ukraine – holding many virtual meetings throughout the year. These discussions have centered on the current situation in Ivano-Frankivsk and explored practical opportunities for collaboration in areas such as public safety, emergency response, and community development. The consistent dialogue has not only renewed connections but also laid the groundwork for deeper engagement in the months ahead.

Ivano-Frankivsk Delegation Visits Arlington

In early February 2025, a delegation representing the Ivano-Frankivsk city government, local hospitals, and business people visited Arlington to refresh our Sister City partnership. The visit was in conjunction with the delegation's participation in the National Prayer Breakfast in Washington.

The highlight of their Arlington visit was meeting with Arlington County officials that included Takis Karantonis (Chair of the Arlington County government) and David Povlitz (Chief, Arlington County Fire Department). Among the Ivano-Frankivsk visitors were Oksana Savchuk (representing City Hall), Olya Boychuk (Deputy of the Ivano-Frankivsk City Council), and Taras Maslyak (Director of the Central City Hospital). ASCA is grateful for Arlington County's continued support of these important exchanges.

After the productive meeting, ASCA's Ivano-Frankivsk Sister City Committee hosted the group at a reception where the delegates had an opportunity to meet with members of the Committee and discuss ways our Sister City partnership can bring new and informative cultural and commerce exchanges in the future.



Ivano-Frankivsk (Ukraine) Sister City

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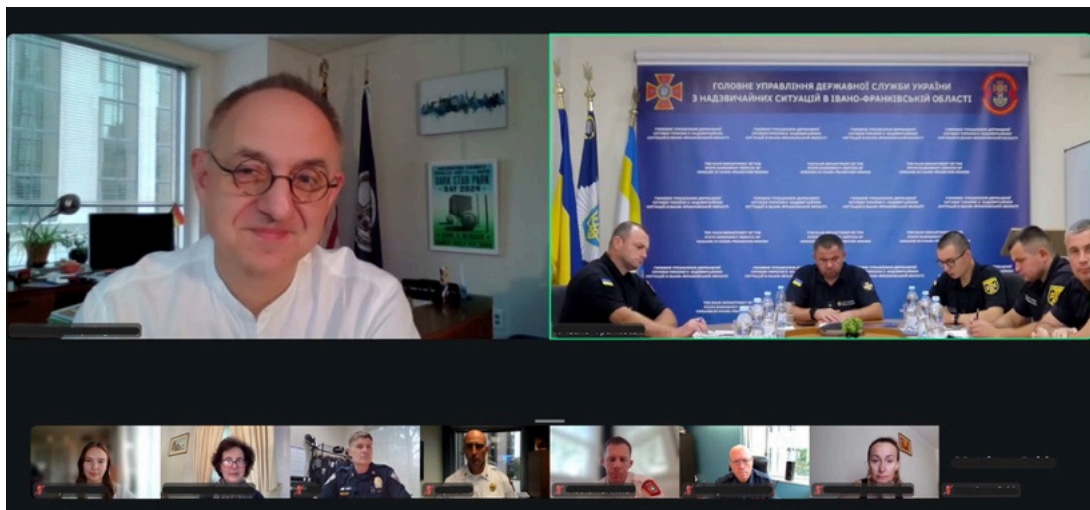
Virtual Firefighter Exchanges

Through the ongoing liaison work of ASCA's Executive Director, Anastasia Orfanoudis, with the International Relations, Tourism and City Promotion Department, Ivano-Frankivsk City Council, a two-part virtual firefighter exchange with experts from Arlington and Ivano-Frankivsk took place over the summer of 2025. The Ivano-Frankivsk Sister City Committee, led by President Sophia Taylor, enthusiastically supported the renewal of the relationship between the two sister cities through this special program which was modeled after the 2017 in-person program.

The first virtual exchange held in July focused on hearing from members of the Main Directorate of the State Emergency Service of Ukraine (Ivano-Frankivsk region) describe how they handle emergency response in times of war. The experiences they shared included how members of fire, rescue, and safety teams come together – putting their own lives at risk – to deal with emergent situations on a daily basis. Additional topics covered ranged from drone/UAV defenses and de-mining operations to explosives response and firefighting technologies. Both Takis Karantonis, Chair of the Arlington County Board, and Oksana Savchuk, representing City Hall, offered remarks of both welcome and support for this collaboration. ASCA's Executive Director, Anastasia Orfanoudis, served as moderator.

The second installment of the virtual exchange took place in late August 2025. This time, experts from Arlington County's Special Hazards Response Program presented their perspective on emergency response tactics, tools, and lessons learned. Arlington County's emergency response teams were well-represented in both virtual exchange meetings, including: David Povlitz, Fire Chief, Arlington County Department and Matthew Cobb, Chief Fire Marshall, Arlington County. ASCA extends deep appreciation for their time and commitment to this Sister City exchange.

ASCA Board and Ivano-Frankivsk Sister City Committee members participated as observers. These discussions have expanded the Ivano-Frankivsk Sister City Committee's network and influence, and will serve as a foundation for additional exchanges, including a future in-person program in Arlington.



ASCA: A Look Forward

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Aachen Sister City

The Aachen–Arlington Sister City relationship is our longest-standing partnership, established in 1993. Over the past three decades, this friendship has flourished through educational, artistic, and governmental exchanges. Beyond the official programs, countless personal friendships have taken root among students, families, and government officials -- strengthening the bond between our two cities. The benefits of this relationship are immeasurable and we look forward to carrying it forward for many years to come.

Official Travel

ASCA anticipates an official invitation for the 2026 *Karlspreis* in Aachen. Traditionally the *Karlspreis* award ceremony takes place on Ascension Thursday, which will be on May 14 for 2026. The official visit to Aachen may also include a trip to Reims, as travel between our two sister cities is easily accessible by train.

Aachen Exchanges

This October, we look forward to welcoming more than 120 visitors from Aachen to Arlington. Their visit will launch the new cohort for the Elementary/Family Exchange Program and complete this round of the High School Exchange Program, which began with Arlington students traveling to Aachen in July (as noted in the “Accomplishments” section).



Each exchange has two parts: inbound (when Aachen families visit Arlington) and outbound (when Arlington families travel to Aachen). ASCA is especially grateful to Arlington Public Schools for welcoming the Aachen students into classrooms for a day—always one of the most memorable part of the exchanges.

Elementary/Family School Exchanges

The Elementary/Family Exchange is back to full strength – with 50 Arlington families matched with 50 families in Aachen. The inbound program takes place in October. Aachen families will arrive and meet their partners in person after weeks of connection through texts, emails, and virtual meetups. The Arlington participants represent 16 elementary schools across Arlington County.

The inbound program features a welcome breakfast, a nighttime bus tour of the monuments with a German-speaking guide, a school day shared by the partner students, and a Halloween-themed farewell party with “trunk-or-treat” fun. Arlington families also host their partners in everyday life—sharing meals, sports, hobbies, shopping, small group gatherings, and outings around Arlington, Washington, D.C., and the Virginia countryside.

The exchange continues in the spring, when Arlington families travel to Aachen to reunite with their partners. The outbound portion of the program will take place late March/early April 2026 with similar programs and activities as outlined earlier under “Accomplishments.”



Aachen Sister City - *continued*

2025 High School Exchange Concludes

In October 2025, seventeen students from Aachen, accompanied by two chaperones, will be in Arlington to reconnect with the exchange partners they spent time with in Aachen and Berlin this past July. Their visit includes a full schedule of educational and cultural activities, highlighted by a day attending classes at their partners' high schools. Evenings and weekends will be spent with host families, often filled with football games and other sports, fire pit conversations, shopping, and social gatherings with other Arlington students. The group will be welcomed by an Arlington County Board Member at the Bozman Government Center to learn more about Arlington and our local form of government, visit the U.S. Capitol, the Library of Congress, Georgetown University, Smithsonian Institution museums, and other local landmarks. After leaving Arlington, the students continue on to New York City for three days before returning home to Aachen.

2026 High School Exchange Begins

Recruitment for the 2026 Aachen High School Exchange will launch in October. Volunteer coordinators will host information sessions, manage applications and scholarship requests, and finalize the list of participating students in January. The outbound portion of the exchange will take place in July 2026, when Arlington students and their chaperones travel to Aachen and Berlin for a program similar in scope to this year's outbound exchange.

University Partnerships

Professor Jurgen Vogt (RWTH Aachen University and the University of Applied Sciences in Aachen) will be visiting Arlington with his daughter for the Aachen Elementary Exchange and is planning to meet with representatives from the George Mason University and Marymount University. Our partner committee in Aachen hopes to revive and also build upon past exchanges at the university level. The Sister City Committee in Aachen is in the process of putting together an initial proposal of what each of these universities can potentially offer Arlington County college students.

Education Task Force

In the next year, the Aachen Committee and ASCA's Educational Task Force will collaborate to organize a free educational event for the Arlington community. Details are still in development, but past programs have featured lectures, panel discussions, and author talks.



ASCA: A Look Forward

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Reims Sister City

20th Anniversary

Aside from participating in ASCA-wide events throughout the year, the Reims Sister City Committee plans to hold a dinner celebrating the 20th Anniversary of the sister city relationship between Reims and Arlington in the fall of 2025. In anticipation of this occasion (noting the signing of the Arlington and Reims Sister City agreement), an invitation will be extended to the Mayor of Reims to visit Arlington.

Official Travel

ASCA anticipates an official invitation for the 2026 Karlspreis which is scheduled for May 14, 2026. Should there be an official visit to Aachen for the award ceremony, it is likely that the trip will include a trip to Reims since travel between ASCA's two Sister Cities is easily accessible by train.

Movie Night

In addition, the Reims Sister City Committee would like to show a free French movie in Arlington to attract new members and celebrate the French film industry. Ideally, the movie would have some type of connection to the city of Reims or be a well-known French language movie from the Cannes Film Festival.

Arts & Buildings

ASCA's Reims Committee members also plan to hold an event with a local expert on art to discuss French artists native to the Reims area of France and their works of art. The Committee believes this event would not only be culturally enriching, but also engaging for members and residents of Arlington alike.

Another possible event includes asking a local historian from Reims to discuss important buildings in Reims during a virtual session so that members from both Arlington and Reims could participate.

Pen Pal Program

Having initiated this effort during the 2024-2025 school year, the Reims Sister City Committee would like to continue to work with the Arlington Public Schools and Arlington's students on a "Pen Pal" program. This program would be between interested Arlington students and their counterparts in Reims.

Partnerships

The Reims Sister City Committee plans to work on strengthening its relationship with the Alexandria-Caen Sister City Committee with an eye toward engaging in some joint activities.



ASCA: A Look Forward

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San Miguel Sister City

Looking forward, the San Miguel Sister City Committee has a series of planned initiatives that continue to build on the goals of cultural exchange, education, and community involvement.

Pen Pal Program

Partnering with ASCA’s Education Task Force, the San Miguel Committee is planning to develop a Pen Pal Exchange program between students in Arlington Public Schools and those in San Miguel. The initiative will be incorporated into English-language program in San Miguel and will foster direct student-to-student engagement across borders.

Fiesta DC Parade

In late September 2025, the Committee plans to participate in the largest Hispanic Heritage Month celebration in the DC, Maryland, and Virginia region. Fiesta DC offers a highly visible platform to celebrate Salvadoran culture and promote the Arlington-San Miguel Sister City relationship.

2025 Festival Latinoamericano

Hosted by Arlington County, this event (which will be held in October 2025) will provide another opportunity for the San Miguel Committee to engage with the Arlington community, share information, and celebrate Latin American cultures.

Arlington Resource & Legal Fair

The San Miguel Sister City Committee will, once again, host this community event in November 2025 in order to connect residents with resources and legal support, while also promoting awareness of ASCA and the San Miguel Sister City partnership.

National Pupusa Day Proclamation

In recognition of Salvadoran heritage, the San Miguel Sister City Committee will work with Arlington County officials to formally proclaim “National Pupusa Day” (which is November 8, 2025 this year) in Arlington – highlighting cultural pride and community contributions.

20th Anniversary Celebration

In the Spring of 2026, ASCA will mark the 20th Anniversary of the Arlington-San Miguel Sister City partnership and the San Miguel Sister City Committee has already begun planning for the occasion. This commemorative celebration will honor this legacy and renew commitment for continued future collaboration and will include a collaboration with the Arlington Philharmonic whereby Salvadoran music will be showcased at an Arlington concert.



ASCA: A Look Forward

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Ivano-Frankivsk Sister City

Aachen

United States Department of State Grant Application

The Ivano-Frankivsk Sister City Committee, in collaboration with Sister Cities International (SCI) and Virginia Sister Cities representative Fred Blanton, submitted a grant proposal to the U.S. Department of State in July 2025. The grant seeks to support efforts to “revitalize or establish city-to-city partnerships between Ukrainian and American communities.” As of this writing, a final decision is expected in October 2025.

Should ASCA and the Ivano-Frankivsk Sister City Committee be successful in its State Department grant request, then the Ivano-Frankivsk Sister City Committee will partner with SCI to build upon its strong experience by launching a comprehensive firefighter and EMS exchange program. This program would include continued virtual discussions and an in-person event in Arlington to share best practices across all teams. Both the Arlington and Ivano-Frankivsk emergency service teams have expressed strong enthusiasm for this initiative and the Ivano-Frankivsk Sister City Committee is both prepared and excited to quickly move forward.

Pen Pal Program

The Ivano-Frankivsk Sister City Committee remains interested in organizing a virtual Pen Pal exchange between students in Ivano-Frankivsk and Arlington. This program would connect students in both sister cities and foster friendship and learning across the two communities. ASCA is currently working closely with the Arlington Public School system to ensure this exchange program can be launched in the coming year.



Financial Highlights

FY 2024-2025

FY 2025-2026

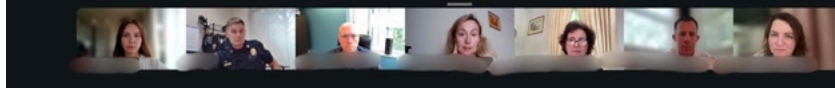
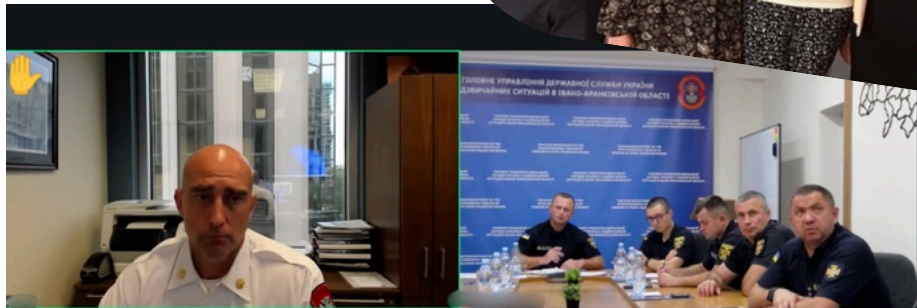
As the Arlington Sister City Association (ASCA) enters its new fiscal year effective September 1st, ASCA continues to thrive financially, thanks to the financial support from the Arlington County grant, membership dues income, revenue from events and activities, as well as unrestricted contributions and contributions restricted to the Ruth White Scholarship Fund.

It should be noted that ASCA continues its membership with Sister Cities International and the Arlington Chamber of Commerce in order to help build relationships across the Arlington spectrum that will lead to new members and support.

The ASCA Board of Directors remains committed to providing scholarships and opportunities to underrepresented and underserved students in Arlington County so that they may attend Sister City high school exchange programs. During FY2024-2025, ASCA awarded a \$750 scholarship to a student participating in the Aachen High School exchange. Additionally, revenues increased relative to prior years, in part due to the collection of program fees for the Aachen school exchanges and corporate sponsorship. ASCA's primary expenses are for the part-time Executive Director and funding of Sister City Committee activities.

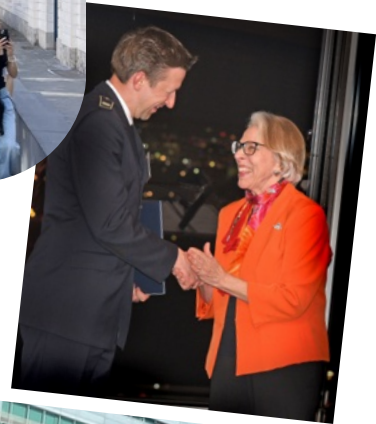
ASCA is firmly rooted in its mission to build global connections and its 30-year history exemplifies this commitment. ASCA's programming efforts will continue to build upon this history; and, with the help of its dedicated volunteers together with the Executive Director, anticipates staying financial strong for FY2025-2026 and beyond.

ASCA in Photos...



ASCA in Photos...

-- continued



Arlington Sister City Association

2024-2025 Annual Report *and* 2025-2026 Work Plan



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