



BRIDGES TO THE WORLD

President's Message

SCAS Board of Directors 2020-2021

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In September, I embarked on an extended Road Trip to re-invigorate my mind, body, and spirit. I headed for the Canadian border and hoped to find clear skies, cool air, green forests, and deep clear cold lakes. I'm sure I'll have plenty of tales to tell, however I thought I'd inform you that the City of Sarasota has once again renewed their commitment to our organization. Below is the year-end report submitted as a summary of this crazy year.

Sister Cities Association of Sarasota began the 2019-2020 fiscal year anticipating a banner year, filled with activities including the signing of an agreement with our newest Friendship City, Busseto, Italy and a Gala One World Celebration honoring Maestro Victor DeRenzi and the Sarasota Opera. We also began rekindling relationships with our Alliance Organizations and City Officials.

In October, our City Director for Vladimir Russia, Miriam Kramer applied and received a grant from the Community Foundation to attend an important conference in Moscow. This resulted in an opportunity for her to meet several officials and peers. She travelled to Vladimir to establish personal relationships and to discuss how to improve our Sister City relationship. Miriam is now in direct contact with Vladimir citizens.

**SCAS City Directors
2020-2021**

Dunfermline, Scotland
Pauline Mitchell (CD)
Karen Malesky (ACD)

Merida, Mexico
Michael Fehily (CD)
Grisell Aleman (ACD)

Perpignan, France
**Marie des Neiges
Grossas (CD)**

Rapperswill-Jona,
Switzerland
Nelly Camardo (CD)
Charlotte Hull (ACD)

Tel Mond, Israel
Jonathan Katz (CD)
Alice Cotman (ACD)
Kim Sheintal (ACD)

Vladimir, Russia
Miriam Kramer (CD)

Xiamen, China
Douglas Sparks (CD)
Larry Bennison (ACD)
Duane Finger (ACD)

Busseto, Italy
Phillip Gordon (CD)
Kenney DeCamp (ACD)
Mirco Chiodi (ACD)

Julio Sauma Castillo, a city official from Merida, Mexico visited Sarasota in December in conjunction with Mexican dance performances at Ringling's Historic Asolo Theater. At that time, there were talks of a different group of dancers (this time from our sister city Merida) coming to Sarasota in the fall of 2020. This event would be a joint venture with The Ringling. We hope it will take place at a future date.

Then, as we all know the world changed. No longer could we go to our office, conduct our monthly meetings, or our in-person exchanges. For the first time since its inception, the FST Young Playwrights Festival was cancelled and winning students (of the Write-A-Play contest) from our Sister Cities lost the opportunity to visit and see their plays performed live.

Out of chaos comes opportunity and like other organizations, including Sister Cities International (SCI), we went virtual. The online SCI Annual Conference was free for all to attend allowing greater participation. Sarasota Sister Cities has capitalized on technology to conduct our monthly Board of Directors meetings and we have offered two virtual "Speakers Bureau" sessions with several members attending via Zoom.

Our One World Award Gala honoring the Maestro and the Sarasota Opera has been rescheduled for March 28, 2021 and we are launching a fundraiser to help renovate the Villa Verdi in our Friendship City of Busseto Italy.

Our "normal" activities have been put on hold but we are using this time to plan and think outside of the box in order to create events using technology to provide new concepts to a broad audience.

Humbly submitted,

Toni Duval

SCAS President

Philanthropy of Sarasota Sister Cities Association

Raymond A. Young, VP Programs & Planning

Sarasota Sister Cities has a long history of Philanthropy towards our sister cities for special needs projects. Our recent request of our members and friends is for donations for the Conservation and Renovation of the Villa Verdi in our new friendship sister city and candidate sister city, Busseto, Italy. Matching funds of \$5,000 have been approved by SCAS.

This request certainly has precedence. Major donations were made to our first sister city of Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. In 1990 during the tenure of SCAS president Julio Claret, a Fire Truck was donated to Santo Domingo where critical safety funds were not available. Generous gratis assistance was provided by a local business, Davi & Valenti Movers, for transport of the truck to Miami and the U.S. Navy transported the truck from Miami to the Dominican Republic.

Further assistance was given to Santo Domingo under the tenure of SCAS president Hope Byrnes. Santo Domingo was severely damaged by Hurricane Georges in 1998 and SCAS responded again with contributions of Medical Equipment & Medicines and School needs of Desks & Books. The donations were acquired with the help of the County School Board, the Sarasota Memorial Hospital and the Jewish Federation of Sarasota/Manatee. Sister City Santo Domingo was later placed on Emeritus Status due to new priorities of the city.

SCAS member philanthropy continued with financial gifts to aid Jewish Ethiopian refugees in Israel provided by a delegation of Sarasota Sister City visitors, led by Linda Rosenbluth, to Tel Mond in 2014.

Liliane Sealy Shrock, former Parliamentarian for SCAS, in cooperation with the Rotary Club of Sarasota generously distributed many English language dictionaries to our sister cities in 2008.

Of course, as part of our sister city mission we provide room and board to all official visitors from our sister cities. Contributions for a number of these delegation visits have been augmented through generous donations by several of our SCAS members including, Dunfermline City Director, Pauline Mitchell, former Tel Mond City Director, Linda Rosenbluth, Tel Mond Assistant City Director, Kim Sheintal and Board Members Beth Ruyle & Craig Hullinger.

Your contribution to Conservation and Renovation of the Villa Verdi, home of opera composer Giuseppe Verdi, in Busseto, Italy would be greatly appreciated. Please visit our website (www.sarasotasistercities.org) or click on the picture below – to access more information on the dedicated page of this Fund-Raising Campaign.

If you missed Phillip Gordon's Zoom presentation on September 16, related to our *Save Villa Verdi* campaign, Phillip is scheduling another Zoom presentation on October 20th, Tuesday at 4.00pm. Closer to the date, we will send out an email with the link to the Zoom invite.

If you like, you may make your contribution now by clicking the donate button here:

DONATE NOW



News from Our Sister City Mérida, Mexico



Mérida

CURRENT AFFAIRS

Sister Cities | Sarasota | September 2020

SCAS Mérida Assistant City Director, **Grisell Alemán**, who grew up in Merida, wrote the following update of What's Going on in Mérida and the Yucatan. After reading her most current information please return and click on <https://yucantoday.com/?lang=en> to view the monthly bilingual magazine published in Mérida.



EN ▼

HOME

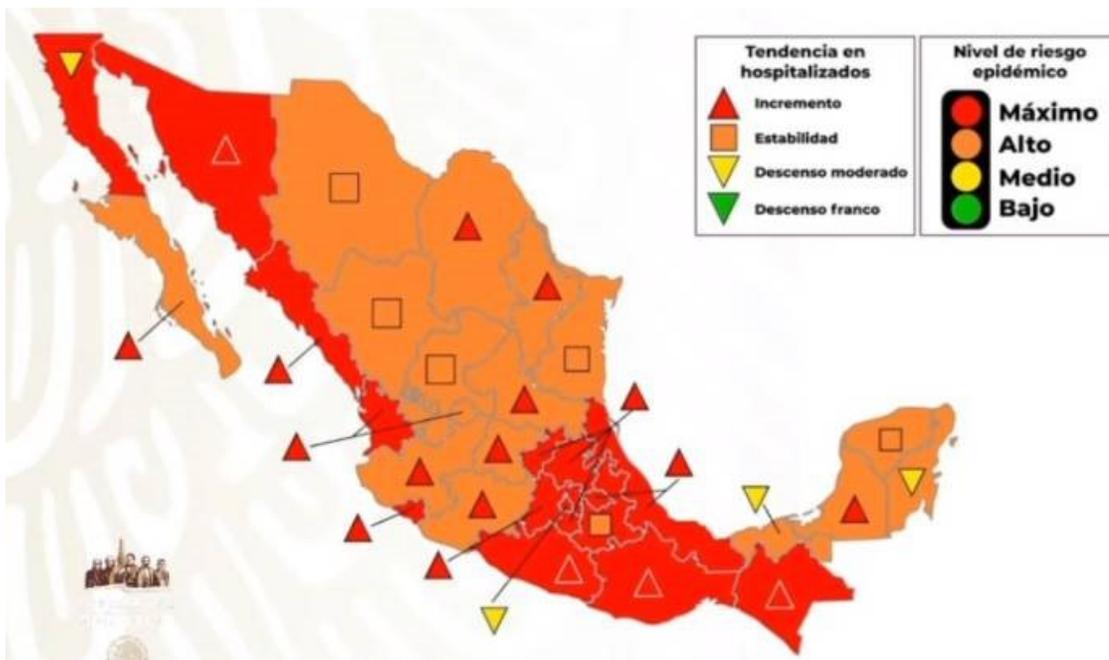
FOOD &
nightlife ▼

TRAVELING &
getting around ▼

MAPS

Current Affairs

Throughout México in what is our new normal, the Mexican government has implemented a traffic light system to indicate the regulation of public space use according to Covid-19 pandemic status. This traffic light system is composed of 4 colors. **Red** indicates not to leave home, **Orange** indicates that if you can, stay at home. **Yellow** means you can do more activities outside and **Green** allows you to leave your home cautiously.



Mérida is currently Orange and now it is mandatory that if a business wants to open its doors to the public, it needs to obtain a Certification of Health Practices through the Public Health Secretary. To obtain the certification they need to take a mandatory course and then implement all the protocols learned to be able to open their business. Steps should include the use of a sanitizing mat at the entrance, antibacterial gel, a temperature reading of each person upon entering the establishment, the use of mouth coverings and social distancing between people.

Mérida is trying to reactivate tourism and invite all national and international tourists to feel comfortable and safe to return to sightseeing all the beautiful places that Yucatan has especially since they obtain the **Safetravel certification**. The reason why all these measures are being taken is to prevent the transmission of Covid.

a new perspective of two cities. The first tour is of the **CHURCHES IN THE CITY OF MÉRIDA** seen from above viewing the beautiful stained glass, statues, details of construction all while listening to the interesting history of each of the churches. The *other tour features the city of Izamal* which is located forty-four miles from Mérida. It is a **Mexican Certified Magical Village** for its culture and for being picturesque since its houses and buildings are all painted yellow. On the drone tour you will see churches, archaeological areas and the large convent of San Antonio de Padua built on a Mayan temple and which has the second largest atrium in the world. The virtual cultural tours are in Spanish and is a new feature to learn more about the cities in detail.

Drone 1 Flight: <https://www.facebook.com/357724287576080/posts/3851560711525736/>

Drone 2 Flight: <https://www.facebook.com/357724287576080/posts/3883688158312991/>





TIANGUIS
TURÍSTICO
México
Merida
2021

Also preparing to reactivate national tourism, the city of Mérida plans to host the **Tourist Tianguis 2021** for the first time, which was planned originally for the beginning of this year but had to be rescheduled. The Tourist Tianguis is the most important business forum in

México's tourist sector. There will be conferences, and representations of hotels, air lines, travel agents, representatives from 32 states, car rental and various other companies.

“Tianguis Turístico” “Open-air markets or bazaars held on market days in towns or city neighborhoods in Mexico and Central America. This bazaar tradition has its roots well before the pre-Hispanic period and continues in many cases essentially unchanged into the present day”

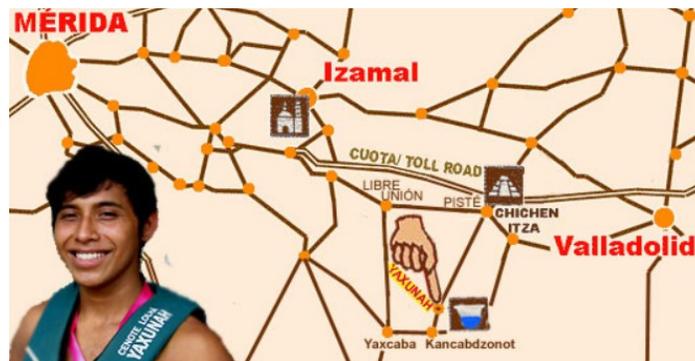
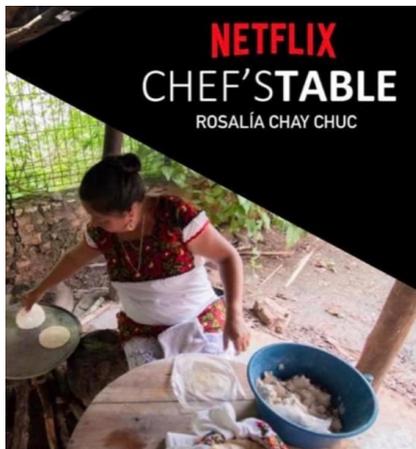
The new era of tourism is already in Mérida and we have plans to prepare a cultural tour of Mérida with the help of the **CONFETUR (Confederation of Women in Tourism) Association** and the state government in the year 2022. The last time that the Association of the Sister Cities from Sarasota made a trip to Mérida was in 2015. I hope everyone can come with us and enjoy the riches that the city has to offer.



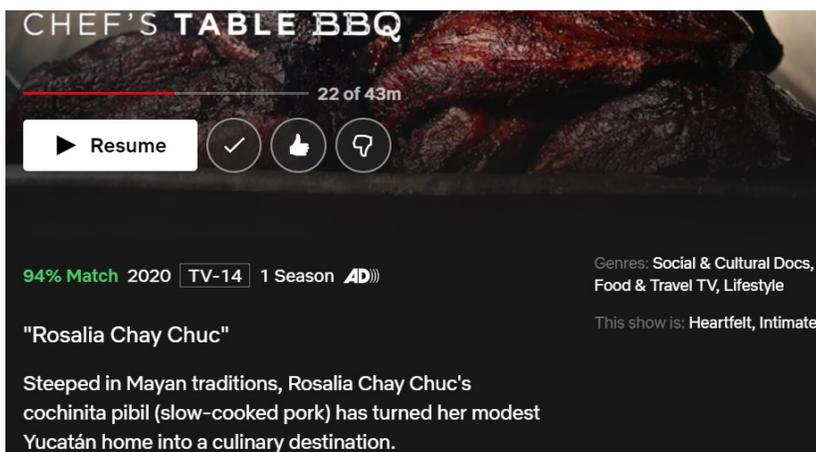
By the way, be sure to see **Rosalia Chay Chuc's "Chef's Table"** chapter featured on Netflix where the gastronomy of traditional Yucatecan food from Rosalia's village is on full display.

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1115123182216764>

Cochinita pibil (Cochinita pibil is a traditional Mexican slow-roasted pork dish from the Yucatán Peninsula. It is a **cooking** technique that involves wrapping pork (or another meat) in banana leaves, marinating it in sour orange and achiote—a sweet, slightly peppery red sauce made from annatto seed, a plant found in the tropics—and baking it in a hand-dug barbecue pit in the ground for several hours.)



To view the full episode [click here for the NETFLIX LINK](#)

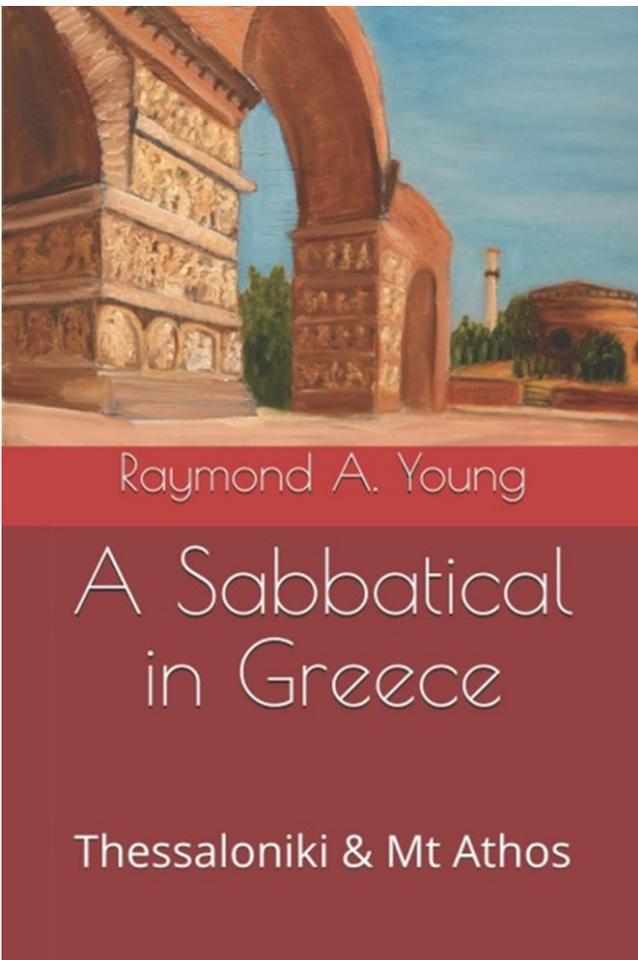


Chef Ricardo Muñoz, owner of Azul Restaurants, Mexico City (and commentator in this episode) was awestruck by his first meal of Rosalia's Cochinita Pibil . He said, "When I took a bite, it was one of the greatest moments in my life." ".....This is a National Dish"

Books and Films

Recently Published Book by SCAS Board Member Raymond Young entitled *"A Sabbatical in Greece: Thessaloniki & Mt Athos"*

(available on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) in digital and paperback form)



This book is a Memoir & Travelogue of my sabbatical in Thessaloniki, Greece in 1989. It encompasses my personal academic experience as a Senior Fulbright Scholar at the Aristotle University in Thessaloniki interspersed with the unique history of Thessaloniki, Macedonia and Mt Athos. Thessaloniki was a major home to the three great monotheistic religions of Orthodox Christianity, Turkish Muslim and Sephardic Judaism and Mt Athos is an important center of Eastern Orthodox monasticism where the monks have followed Byzantine rules for the past 1,000 years. The book would be of interest to academic scholars planning or having completed an international program, travelers to Northern Greece and those interested in Greek History and Culture.

Amazon Prime free Chinese Movies in the time of Covid

Enjoy the following movie selection by Dr. Carolyn Bloomer (our former CD of Xiamen, China)

Artist Ai Weiwei documents the refugee crisis



HUMAN FLOW

Director Ai Weiwei 艾未未, 2017/ 140 min.

Amazon Prime Video

A documentary on the making of the film:

Ai Weiwei Drifting, 43 min.

An exuberant and youthful romantic comedy set in contemporary Beijing

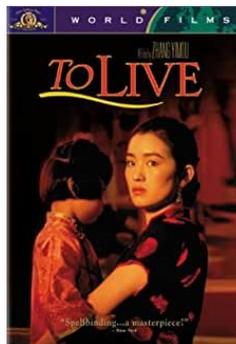


WAITING ALONE 独自等待

Dayyan Eng 伍仕贤 (*Wu Shixian*), 2004. 107 min

Amazon Prime Video

A family survives the decades from the 40s thru the 70s



TO LIVE 活着 *Huo zhe* (Living)

Zhang Yimou 张艺谋, 1993-4. 132 minutes.

From the novel by Yu Hua 余华, 1993. 132 min.

Stars Ge You 葛优; Gong Li 巩俐; Jiang Wu 姜武

Amazon Prime Video