

Sister Cities of Durham

Annual Report July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026

The annual report shares the impact of your financial support and the dedication of our membership, partners, volunteers, and City and Board Committee members.

The Board of Sister Cities thanks you for achieving another successful year of providing engaging programs, and visits between Durham and our Sister Cities. Together we are building mutual respect and understanding for a more peaceful world.

We are especially grateful to you for supporting Durham youth with scholarships for travel to our Sister

Cities; participation in Sister Cities International's Youth Leadership Summit, and in the SCI Young Artists and Authors Showcase.

With new teen and adult leadership, there will be more opportunities to share your passion for building cultural understanding among the youth of Durham.

Please enjoy reflecting with us over the highlights of the past year. We are excited to partner with you again; it seems our mission of building friendships, collaborating around shared challenges and celebrating diversity, is as relevant as ever.

Zhuzhou, China Annual Report

Over the past year, the Zhuzhou Committee has continued to strengthen the bond between Durham and our sister city, Zhuzhou, through a range of meaningful cultural and educational exchanges.

- **Dragon Dance in Durham Christmas Parade**

For the fourth time, we incorporated a dragon dance group into the Durham Holiday Parade. The performance was a big hit and drew enthusiastic responses from the community, showcasing our vibrant cultural traditions.

- **Chinese Calligraph Lecture at Durham Library on March 14, 2026**

The committee collaborated with the Durham Public Library's Adult Program to host a lecture, The Pictographic Origins of Chinese Characters, offering participants an engaging exploration of the 3,000-year evolution of Chinese writing from early pictographs to modern scripts. Through an interactive, hands-on pictographic calligraphy activity, attendees also learned about the principles behind the formation of simple and compound Chinese characters. The program was well attended and generated enthusiastic interest in Chinese language, history, and cultural perspectives.

- **High School Student Trip to Zhuzhou**

In partnership with the Thousand Mile Initiative and the Zhuzhou Foreign Affairs Office, the committee helped organize another high school student exchange to Zhuzhou this summer. Fourteen students from the Research Triangle Park (RTP) area, including five students from Durham, visited Zhuzhou No. 2 High School, where they taught, engaged with local students, and proudly represented Durham. Their experiences provided a meaningful opportunity for cultural exchange and strengthened connections between students and communities in both cities. Learn more at ThousandMile.org

After leaving Zhuzhou, the Durham students and their chaperone also visited Kunshan, our other Sister City in China. With the generous support and hospitality of the Kunshan Foreign Affairs Office, the delegation enjoyed a wonderful two-day visit and gained a deeper appreciation of Durham's sister-city relationship with Kunshan.

The committee also co-hosted a reunion event with the Thousand Mile Initiative in August for students and families who participated in the high school teaching exchange. The gathering provided a wonderful opportunity for participants to reconnect, reflect on their experiences in Zhuzhou, and share the lasting impact of the trip on the students, their families, and the broader community.



Students enjoying *Tianmen Mountain National Forest Park* in Zhangjiajie, Hunan Province

Toyama Enthusiasts Annual Report: (16 members strong)

- **Taiko Drumming Performances (October and January)**

The Toyama Enthusiasts welcomed the Peaceful Forest taiko drumming family (internationally acclaimed Takumi Kato, his wife and three sons) to Durham from Gifu, Japan for performances at the Forest at Duke, Croasdaile Village and the home of TCFL host family Laurie, Matt and Cora Williamson in October and Carolina Meadows Retirement Community in January.

SCD Member Yuki Temma and former SCD Board Member Celeste Holtzmann hosted them at the Durham County Library in January, followed by a Japanese dinner at Kinya Ramen, hosted by the Toyama Enthusiasts.

Peaceful Forest has the goal of making 1000 performances in all 50 states in five years in the name of international peace and harmony. They are well on their way to their goal! Arrangements made through the Japan America Society of NC while the Katos were here to go to a public appearance of the Buddhist Monks who walked through the Triangle in the name of peace at a Wake County High School in January.



Tom and Polly Harris at the TSFL graduation ceremony

- **JapanFest Discussions (ongoing March -present)**

A Triangle group has formed to host a JapanFest at the DAP on October 2, 2027 and has invited the Toyama Enthusiasts to participate. Peaceful Forest will perform.

- **Durham HS Visit to Toyama (June meeting to discuss)**

A subcommittee of the Enthusiasts formed to begin exploring how to send 15 HS students to Toyama in 2028. Participants include: a former student chaperone to Toyama, a teacher from RT HS who has chaperoned students to Japan in the past and wants to go again, a student who travelled to Toyama on our 2019 exchange and a parent whose child went to Kavala on a SCD visit.

- **Hajimari Project: US -Japan Sister Cities Stories of Origin**

Publication received in July from SCI, containing the story of how Toyama and Durham came to be Sister Cities, as told by Dot Borden, an SCD Founder, to Chris Boyer.

- **Exchanges to Toyama/Toyama College of Foreign Languages**

Four families (total of nine people) made trips over the spring and summer to Toyama. Most of them also visited TCFL with one family attending the student's graduation. The purpose was to reconnect TCFL students they hosted in years past.

Brick of tobacco from Kavala, Greece



Kavala also has a tobacco museum

Kavala, Greece Annual Report (6 members)

In May, in partnership with the Duke Homestead and Tobacco museum, we set up a display for the public featuring the tobacco connections between Durham and Kavala.

In May, Durham celebrates Greek culture at Saint Barbara Greek Orthodox Church in Durham; many SCD members enjoy this event.

Planning in the Spring included sponsorships for Cristos and Vasilis Mantzouka who participated in a Greek Cultural trip to include a visit to Kavala.

Sibiu, Romania Annual Report

With a rich tradition in classical music, the committee once again partnered with Sibiu to host the Erich Bergel and Dorothy Kitchen Music competition. Dorothy Kitchen was a long time Director of the Duke Youth Orchestra.



Kunshan, China Report

The Kunshan City Committee had a busy year! We spoke at the NC Jiangsu Association's Midautumn Festival Gala event in September 2025, MC'ed the DCSSA Chinese New Year Gala at Duke University in February 2026, attended the April 2026 首届美东地区中国学生学者联合会 located in Brooklyn, New York, and hosted a 6-day person-to-person exchange of NC Young Entrepreneurs in conjunction with the Kunshan Foreign Affairs Office.

The 2026 Young Entrepreneurs trip to Kunshan, China, demonstrated how the sister-city relationship can move beyond traditional exchange and become a more practical platform for entrepreneurship and economic cooperation. The program combined company visits, industry-focused meetings, cultural activities, and direct engagement with Kunshan's innovation ecosystem, with several stops specifically tailored around the projects and interests of participating entrepreneurs. This made the experience valuable because participants were able to engage with companies, institutions, and sectors that directly related to what they were building.



Violet Evans L and James Long R, Co-Chairs



The trip also highlighted the complementary strengths of Kunshan and Durham, particularly Kunshan's manufacturing, engineering, supply chain, and commercialization capabilities alongside Durham's strengths in research, technology, life sciences, and early-stage innovation. On the final day, participants held a roundtable discussion focused on lessons from the trip and ways to strengthen the program next year. One of the clearest opportunities is to increase direct participation from the Chamber of Commerce, both in identifying strong applicants and in helping convert the relationships created during the trip into longer-term business connections. More broadly, the discussions surrounding this year's program can help lay the foundation for a SCD Economic Committee that would provide continuity between delegations, maintain relationships developed through sister-city exchanges, and create a more structured channel for connecting entrepreneurs, companies, universities, and economic-development organizations in Durham and its partner cities.

Sister Cities Durham UK Committee Annual Report

During the July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026 reporting period, the Durham UK Committee focused on strengthening the relationship between Durham, North Carolina and Durham, United Kingdom through relationship-building, community engagement, and the development of new opportunities for exchange and collaboration.

A key focus of the year was renewing direct connections with partners in Durham and County Durham, UK. A small delegation from Durham, North Carolina visited Durham, UK in fall 2025, helping to strengthen relationships and generate ideas for future collaboration. The committee continued building on those connections throughout the year through individual visits, professional introductions, and direct engagement with partners in County Durham.

The committee also broadened awareness of the Durham-to-Durham relationship through participation in a Sister Cities International virtual round table, which brought together approximately 45 participants from the United States and United Kingdom.

Locally, the committee expanded its community engagement through recurring “Two Durhams” Pub Nights, providing informal opportunities for residents, committee members, and supporters to connect and learn more about the sister-city relationship.

Several promising initiatives advanced during the year but remained in development as of June 30.



These included a proposed Veterans Exchange, potential Durham County Library programming, and opportunities to develop educational, university, faith-based, civic, cultural, heritage, and tourism partnerships between the two Durhams.

The committee concluded the year with a growing network of contacts and a strong pipeline of future opportunities. Priorities for 2026-27 and beyond include continuing the “Two Durhams” Pub Nights, developing reciprocal and digital programming, advancing the Veterans Exchange and other institutional partnerships, and exploring a potential group visit to Durham, UK in 2027.

Overall, 2025-26 was a year of rebuilding connections and creating a stronger foundation for sustained, substantive engagement between the two Durhams. The committee’s work combined international relationship-building with increased local participation, positioning the partnership for expanded programming and exchange in the years ahead.

Arusha, Tanzania Annual Report

The Sister Cities of Durham (SCD)–Arusha Committee consists of 10 active members dedicated to strengthening cultural, educational, and professional connections between Durham, North Carolina, and Arusha, Tanzania. We are 35 years old.

August 2025

- Ambassador Kanza was in North Carolina and visited UNCG, NCCU and had an official visit to Durham with Mayor Williams. Several SCD-Arusha Committee members attended

September 2025

- SCD-Arusha Committee had an information table at the Mama Africa event in Raleigh, Sunday, September 21st

October 2025

- Salma was awarded an ICMA scholarship to work with the City of Arusha Budget Dept and had a great exchange in Arusha for 5 days
- Beverly McLaughlin, Owner, Afrikikos Bistro, won the SCD Mayor's Award for partnering with SCD-Arusha Committee to host the Kiswahili Conversation Community Series for 2yrs



Ambassador Kanza at NCCU



Cosmas and Jennifer, Center at Saint Titus church

January 2026

Welcomed Cosmas and Jennifer Haule from Arusha to Durham which including meeting with Mayor Williams and visit to long-time partner Saint Titus Episcopal Church.

June 2026

SCDurham-Arusha Committee hosted a trip to Tanzania for Durham citizens Amara, a student who attended the SCD-Arusha Committee Saturday Hybrid Drone Academy in May 2025, went on the SCD-Arusha Committee Tanzania June 2026 Trip.

July 2026: Amara presented her experience and her meeting with the students she had a virtual exchange with during the SCD-Arusha Committee Saturday Hybrid Drone Academy in May 2025 by participating in the SCD-Arusha Committee Tanzania Trip.



Ronda Pierce, top left, Co-Chair of Arusha and Amara, center red stripe shirt - Drone Academy participants.

Celaya, Mexico Annual Report

In the Summer of 2025, Celaya Chair, Carolina Vera, DDS made another successful trip with dental students from UNC to Mexico providing free dental clinics, and educational opportunities. This program furthers the mission of Sister Cities by connecting communities through health, education, volunteerism, and cultural exchange.

A key feature of this program are the many partnerships including with Universidad Latina de México in Celaya. Engaging with other partners in Celaya increases awareness of the Durham–Celaya Sister Cities and Sister Cities of Durham relationship among universities, professionals, community leaders, governmental representatives, students, and volunteers.

This project is part of a larger initiative, the Inter-University Alliance for Global Oral Health, and encourages international cooperation between professionals and organizations from Mexico, the United States, Canada, and other participating networks. The project is creating a model that can continue growing beyond a single annual mission.

Most importantly, the clinics provide preventive and clinical oral healthcare to children and underserved populations.

Dr. Vera at providing dental health kits to children



Other programs and visits:

Welcomed visiting Dental Students from Celaya for a week of professional development, service and fun!

Held a Cinco De Mayo event in partnership at Que Chula in Chapel Hill and at the Glass Jug RTP in Durham. At both events, David and Victoria Garret (Carolina’s children) provided Mariachi music.

Hosted Adrian Guerreo Carracheo, Celaya City Councilman for a presentation through the Latino professional network on developing leadership tools; Mr Guerreo Carracheo is a Business Leadership Consultant.

Alma Renaya coordinated participation in the NC Museum of Natural Sciences’s **Día de la Ciencia y la Cultura** (Science and Culture Day).



Nancy and Andrea, Dental Students in Celaya with Dr. Vera visiting ECU School Dentistry. These students were instrumental in coordinating the Celaya clinics.

Sister Cities Organization-wide events

At our Annual Celebration the membership comes together to elect new at-large Board members, and to recognize both the Mayor’s Award for an individual and organization and the Dot Borden volunteer of the year.



Councilman Nate Baker with Arusha Committee Co-Chair, Ronda Pierce and Mayor’s Award Recipient Beverhly McLaughlin



Councilman Nate Baker and SCD President Nancy Cox with award recipient Brian Snyder



vice President Chris Boyer with Dot Borden Awardees, Tom Harris and Sue Mathias



Each year we enjoy marching in the Durham Holiday Parade - we welcome you to march with us in December 2026!

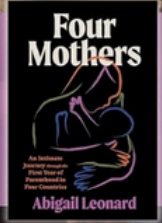
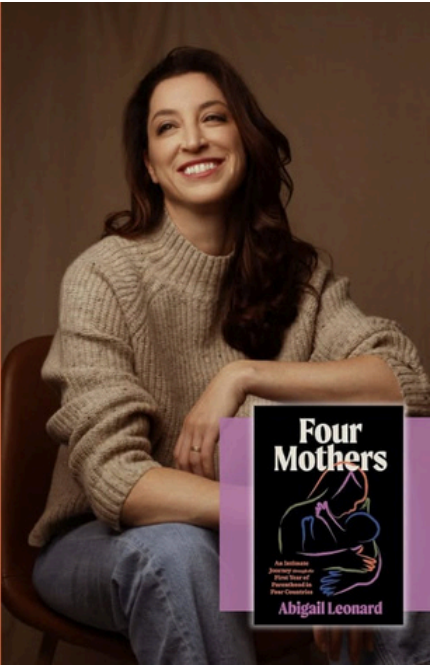
AUTHOR TALK
+ Resource Fair



Author Abigail Leonard in conversation with County Commissioner Michelle Burton.

March 7, 2026
1:30-2:30 p.m. > Author Talk
2:30-3:30 p.m. > Resource Fair and Book Signing
at Durham County Main Library Auditorium - 300 N. Roxboro St., Durham, NC 27701





This year we held our 2nd Annual International Women’s Day Event in partnership with the Durham County Library Humanities program, and with the Durham County Women’s Commission.

SCD Financials ending June 30, 2026 for FY 2025/6

Sample Income Sources:

- City of Durham - \$18,474
- Dot Borden Annual Gift - \$4265
- Donations - \$1670
- Dues - \$1295
- Interest - \$465
- Grant - \$44,444

Numbers are rounded

In FY 25/26 to our delight, a grant was made in honor of longtime member, Mark Goodwillie by the Joshua and Ravit Mandell Foundation in the amount of \$44,444.44! These funds are in our reserve account with plans to invest some portion for future use.

The City of Durham allotted \$18,500 to support our partnership in promoting our sister city relationships and cultural diversity in Durham.

Sample Expenses:

- SCI Membership Dues - \$1030
- Board Insurance - \$2626
- Accounting Expenses - \$5,131
- Social Media and Website - \$960
- Technology - \$397
- Office and Storage Unit - \$1632
- Program Support - \$8700
- Conferences - \$1219
- Recity Office Space - \$960
- City Committee Program and Visit Support - \$7,087

A successful Membership Drive welcomed new members.

SCD awarded \$1400 in youth travel scholarships.

Dot Borden, an SCD founder, created a fund through the Triangle Community Foundation - each year, SCD receives an interest payment. We invite you to consider creating a gift of this nature and are happy to provide support.

Sample Assets:

- General Fund - \$176,196
- Youth Scholarship - \$253
- Reserve - \$80,080



Li Ming's 黎明超市

GLOBAL MART

SCD Business Sponsors



THROUGH THIS LENS



Captain John's Dockside restaurant and Tiki Bar



Neomonde
Mediterranean
A New World of flavor.



QUE CHULA
♦ CRAFT TACOS & TEQUILA BAR ♦



Foster's
market



Mariakakis
Fine Food & Wine

Lowes
FOODS

Our 25/26 Board Members

Nancy Cox - President
Di Qin - Vice President
John Felheim - Secretary
Min Shu - Treasurer
Chris Boyer - Chair Toyama
Gwenn Bookman - co-Chair Arusha
Dot Borden - Lifetime Director
Violet Evans - co-Chair Kunshan
Mark Goodwillie - co-Chair Zhuzhou
Randy Griffin - Chair Kavala
Leslie Fischer - co-Chair Durham, UK
Zenani Fogg - Board member
Lusia Li - co-Chair Zhuzhou
James Long - co-Chair Kunshan
Eve Marion - co-Chair, Durham, UK
Susannah Ochalo - Board member
Ronda Pierce - co-Chair Arusha
Salma Rashid - Board member
Alma Reynaga - Board member
Mich Scurtu - Chair Sibiu
Patricia Sheppard - Board Member
Katie Vanhoy - co-Chair Kavala
Carolina Vera - Chair Celaya
Brady Surles - co-Chair Kavala
Celeste Holtzmann - Board member

Our City and Board Committees

Please join a committee

Arusha	Sibiu
Celaya	Tilaran
Durham	Toyama
Kavala	Zhuzhou
Kunshan	

- Economic Development
- Governance
- Finance
- New Sister City committee
- Youth Programs and Scholarships
- Technology
- Outreach and Engagement - *marketing, fundraising and membership*
- Peace Grove Team (*care for oak trees in Central Park and create programs*)
- Nominations
- International Women's Day Event
- Annual Meeting and Awards
- Holiday Parade

Become a member of Sister Cities, grab your annual passport membership today and help to spread peace in Durham and around the world through cultural understanding.

Memberships:

Individual \$20

Family \$35

Student \$10

Lifetime \$300



Toyama Students showing off gifts from their Host Families in Durham.

Send checks made payable to
Sister Cities of Durham
112 Broadway Street Suite B
Durham, NC 27701

www.sistercities-durham.com

