

## **Greater Savannah International Alliance (GSIA)**

### **Report of the Partner City Committee**

**February 26, 2022**

#### **New possibilities of partner city relationships for the City of Savannah**

- a. Cities of Dangriga and San Ignacio (Belize)** – at Mayor Johnson’s suggestion, the GSIA partner city committee has recently had conversations with The Honorable Shyne Barrow, Leader of the Opposition Party in the Belize House of Representatives. He has recommended that since Belize is a small country, the City of Savannah could focus on partnering with the cities of Dangriga and San Ignacio. Dangriga is the largest city in southern Belize and could be an important partner due to heavy influence of African heritage and culture of the Garifuna people. San Ignacio has a wonderful Latin culture that could match well with Savannah’s Hispanic culture.
- b. Kumasi or Cape Coast (Ghana)** – the partner city committee has been exploring the possibilities of developing a partnership with one of these two cities. According to Richard Shinhoster, Savannah would have sizeable group of ex-patriots from those cities already living in Savannah that would support such a partnership.
- c. A City in Burkina Faso** – our research into one of the cities has been put on hold due to the recent coup in that country. Perhaps later, Savannah can develop a partnership there.
- d. Possible partner city in Peru or Mexico** – our committee is at the beginning stages of locating a partnership in one or both of these countries. Savannah does have sufficient ex-patriots or residents with heritage from one of those countries that could support a partnership.

#### **Current Partner City Affiliations for the City of Savannah**

- a. Halle (Germany)** – Savannah has had about a 12-year partnership with this city that has a strong connection with the Salzburger after they were forced from Austria around 1730. The City of Savannah has had numerous exchanges sponsored by the Teutonic Council of Savannah and the Armstrong Campus of Georgia Southern. For example, in December, we hosted the Vice Mayor for Culture and Sports and the Director of Economic Development who also met with Mayor Johnson, City Manager Melder, and some of the T.C. members. Last week, the Teutonic Council arranged a Zoom meeting between the Fire Chiefs of Savannah and Halle to plan an exchange of fire personnel between Fire Departments of both cities. This exchange will begin on an annual basis beginning later this spring. Martin Luther University in Halle (MLU) has been sending exchange students to both the Armstrong and the Statesboro campuses in past few years. MLU currently has 3 pre-service teachers interning in several Savannah High Schools (February-April).
- b. Vaxjo (Sweden)** - Savannah also has a partnership with this city with the documents signed by former mayor, Otis Johnson. The primary exchanges in this partnership have been

carried out by Linnaeus University in Vaxjo and the Armstrong campus of Georgia Southern University. The exchanges have had students traveling to both campuses, several professor exchanges in the areas of health sciences, nurses, and economics, plus numerous video conferences between professors and students. We have just received new connections to the Lord Mayor's Office and are planning a Zoom Conference with the two mayors to begin resuming city to city exchanges.

- c. **Batumi (Republic of Georgia)** - This partnership agreement was signed in the early 1990's and we have several exchanges of city officials from Batumi coming to Savannah. In 1995-96, we received two grants from Sister-City International to have an exchange of a total of 60 Batumi and Savannah high school students plus 8 teachers who participated in a three-week art, music, and theatre program in the summers of 1995 and 1996 on the Armstrong State University Campus and in the City of Batumi. Due to the civil war in region around Batumi, our connections with the city were lost. After various inquiries, we have made new connections in the U.S. Embassy in the Republic of Georgia and at the Georgian Embassy in Washington, D.C. These officials working to get us new people to communicate with in Batumi.
- d. **Jiujiang (China)** – with the signing of this agreement with the City of Savannah, both Savannah State University and Armstrong State University signed exchange agreements with Jiujiang University, a school of over 50,000 students. Both Savannah universities had a series of two-way student exchanges but SSU took the lead role in sponsored a highly successful Confucius Institute on their campus that existed until the past couple of years. This Institute fostered many student and professor exchanges with Jiujiang University, and sponsored many cultural events and education workshops for the universities, public schools, and the community. Unfortunately, almost all exchanges were just been between the two universities. Our committee is working now to re-establish communication between the mayors of both cities.
- e. **Patras (Greece)** - this was the signed sister city for Savannah and was formalized during the time of former Mayor John Rousakis. Unfortunately, there has been no activity for this relationship in the past 20+ years that we are aware of. Our partnership committee is searching for a Savannah connection to help us re-connect with this city.