

# Sister Cities of Columbia, IL Newsletter

## Volume XXII Issue 3 Summer 2013

### May 2013 Visit Report

“The hospitality and friendliness of the people were overwhelming”! stated Mayor of Gedern Klaus Bechtold, Miss Vulcania Jennifer Klehm and Gedern Sister Cities President Uwe Bergheimer in an interview with their local newspaper, Kreis-Anzeiger, upon their return home. “We felt right at home!” reported Uwe Bergheimer. The twenty-year partnership between Gedern and Columbia was celebrated with the official visit of 45 guests from Gedern to Columbia for ten days beginning on May 10. “I had a terrific fear of flying,” revealed Mayor Bechtold, “but I put that aside by convincing myself I was on a coach bus and not in an airplane, and I was amazed how pleasant the flight was without any turbulence.” Upon arrival at the St. Louis airport, the guests immediately boarded a coach bus and made their way to Columbia. At the outskirts of town, they were greeted by the flashing lights and sirens of the CVFD fire truck who gave them an official escort into town. They soon arrived at the American Legion Hall where the Welcome Reception was held. Guests and hosts were thrilled to see each other...some were long-time friends, others were here for their first visit or hosting for their first time...all were eager to be a part of this special visit! Mayor Kevin Hutchinson and Sister Cities President Ingrid Soraghan welcomed the group officially. Each guest received a t-shirt with the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary logo as a

momento of their visit. Guests soon retired to their hosts' homes to get some rest after their long travels.

The next morning started off with a unique American experience for the guests and hosts when they had to catch their own pancakes for breakfast as it came hot off the griddle. Visitors then took a guided Walk down Main Street, finding their personal Welcome Signs in local businesses and learning about our community. A tour of City Hall by Mayor Hutchinson also included the Council chambers. Gedern Mayor Klaus Bechtold beamed with obvious delight when he sat in the mayor's chair and tried out the gavel – after all, he was soon to be proclaimed honorary mayor! The group soon continued on their way through town, exploring our Columbia Public Library with its special Sister City display and stopping at the Memorial Fountain in Metter Park to be greeted and welcomed with a uniquely American spirit – the Jello-Shot (in patriotic colors, no less!). The City Walk ended with a special tour of the Fire Department facilities by Don Sutter.

Guests and hosts thoroughly enjoyed the evening Welcome Dinner/Dance with its special theme of “the County Fair”. The event was opened with a Welcome Greeting and ribbon (deemed a Ribbon of Friendship) cutting by Miss Vulcania Jennifer Klehm and Miss Monroe County Fair Queen 2012 Jana Steibel and Little Miss Emma Day. Everyone tried their hand at one of the

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many fair games, had their photo taken in blue jean overalls and straw hats, requested a sculpture by the amazing balloon man or danced to the tunes of K and J Music. Brief remarks of greeting by Mayor Hutchinson, Mayor Bechtold, Uwe Bergheimer and Ingrid Soraghan were made. Mayor Hutchinson presented two certified Proclamations honoring the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of our Sister City relationship with Gedern and appointing Klaus Bechtold, Mayor of Gedern, as honorary Mayor of Columbia. Josephine Wittenauer, Columbia Sister City member and also Southern Illinois State Coordinator, presented Gedern and Columbia each with a special certificate of recognition from Sister Cities International in honor of our 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. The certificate "...commends the efforts of both communities in the pursuit of peace, mutual respect, and understanding through citizen diplomacy." All guests attending this evening received two special items commemorating the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of our partnership: a custom-designed commemorative medallion coin and a commemorative booklet providing a brief history and an overview in pictures and words of our partnership these past 20 years.

Sunday, May 12, was Mother's Day, a free day during which guests could enjoy family time with their hosts.

On Monday, guests had a daytime group shopping trip to West County Mall.

Later, guests and hosts enjoyed a special evening at Rock City with a guided tour by Joe Koppeis of the facilities and a chance to view the river valley from the bluffs (one of Monroe County's treasures!). Scrumptious appetizers and cold refreshments were enjoyed by all!

Tuesday, May 14 was a free day, allowing guests and hosts to plan their own sightseeing time. Many enjoyed pursuing personal interests, visiting new sights or relaxing at home with friends.

On Wed. May 15, many in the group went on the 2-day optional trip to Louisville, Kentucky. Bourbon, bats and horses were the overriding theme as the group members toured a distillery, visited a working bat factory and placed a bet at Churchill Downs. Guests who remained in Columbia participated in a wonderful Tour of The Hill - from watching the cooks make ravioli, to touring St. Ambrose, learning to play bocce, viewing a chocolate - making demonstration and then having lunch at one of the great restaurants on The Hill!

On Friday, May 17, the group went to historic St. Charles, visiting many of the boutique shops and having lunch there. In the evening, all enjoyed the BBQ at Herbeck's Lake. The outdoor atmosphere, wonderful weather and good food and drink was the back drop to an evening that was just delightful! Friends, as we all have become, just thoroughly enjoyed talking and visiting with one another!

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On Sat. May 18, the much-anticipated 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration had finally arrived! A full house of guests was present at Turner Hall. After a delicious dinner, official remarks were made and official gifts were exchanged. Mayor Hutchinson, standing on a chair to show the official banner's full length, proudly displayed this wonderful 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary gift from Gedern. Congratulations and a continued strong relationship of mutual respect and friendship between our two cities, its leaders and its citizens were the wishes expressed for the future! After the formal program, guests were warmly welcomed by the MC/leader of Smash Band and invited to join in the fun and dance to their spirited and lively music! Miss Vulcania was delighted to be serenaded with a special tune just for her by the talented violinist! When the mayor's dance was announced, Klaus Bechtold was surprised to see a dozen or so women waiting in line to dance with him, despite him claiming, with a grin, to be an ardent non-dancer. The talented musicians of the Smash Band were the perfect musical party hosts that kept toes tapping and feet dancing well into the night!

The next morning, Sunday, May 19, guests and hosts gathered at the City Hall fountain to commemorate the 20-year friendship with a special tree-planting ceremony on the grounds of City Hall. They made their way first to see the redbud tree

planted twenty years ago during the visit in May 1993 when the relationship was first formalized. All then proceeded to the site where the new tree, also a hardy redbud, was planted.

Soon thereafter, a joint board meeting was held at City Hall. Good communication and collaborative efforts by members of both boards are a strong component of the success of our partnership. Discussions were held and tentative plans were made for Columbia's official visit to Gedern in the spring of 2015.

Guests and hosts spent their final afternoon together at the Farewell Picnic at the Quail Club. The next morning, after long hugs and heartfelt good-byes, the guests left for the airport in the coach bus and began their journey back home to Gedern. Two years is not that far away as all look forward to a "Wiedersehen" in Gedern in 2015!

### **All Hosts for the May 2013 Visit**

We continuously strive to improve each visit and would like your feedback on what you think went well and what you think we could improve upon. Many hosts mentioned interesting and varied outings during free times with their guests. We'd love to share some of these stories with our members in a future newsletter! Also, if you are planning to join the official trip to Gedern in 2015, we would like your

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feedback on some proposed dates. Please complete the attached "We Want to Know" survey and return it by Aug.14 to Ingrid Soraghan. We will take your comments into consideration when planning the 2015 trip to Gedern and planning the events for the 2017 trip from Gedern to Columbia.

### Thank you to all!

This recent visit owes its success to many whom we would like to thank:

- Sister City board members for the year-long planning and organizing of events and activities.
- Host families (day hosts, too) for opening your homes and hearts to our guests.
- Committee members who helped plan, prepare, set up and clean up each event.
- Mayor Kevin Hutchinson and the City of Columbia for their wonderful support.
- Columbia businesses for posting the Welcome signs in their windows.
- Carol Waide for distributing all the Welcome signs.
- Don Sutter and the Columbia Volunteer Fire Dept. for the welcome escort & tour.
- Tom Korte and Cindy Straub for developing the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary logo, implementing its use fully, and designing the commemorative medallion coin.
- Cristin Callis for her graphic arts expertise on the Commemorative Booklet.
- Gillan Graphics in producing a fine quality Welcome banner & printing t-shirts.
- Market Place and Columbia Market for their support.
- Conrad Press for the printing of the Commemorative Booklet.
- The Independent, Waterloo Republic-Times and Belleville News-Democrat for fine media coverage of our visit.
- American Legion Hall and its volunteer staff for 2 wonderful evenings.
- Kenny Schmidt & Bonnie Straub at Turner's - great 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary event!
- Quail Club and its staff - Farewell Picnic.
- Curtis Jewelers - fine engraving on gifts
- Herbeck family, Joe Menner, & their family and friends for hosting the BBQ at Herbeck's Lake.
- Linda & Bob Schrepel - turning early videos into DVDs that are long-lasting.
- DJs Kelly & Joe Dobronski - providing the music at our Welcome Dinner/Dance gratis.
- Jana Steibel - Miss Monroe County Fair Queen 2012 and Emma Day, Little Miss - helping "open" our official visit on May 11.
- Mike Raeber for building our booths and photo area for the Welcome/County Fair.
- City of Columbia for donating the redbud tree to honor the 20<sup>th</sup> year of Partnership.
- Joe Koppeis for the "Evening at and personal tour" of Rock City.
- Dennis Gruchala & his committee for cooking the food for our Farewell Picnic.
- Charlie Kutterer - providing the music at Herbeck's.
- Don Voelker -donating his stein collection as prizes at the Welcome/County Fair.

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- Helen Stanley - single-handedly making ALL the Welcome Jello Shots & being Ingrid's "go-to-gal" during the entire visit.
- CUSD#4 for the use of their school buses and bus drivers for donating their time.
- Local businesses for their merchandise donations for use as prizes in Fair games: Columbia National Bank, D & D Distributing Services, Inc., Dairy Queen, First National Bank of Waterloo, McDonald's, Tammy Mitchell-Hines & Co., and Tiny's.
- Members and friends who attended our Welcome Dinner/Dance & 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration Event.
- Contributing authors to the Commemorative Booklet: Uwe Bergheimer, Klaus Bechtold, Kevin Hutchinson, Maic Neunert, Marko Fidorski, Andreas Heuser, Dennis Patton, Jordan Conrad, Barbara Gundlach, Jochen Bergheimer, Marius Heuser, Don Gleiber, Linda Schrepel and Ingrid Soraghan.

We especially want to thank each and every one of our 45 guests from Gedern for making the long overseas trip to Columbia to celebrate this 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary together with us. Their being here with us will make this official visit a special memory for us all! Many thanks also to Gedern Sister Cities President Uwe Bergheimer and Board members for organizing the trip. We also want to thank Mayor Klaus Bechtold and Miss Vulcania Jennifer Klehm for coming as official representatives of Gedern and

extending such warm greetings at our events! We hope you come again!

### New Board Member

Due to his work conflicts, Board member Dan Duffy stepped down from the Board in Feb. 2013. Thank you, Dan, for the many years of committed involvement and active service on the Board! We are pleased to report that Chris Neumann has joined the Board, effective July 18, 2013. We warmly welcome Chris and look forward to having him as part of our Board of Directors!

### New Lifetime Members

We are pleased to report that some of our members have elected to become lifetime members! Thank you to Terry and Brenda Schramm. We also welcome new lifetime members: Mary Ellen and Jay Huetsch. We appreciate your dedicated support of Sister Cities!

### Columbia Daze...Fundraisers

We were recently notified by the sponsors of Columbia Daze, the Turners, that Sister Cities will not be able to have a stand at the Columbia Daze festival in August to sell our popular German beer and other spirits. Their insurance audit does not allow for us to sell alcohol now. Thanks to those of you who had already volunteered to work at our stand! At this point we have no fundraisers planned for the remainder of the year. We would welcome any ideas and suggestions that our members have to raise funds for our organization!

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### Upcoming Events

- Tues. Aug. 13 – Stammtisch at Tequila's –  
6:30 p.m.
- Tues. Sept. 10 – Stammtisch at Reifschneiders  
6:30 p.m.
- Thurs. Oct. 17 – Fall Membership Dinner  
Meeting at Waterloo Country Club.  
(Reservations needed.)
- Sun. Nov. 10 – Stemler Trail Walk w/ wine &  
cheese at Metter Park afterwards, 1:00 p.m.
- Tues. Nov. 12 – Stammtisch at Bully's  
Smokehouse – 6:30 p.m.
- Tues. Dec. 10 – Christmas Party – 7:00 p.m.  
More info in the next newsletter.

### Web Site

Check us out online:

[www.columbiasistercities.com](http://www.columbiasistercities.com) We will be  
updating our web site soon!

Follow us and post comments on Facebook:  
[www.facebook.com/columbiasistercities](http://www.facebook.com/columbiasistercities).

### Affiliations

Sister Cities of Columbia, IL is a member of  
Sister Cities International and Illinois Sister  
Cities Association.

### Newsletter Committee

Our Newsletter Committee: Barb Miller,  
Tom and Ingrid Soraghan. Questions and  
comments are welcome! Please contact  
Ingrid at [jrbill1@htc.net](mailto:jrbill1@htc.net) or phone/fax at  
618-281-7864. ***Please send us your e-mail  
address so we can send updates and  
reminders via e-mail.***



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