

Rockville Sister Cities Corporation's Annual Presentation to the Mayor and Council of Rockville



July 14, 2025



City of Rockville's Sister Cities

- Pinneberg, Germany -- since 1957



Pinneberg flag



Burgermeister Voerste



Town Square



Mayor Krasnow and 40 RKVers, 40th anniversary, at Der Drostei, 1997

- Yilan City, Taiwan -- since 2019



Yilan City flag



Mayor Chen



Diudiudang Market (town center)



Mayor Newton & co., at train station square, 2023



Big Activities of RSCC in FY25

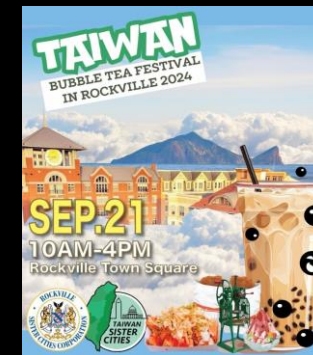
RMHS Jazz students go to Pinneberg for 2024 Jazz Festival



- Aug. 5 – 12: 15 students, +4 chaperones(+2) travel & perform.
- City contributes \$2000 (~4% of costs). Mostly participant families, RSCC & DAGRP carried costs.

Big Activities of RSCC in FY25 (cont.)

2024 Bubble Tea Festival, Rockville Town Center Plaza



- Sept. 21, 12,000 in attendance (attracted to TC, per RPD).
- City contributed \$7000 (~35% of costs). Mostly Taiwan Sister Cities (TSC), RSCC, plus sponsors carried costs.



Big Activities of RSCC in FY25 (cont.)

Fu Shing Jr. High Dancers, visits Rockville (from Yilan City)

- Concurrent to Bubble Tea Festival



- Sept. 19 – 27, 10 student dancers + 3 chaperones, tour and perform.
- No City funding support, 0% (minor in kind). Participant families, Yilan City and RSCC carried costs.

Big Activities of RSCC in FY25 (cont.)

2025 Lantern Festival, at TECRO Cultural Center, Gaithersburg

- F. Scott Fitzgerald Theatre & Social Hall closed for renovation



- Feb. 15, well attended to TCC capacity (~300).
- No City funding support 0% (some M&C attendance). RSCC, Taiwan groups and sponsors, and TECRO (for venue) carried costs.



Big Activities of RSCC in FY25 (cont.)

Klarinette Ensemble visits Rockville (from Pinneberg)

- Over Memorial Day weekend
- Perform RMHS, Glenview & HTH, plus laid wreath, marched in parade



- May 20 – 27, 6 students + director, tour & perform.
- No direct City funding support for hosting costs. Costs carried by participants and RSCC.
 - Glenview venue in kind via grant item (~\$2200 value, ~16% trip costs).

Other Activities of RSCC in FY25

- **Supported Rocktoberfest, Sept. 28, with event table**
 - RSCC started the Octoberfest in Rockville, to honor Pinneberg as our German sister city.
 - Disappointed to have no mention of our German sister city at this event lately.
- **TAAGWC Thanksgiving Celebration, Nov. 16, represented Rockville to the local Taiwanese-American Community**
- **Met with Korhogo, Cote d'Ivoire representatives, Dec. 7**
- **Holiday Social, Dec. 16, for membership**
- **Rockville-Yilan City online Mayor meeting, Mar. 19**
- **Supported Rockville International Night, Apr. 11, with event table**
- **Taiwan-American Heritage Proclamation, May 12, M&C to FAPA**
- More generally:
 - Regular correspondence & planning with DAGRP & YSCC
 - Support for City international contacts and protocol
 - e.g. Guided visits from Cameroon delegation and Taiwanese film director
 - Opened discussions with Senior Commission on elder exchanges with sister cities.

Coming Up in FY26

- **Summer luncheon**, either:
 - Asian Luncheon or Brewery tasting (Pinneberg Helles Lager)
- **Official delegation trip to Pinneberg**, for their 150th incorporation celebration, Sept. 4 – 8
- **2025 Bubble Tea Festival**, Sept. 20
- **German-American Day picnic**, (TBD)
- **2026 Lantern Festival** (hopefully at F. Scott Fitzgerald Theatre again)
- **2026 Memorial Day activity**
- **DAGRP** has asked about sending a **40 student youth orchestra** (TBD)
- Perhaps an **official visit by Mayor Chen** (Yilan City, TBD)
- Another **Glenview event** (TBD)

Further Ahead

- 2027 is the 70th Anniversary of the Rockville-Pinneberg sister city
 - 10 year anniversaries are historically big exchange years
 - We should invite Burgermeister Voerste to visit, if not before this
- A third sister city?: Korhogo, Cote d'Ivoire – in discussion.
- Whatever we can contrive for elder activities
- More Fire Dept. interactions
- More student exchanges
- More cultural exchanges
- Business collaborations?



Rockville Sister City Corporation

Quick review:

- Rockville's first sister city in 1957, Pinneberg, Germany
 - City of Rockville operated the program
- In 1982, in interest of reinvigorating relationship, led to seating a City Task Force, while Pinneberg forms DAGRP in 1984
- In 1986, City spun off RSCC as 503c non-profit corporation to operate the sister city program, also retains RSCC as a city commission
 - M&C approve and mayor signs sister city agreements
 - M&C appoint some RSCC Board Members
- The sister city program is the City's program, not RSCC's exclusively. The City benefits from this arrangement.



Challenges with City's Newer Admin. Processes

- During COVID, RSCC reclassified as a “partner org” (RSCC was not consulted).
 - Peculiar and non-transparent treatment among the five “partner orgs.” (REDI, RHE, Rec&Parks Foundation, Rockville Seniors, RSCC)
 - Rather, we are an all volunteer org. operating a City program.
- Since reclassified, RSCC treated as entirely outside the City government, particularly with funding by grant cycle and denial of customary city services.
- Very recent examples:
 - Communication and Community Engagement would not include a RSCC event ad in Rockville Reports because the event was considered outside the scope of a City program.
 - Department of Housing and Community Development asked RSCC to sign an insurance agreement as an “independent contractor” to the City, for inapplicable purposes.
- City supports < 20% of RSCC annual costs, which amounts to a very good deal for the City.
 - City support is getting more limited and administrative requirements more burdensome for volunteers.
 - This is an obstacle to expanding to more sister cities.
 - We heard M&C express interest last year in expanding the program. But we cannot do that without commensurate support.



RSCC's Organizational Challenges

- Memberships and sponsorships have not recovered post-COVID
 - We need to raise more ongoing income, to sustain current activity
 - Or to afford a further sister city(ies)
- Need to increase volunteer engagement and productivity
 - Old model of central doers only, does not scale to broadening org.
 - We may have a pending leadership crisis
 - Perhaps org. needs a rotating Presidency practice
- German cultural representation is wanning
 - Perhaps generationally so, or the distinction of German heritage
 - This also happening in Pinneberg
- The CoR grant cycle is an undue burden for volunteers
 - Requires much advanced planning out of keeping with usual intervals
 - To extent we can plan 18+ months out, so far navigated CoR funding changes



RSCC Had A Great FY25

- Reconnected with our sister cities post-COVID interruption and had successful exchanges.
 - Relations are good, sustained to a new generation of leadership
 - Plus supported two further countries: Cote d'Ivoire and Cameroon
- Our board fully seated and directors getting back in stride.
 - We need to rebuild host family depth, while succeeded for latest hosting.
- Innovating with programs and partners.
 - Lecture and visit at MC, collaborated visit with REDI & MWBC, good collaboration with RMHS, potential on elder services.