

PORT-
VENDRES,
FRANCE

YORKTOWN,
VIRGINIA



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MARK YOUR CALENDARS

THIS SATURDAY, 5 October: Wine Festival, Yorktown waterfront, 12-6pm.
We still need volunteers, especially second shift (2:30-6) and cleanup (5:30)

SATURDAY, 19 October: Yorktown Day, Yorktown waterfront, 8am-3pm.
Volunteers needed 7-11am and 11am-3pm.

THURSDAY, 19 December: Membership Holiday Social at the Hornsby House, 6-8pm

President's Corner

Bonjour! As we have embarked on another year of fostering international friendships and cultural exchanges, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude for your unwavering support and commitment. Our Sister Cities program thrives because of your enthusiasm and dedication.

The connections we foster enrich our communities and create a world where collaboration and understanding thrive. Let us continue to embrace the spirit of global citizenship, supporting initiatives that promote peace, education, and cultural appreciation.

As our new school year 2024-2025 has started we will be reaching out to the individual York County French teachers to discuss how we can help foster our relationship with them and Port Vendres.

We look forward to seeing you at our upcoming events and thank you so much for your support !!! Debra Paulus

In 1990, Yorktown, Virginia, entered into a sister-city relationship with Port-Vendres, a small French village on the Mediterranean Sea. The relationship was formalized in 1990, in Yorktown in April, and in Port-Vendres in July by the Yorktown Trustees with the Port-Vendres mayor and other dignitaries. In 2010, Sister Cities Yorktown and Port-Vendres celebrated the 20th anniversary of the relationship with robust citizen exchanges between both countries. The York County Board of Supervisors formally recognized the relationship for York County in December 2011. Sister Cities Yorktown is chartered by Sister Cities International.

Soirée en Blanc at the Hornsby House was a blast!





Culture

Holiday Tradition: The French Crèche

(by Deborah Marquardt)

The holidays are approaching, and one thing that makes the season so very special is the variety of traditions within families or around the world. In Southern France, the season is marked by the “crèche,” a tableau representing not only the imagined scene of the Jesus’ birth but villagers’ preparations and celebrations of the occasion. Unlike large church Nativity settings, the French Crèche often is comprised of tiny figures representing a story particular to its region. There are often competitions among families and villages for the best crèche. I have been collecting figures for 25 years; each Christmas, they occupy four shelves of a china cupboard in our living room.

My interpretation begins with the first Christmas we spent in our beloved village of Port-Vendres, sister city to Yorktown (1996). It is based on the geography and traditions of French Catalonia (from high Pyrenees to the Mediterranean), and memories of a holiday pageant we witnessed in an old monastery-turned-performance-space in nearby Perpignan. Catalonia shares a border and some traditions with Spain. And, they make every story their own, even the coming of Jesus. So, if you believe the locals, Christ was born somewhere near Banyuls-sur-mer, which is adjacent to Port-Vendres, and just a few miles from the Spanish border!

The pageant’s large cast included the famous Catalan crooner Jordi Barr as lead, dozens of singers, dancers and jesters. Performers danced the traditional Catalan sardane, a circle dance accompanied by wind and brass instruments and the tambourine, as well as the Spanish flamenco backed by percussive and rhythmic guitar. While Joseph and Mary tended their baby quietly in the background of the set, the village erupted in a spirited celebration. They ate, drank, sang, danced, and shared their native gifts with the newborn babe: blood sausage, garlic, oranges, olives, homemade wine, artisan bread. Frankincense and myrrh would have been above their station. But wait! Oh dear! The devil, disguised as a “viper” or serpent, is arriving to steal the baby. The ensemble quickly organizes to dance the demon away. The baby is safe and all is well. Merry Christmas!

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There can be no French celebration without wine. Here, the vigneron has completed the recent harvest. Grapes are being crushed and put in barrels for aging. Two tasters sample an earlier vintage. A woman gathers lavender and two shepherdesses tend their goats and sheep under the canopy of an “umbrella pine,” planted along the ridge by Romans when they occupied the area from 120 BCE to 478 CE.



Catalan dancers perform the traditional sardane, while Spanish dancers move to the spirited flamenco. In the background, bouchers (bakers) turn out loaves of bread from the hot oven.

Culture (continued)

Wine! Toast the New Harvest

Fête des Vendages, October 9-13, 2024, Banyuls-sur-Mer, adjacent to Port-Vendres: Now in its 28th year, the Fête celebrates the harvest of grapes from the tiered vineyards of the Banyuls appellation -- most importantly Grenache noir -- used in the traditional fortified sweet wines of the region. Sunday, October 13 is the big day, when school children are taken early to the vineyards to harvest the last of the grapes and learn about wine making. They arrive in procession on the backs of mules to the heart of the village. Strapped to the sides of the animals are traditional large wooden harvest baskets. (As the terrain is steep, mules once were important to the harvest.) When the children arrive at the church, the priest blesses them and their grapes. Then hundreds of onlookers head for the pebbled Mediterranean beach, where more grapes arrive by sea in barques catalanes, as was typical in days before roads. Following a ceremonial crushing, celebrants gather around dozens of barbecues, where sausages, pork chops, mussels and escargot cook over grape-vine embers on low racks. Often a restaurateur roasts mutton on a spit, stuffed with couscous and vegetables. All is washed down with toasts upon toasts. Needless to say, it's best to catch a ride home on the bus or train!



Celebrants toast the harvest with the traditional Banyuls sweet wine.

Upcoming Events and Activities

October 5: Wine Festival fundraiser on York River riverfront

October 19: Yorktown Day and Victory Market

(Email don.willis@cox.net to sign up or for any questions)

December 19: Holiday Social for Membership at the Hornsby House from 6-8pm

Past Events and Activities

April 20: French Market fundraiser at the Yorktown riverfront

May 5: Blues, Brews and BBQ fundraiser at the Yorktown riverfront

July 14: Bastille Day and Soirée en Blanc at the Hornsby House

(POC : Debra Paulus debratscg@gmail.com)

Sister Cities Programs

Earlier this Spring, Sister Cities in conjunction with Tabb High school French teacher, Chelsea Rowe piloted a program with Tabb High where we provided materials like readers and chat mats for the French students.

Last month, we reached out to all the High School French Teachers to discuss their needs for the coming year. They are very excited to have an avenue to supplement supplies for the students as we work towards revitalizing the Student Exchange with Port Vendres. If you have any questions or suggestions, please reach out to one of the Board members.

We would love to hear from you.

Opportunities to Volunteer—we need you!

Sister Cities Yorktown is an organization comprised entirely of volunteers, and we're always looking for individuals that are able and willing to contribute their time and talents to help us accomplish our mission. We are currently ramping up our committees for this year, and have opportunities for you to help us with the following:

Event/activity coordination/execution: Soiree' en Blanc, French Market, Bastille Day, Wine Tastings, social events, etc. This committee will help with the planning and executing of events throughout the year, for fundraising as well as purely social events. We have several planned events, but we're always on the lookout for fresh ideas.

Exchanges: We support student and adult exchanges to/from our sister city, and with travel restrictions easing soon (we hope), we anticipate getting back to exchanges. This committee will help with the coordination of the exchanges between the two cities - both for the adults and high school students.

Public Relations/Communications: This committee focuses on developing partnerships with community organizations (public and private), educating and advocating our organization and its mission to the community.

Business Support: Website maintenance, social media, writing/publishing. This committee will identify areas for improvement and advise solutions to allow us to continue our mission, using current technology and methods.

We work as a team and have fun doing so! If you have the interest, skills and knowledge that you can contribute to help our organization, let us know. Please contact us at debratscg@gmail.com or contact any one of the Board of Directors individually.

We look forward to working with you.

Membership

Sister Cities Yorktown (SCY) membership is open to anyone residing in or working in Yorktown or York County, or anyone with a sustained interest in Sister Cities Yorktown.

Benefits - Participation in “member only” socials and small events (e.g., wine tastings, cooking lessons, history lectures, etc.); first priority for exchange trips; receipt of SCY newsletters and information on local “things French”.

Annual dues - \$25 per individual; \$40 per family. Dues for French language teachers in York County are \$12.50. Membership for high school students in York County is free. While you can join at any time of the year, dues are not prorated. SCY receives no funding from government sources, so donations are always welcome and appreciated. SCY is a 501(c)(3) organization, so all dues payments and donations are tax deductible. Applications are available on our website at www.sistercitiesyorktown.org.

Please mail your check to: Sister Cities Yorktown, P.O. Box 735, Yorktown, VA 23692.

NOTE: Membership dues may only be paid by credit card at February’s Annual Meeting. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact one of our board members or email us at contact@sistercitiesyorktown.org.



Leadership—Board of Directors

Debra Paulus	President:
Jim Stoecker	Vice President:
Royce Hart	Treasurer
Margaret Mack-Yaroch	Secretary
Don Willis	Past President/Current Board Member
Tony Alford	Board Member
Terry Mock	Board Member
Randy Tabor	Board Member
Tommy West	Board Member