

Sister Cities

Sister Cities Association of Salisbury/Wicomico County

THE TOTAL TARTU EXPERIENCE

By Brittany Crispino

I had the pleasure of interviewing (via email) two students, Arielle Champagne and Cory Hutchins, who are studying in Tartu, Estonia. I'll be honest and say I had never heard of Tartu before working with Sister Cities. After hearing about their time there and seeing their pictures, it is one of the next places I would love to visit!

Both students have been there around six weeks, and have had wonderful experiences so far. Arielle and Cory also mentioned how friendly the locals and other international students have been towards them.

Arielle explained, "All my suitemates are friendly and welcoming; they even presented me with a cake and card for my birthday!"

Cory thought it helped with the culture shock. "I believe the friendliness and helpfulness of the Estonian people make the transition all the more easy."

When I asked Arielle about the culture, she had seen a lot in her short time there! Visits to various museums, art galleries, and the University of Tartu's Botanical Garden have enriched her with

Estonia's culture and lifestyle. She has seen many historical buildings and places that are marked with metal plaques, as well. Above is a picture of plaques on the base of a fountain located downtown. They are Tartu's Sister Cities, including Salisbury!

A normal day for them isn't too far off from being at school here. They get up early for class, do their schoolwork and study, then make plans to go out with friends. The school has created a social program for the International students with fun events for them to get familiar with the city and other students. "I guess some things about college are the same everywhere," Cory added.

Arielle and Cory shared the "unofficial rules" with me to becoming a student at the University of Tartu. There is a bridge that crosses the Emajogi River and you need to walk across



(Photo Credit: Arielle Champagne, <http://relinestonia.blogspot.com/>)

the top of the archway, instead of the actual walkway. They both made their Estonian student status "unofficially official" and walked across the top. Cory also mentioned the other rule was to swim in the fountain in the town square, which he has done as well.

I had to ask the most important question of all, how was the food?! Both students thought the food was very good. When it came to buying food, they explained it was generally the same type of food. Arielle found a lot of desserts that were flavored cream cheese treats. Cory did warn us about buying meat, though. "Buying food however, can be a terrify-

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Students' experiences in Tartu
- Visit to Salisbury, UK and Estonia
- Reflection George Whitehead's Time as Chairman
- Fun Facts

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(Photo Credit: Cory Hutchins)

ing experience if you don't know the language. Good luck trying to figure out what kind of meat you are buying."

It was amazing to hear about the wonderful experiences they have had so far. It's nice to read first-hand stories from the students who are benefiting from these Sister Cities relationships!

OUR TRAVELS WITH GEORGE

By Marion Keenan

At our November meeting, George Whitehead noted his chairmanship since December 2007 and suggested that it was time for new leadership. With gratitude to George for his leadership and as Sister Cities' new Chairman, I'd like to reflect upon where George's endeavors have taken us.

Not surprisingly, **Salisbury, England** is our original "Sister." Located in the southeastern area of Wiltshire and not far from Stonehenge, Salisbury was once called "New Sarum." Romans occupied the area. An older settlement, "Old Sarum," dates from the Neolithic period. Salisbury's stunningly beautiful Cathedral was built between 1075 and 1092.

In recent decades, we've had many exchanges between our Mayors, our Ro-

tary Clubs, and by our respective Sister Cities representatives.

Tartu, Estonia was our second "Sister." Our area's two universities foster international exchanges. For example, Salisbury University hosts students from Estonia and Salisbury students study in Tartu. Its university is renowned for its excellence in Cyber-Security studies.

Dalian, China is our "Friendship" City. Quite a few Chinese students study in our area. At Salisbury's most recent Third Friday event, several performed Chinese dance, song, and poetry readings. Thanks to Board members Hong Yao and Derek Wu for keeping our friendship with Dalian vibrant.

Currently, we are exploring a Sister relationship on a third continent. Many of our local citizens are of Latin-American heritage and we

have been examining a potential "Sister" there. Stay tuned!

Thanks to this semester's SU intern Brittany Crispino and to next semester's intern, Stefany Ruiz. And thank you, George, for taking us around the globe.

SALISBURY, UK

I only got in on the wrong side of the car once. It was a taxi and we were headed to the mayor elect's house for a BBQ dinner. Let me back up a bit. In February, Sister Cities received an email from City Clerk Reg Williams, of the City of Salisbury, England, notifying us of their annual Mayor-Making, to be held in May, and inviting Salisbury, Maryland to send a delegation to this prestigious

event. My lovely wife, Lydia, couldn't go, but encouraged me to accept the invitation.

I flew out of our Salisbury, late afternoon, on Tuesday, May 14, via Philadelphia, and into London's Heathrow Airport, mid-morning, on Wednesday, May 15. Annie, my designated driver loaded me into the left hand seat of her car and we drove, in a light English rain, for two hours to Salisbury, England. You know you're getting close when you can see the spires of Salisbury Cathedral, the tallest spires in all of England. Annie dropped me at the White Hart Hotel, my residence for the rest of my visit.

Thursday morning, I walked the few blocks north to the Guildhall, the seat of city government. Dating from medieval times, the current building was built in 1795, the fourth building on the site. I chatted with Reg Williams and had a tour of the Guildhall. Upon returning to the hotel, I met Henry and Karen Alexander, of Salisbury, North Carolina. The evening was an enjoyable dinner as guests of Penny at the Haunch of Venison, my first pub of the visit, established 1320.

Friday morning, Mayor-Elect Penny took the 3 American Salisburians out in the country. With the aid of a hand-held audio guide, we circled the ancient ruins of Stonehenge in silence. The public is kept from the stones by a single rope, while another rope, a few yards further out from the stones, kept the flocks of sheep safe from us as well.

Where was I? Back at the hotel: After exiting the driver's

seat of the taxi and taking my rightful place on the left side, we Americans joined delegations from twinning cities Xanten, Germany and Saintes, France and Penny's family members from Ireland, at the home of the Mayor Elect and her husband, Derek Brown OBE, also a city councillor.

Saturday morning, I walked back to the Guildhall to find all of the City Councillors and officials in their ceremonial robes and uniforms. Reg gave us directions and we processed, in a parade, led by a band, through the streets of Salisbury from the Guildhall a few blocks to the church of St. Thomas Beckett (established 1220). With no separation of church and state here, Councillor Penny Brown became the 753rd Mayor of the City of Salisbury. The festivities continued through Saturday evening and into Sunday with another church service to celebrate her election.

Monday, the 20th, I returned to Heathrow Airport. Salisbury, Maryland, has had a relationship with Salisbury, England since the 1930's. For us, that's a long time. For our friends in our Sister City of Salisbury, England, that's like yesterday.



Tom Welsh with Mayor Penny Brown of Salisbury, England

A VISIT TO ESTONIA

*By Barrie Tilghman
Mayor of Salisbury, MD 1998 -
2009*

In early 1999, the Maryland National Guard invited me to join them on a diplomatic trip to Estonia. Mayor Dean Johnson of Annapolis and I were invited to explore potential Sister City relationships with Tallinn and Tartu, Estonia.

Departing from Andrews Air Force Base in May 1999, our delegation led by Lt. Governor Kathleen Kennedy-Townsend was composed of elected and appointed officials and Maryland educators representing colleges and universities across the State. Estonia is comparable in size to Maryland and the mission's goal was to explore ways to assist the new democratic republic, emerging after over fifty years as a part of the former Soviet Union. Distance learning and economic development opportunities were among the topics for discussion.

Travelling with the National Guard was far different than normal commercial travel. After stops in Newfoundland for a late evening dessert

break and Iceland for an early morning light breakfast, we were treated to a reception at the airport in Tallinn. We did not have to go through customs, and our luggage was delivered to our luxurious hotel suites. Thus began three exciting days of almost twenty hours each day of Baltic Spring daylight.

Among the highlights was dinner at our ambassador's home, a ceremony in Tallinn, establishing a relationship between Annapolis and the Estonian capital city. By far the most intriguing was a cocktail reception with Estonian military officers who until recently had been Soviet officers. Tallinn is beautiful, and reminded me of Prague. The people were gracious. We were humbled by their command of multiple languages, including English.

As we travelled two hours to Tartu, I could have been in eastern Wicomico County, but the architecture reminded me we were very far from home. Larger than Salisbury, Tartu celebrates the university's presence with a fountain in the City Square of the "Kissing Students." We had a ceremony in the City Council Chambers establishing our intention to establish a cooperative relationship.

We toured the City with the mayor, visiting a thousand year old cathedral they were restoring. During the "Soviet Occupation," Tartu was off limits to visitors due to its close proximity to a sensitive Soviet military base and the citizens were clearly enjoying the new era.

Tartu has since become a sister city to Salisbury. Students

from Salisbury University have visited Estonia. I was pleased to host Mayor Ansip and his family on a tour of the City, including lunch and a stop at the Salisbury Zoo. After Mayor Ansip became Estonia's prime minister, his successor travelled to Salisbury twice.

Once during a farewell dinner for our guests from Estonia at Poplar Hill Mansion, I explained to the Mayor how fire had almost destroyed Salisbury twice. She looked at me and said simply, "better that is was not war." Such different histories have brought two cities together in the 21st century. It is exciting to think that the initiative begun almost fifteen years ago continues to bear fruit for two cities with such different pasts, but now with such strong ties and common interests.

LOOKING BACKWARD & MOVING FORWARD

By George Whitehead

At the December 6, 2007 meeting of the Board of Sister Cities of Salisbury/Wicomico County, I followed Greg Olinde as the Chair. At the December 3,

2013 meeting Marion Keenan became the Chair. I am pleased that she is moving up from the position of Vice Chair.

I would like to reflect briefly on the community outreach of this organization over the past six years. This outreach occurred through the efforts of our SU practicum students, Board Members, and collaboration with other organizations.

We now have a newsletter. Welcome to the third issue! We also have a website. Thanks to Tom Welsh for maintaining it.

We have a presence at 3rd Friday in the City of Salisbury. Most recently Brittany Crispino, our fall semester practicum student, worked with Therese Hamilton, to present "Arts Light Up the World."

This was a collaborative effort of Salisbury Wicomico Arts Council (SWAC), Sister Cities, and SU Gallery. Our collaboration with SWAC and SU also led to the September 11, 2010 "Singing to My Sister" event.

DID YOU KNOW ...

The Salisbury Cathedral is the tallest medieval structure in Great Britain, and you can climb to the top of its tower!



When did Salisbury and Tartu declare their friendship?

A. 1999 B. 2002 C. 2005 D. 2009

See page 6 for answer.

We collaborated with the Wicomico Board of Education to sponsor a multicultural education conference, "Celebrating the Beauty of Diversity: Eliminating the Achievement Gaps."

We continue to collaborate with the City of Salisbury. The collaboration began during Mayor Barrie Tilghman's term of office. Yearly we provide the SU International Students an opportunity to meet and talk with the Mayor. Students over the last several years have enjoyed their opportunity to meet Mayor Ireton and visit the council chambers.

Most recently we collaborated with Salisbury's Promise Alliance at their Gimme 5 events for Make A Difference Day.

We have hosted visitors from our sister city of Salisbury, England. Last summer, Tom Welsh visited Salisbury, England for Mayor Making. Several Board members have participated in Maryland Estonia Exchange Council and attended the Inaugural Maryland Sister States Program International Gala Awards.

We have met a number of dignitaries from Estonia, including the Ambassador. We have tried to increase the number of Salisbury's sister cities to reflect the diversity of our community. As a result, Dalian, China is now a friendship city. Brian Stiegler is exploring a

sister city relation with Cuenca, Ecuador.

Successes always occur with challenges. Our committee structure has not worked well. Therefore, some of our initiatives are stalled. We appreciate the financial support we have received but need to increase our fund raising efforts. We also need more Board Members.

As we continue to expand our presence in the community, I would like to see some public recognition of our sister cities, perhaps as a part of the revitalization of the City of Salisbury.



Signs in Salisbury, UK

MOVING FORWARD

By Brittany Crispino

I was fortunate enough to sit down and interview Jake Day, City Council President, to hear his thoughts on Sister Cities. We both agreed Salisbury doesn't have any type of formal representation of the Sister Cities Association, or our actual Sister Cities.

When I asked why that was, his response was cost. "Sister Cities needs to bring people in to do fundraising and show the community what benefits Sister Cities has to offer."

Jake and I agreed if Salisbury saw what they could benefit from these relationships, like business and education, it could help bring more recognition within the town.

Before coming to the interview, I printed Arielle Champagne's photo of the Salisbury, MD plaque in Tartu, Estonia to show Jake. He hadn't seen it before, which was a good time to segue into my next question; "What could we do to advocate plaques like that to show appreciation for our relationship with our Sister Cities?"

He said going to talk to civic leaders to get ideas should be the first step, so we are off to a good start. Coming up with a well-thought out plan would be the next step. Jake added that finding a graphic designer to come up with a mock plaque would help support the plan. "Even if there was some money already fundraised for it when the plan is presented, it will help

push it along more.”

A good direction to go in for fundraising would be to host a ribbon-cutting event to reveal the plaques, maybe with a new “formalized relationship”. Jake suggested that having a post large enough to add more signs would show the town what we already have and what we expect to add. We could take this opportunity to explain the benefits of Sister Cities with the town. He came up with the idea of having an International Themed 3rd Friday, which would be a great way to get the information out there.

While I was working at the Make a Difference Day for Sister Cities, I met a woman from Columbia, MD who listed a variety of Sister Cities partnerships that they had. I shared some of those cities with Jake, and asked who he thought we should work on adding to our list. He listed off a few that he thinks would be a benefit for us to have like: Bosnia, Australia, South Korea, Japan, Germany, Armenia, and the United Arab Emirates. Jake supported those ideas with the fact that South West Asia and the Middle East are in the middle of an economic growth. We could really benefit by learning from them and their ideas.

I think this puts the Sister Cities Association on the right track to expanding their already successful program. Jake was very optimistic about the future of Sister Cities and the path that will lead us there. All in all, community support will be what helps us get to where we want to be.

Cultural & Educational Exchanges

By Carole Anne Champagne

During the past year, our Sister Cities and Sister States ties have been strengthened through several regional events in partnership with our Estonian friends. In 2012 three events were held in Annapolis under the auspices of the Office of Maryland Secretary of State and Maryland International Consortium/Maryland Sister States.

Board members met in Annapolis with our friends from the Maryland Estonia Exchange Council on February 4, 2013. We partook of high tea at the Reynolds Tavern before joining other Sister States members in a meet and greet reception at the Maryland Inn. Multimedia and poster presentations also updated visitors on international agreements from participating member states exhibiting new initiatives and ongoing partnerships. Secretary of State John P. McDonough introduced Anna Yankova, the new Director of International Affairs.

On February 28 I joined Dean Karen Olmstead of the Salisbury University Henson School of Science and Technology to welcome the Estonian National Guard Brigadier General and delegation from the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defense Center of Excellence. Henson School faculty members discussed plans for finalizing curriculum components of the Cyber Security degree program in partnership with Tallinn Technical University and the University of Tartu.



The inaugural exchange semester program that began this August has generated interest in the Henson School, so enrollment is expected to increase in 2014.

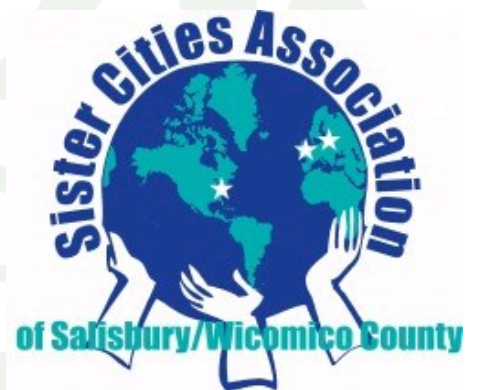
On May 11, I participated in the annual European Union Open House. Embassies open their doors to the public. Bulgaria recently joined the EU. Latvia will become the newest member state on January 1, 2014. This year I visited the Embassy of Estonia. My visit was especially memorable because our Estonian hosts demonstrated talents as inspirational educators as well as welcoming friends. The formal dining room was converted into a make-shift classroom in which streaming videos about historical, biological, and environmental highlights of the country were projected. Estonian student teachers graded my quiz responses after the multimedia presentation, then entered it a raffle. Two winners received vacations to Estonia. Unfortunately, my quiz was not selected, but the game was fun as well as educational.

Other rooms were staffed by hosts in colorful traditional dress at tables offering tourist information, musical selections, and delicious fruit cake and pastry

samples. Several volunteer students invited me to an Estonian concert to be held at George Washington University the following week. If I lived near Washington, I would partake in the concert as well as embassy sponsored events throughout the year! I hope to have the opportunity to thank faculty and administrators at the University of Tartu for providing my daughter with an authentic international education. We will visit the Tallinn Christmas Markets and attend the Holiday Music Festival. Reflecting upon all the wonderful Estonian friends whom I have met over the past two years, I am certain that my first visit to Estonia will be among the most memorable experiences of my lifetime!



Photo before the Maryland International Consortium inaugural assembly meeting



Sister Cities of Salisbury/Wicomico County

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Visit us at <http://www.salisburysistercities.org/>

Sister Cities

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