



Nantesense

Seattle-Nantes Sister City Association Newsletter - October 2025

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Letter from the President

By David Asher

The Seattle-Nantes Sister City Association is delighted to report an exciting last couple of months within the organization - and thank you to all who attended our various events.

This September, a delegation from Seattle visited Nantes to celebrate 45 years of our sister-city partnership. The delegation included artist Barbara Earl Thomas, who inaugurated work at the Jardin de Seattle, Chef Kristi Brown of COMMUNION Restaurant in Seattle, Councilmember Joy Hollingsworth, and a group of citizen-diplomats interested in fostering ties between Seattle and our friends across the Atlantic. Now, more than ever, the importance of strengthening international connections has taken center stage and the Seattle-Nantes Sister City Association is honored by the commitment from our members and friends to make those relationships a reality.

Stateside, SNSCA had it's third annual pétanque event with the Seattle Pétanque Club. For those who haven't attended in the past, it's a real treat. Pétanque - at least in this setting - is equal parts sport and social, and many of us fresh off the delegation trip enjoyed the afternoon to kick back, play, and have some snacks under the September sun.

We also completed our winter prep at Nantes Park, where we removed excess weeds and laid down mulching to set the park up for the upcoming winter season.

SNSCA will have it's Annual General Meeting (AGM) on Saturday, November 8th where we'll share updates on the past year, hold officer elections, and start to dream on what's in store for 2026.

Additionally, we're excited to partner with the Seattle Art Museum for their upcoming exhibit "Farm to Table: Art, Food, and Identity in the Age of Impressionism". The exhibit will feature more than 50 works by artists looking back at the Age of Impressionism through the lens of French culinary tradition, with a spotlight on Nantes! "Farm to Table" will run from October 23rd though January 18th.



Barbara Earl Thomas



pétanque

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45th Anniversary: Seattle Delegation visits Nantes

By Susan Kegel

Our 15 Seattle delegates enjoyed a week of art, architecture, history, food, wine, and gardens on our visit to Nantes in early September. For a day-by-day summary of all the events, see our [Facebook](#) page. Here I will try to capture the highlights, admittedly a personal view.

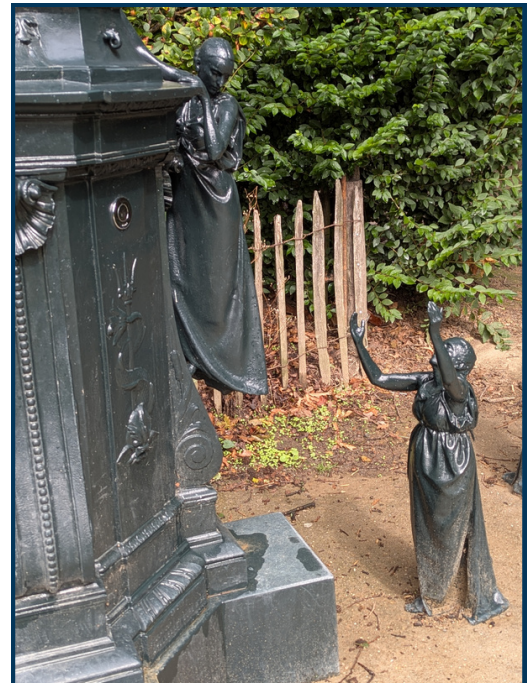
The visit was timed so that we could participate in the inauguration of the Jardin de Seattle, which in turn was planned to coincide with an enormous plant show that Nantes hosts every year called La Folie des Plantes. The show attracts 40,000 people who come to see and buy plants from the 170 exhibitors. Inaugurating the Seattle Garden on the same weekend guaranteed a large audience for the ribbon cutting in front of Barbara Earl Thomas's gates. Several other activities reinforced the sister city relationship - tasting muffins made with common WA berries, learning to hit balls with the Mariners Baseball Club of Nantes, a grunge concert, and a Seattle-themed dinner where chefs Kristi Brown and Lucie Berthier Gembara and their staff served a 4-course meal with wine pairings and mocktails to a sold-out crowd of 260 people. It was a magical weekend.

We were also treated to three professionally-guided tours of the city, each focusing on a different aspect. This was my 8th trip to Nantes and my 3rd delegation visit, but I learned a lot that I didn't already know. On the walking tour from the chateau to Place Royale, I learned about the progression of historical styles in the architecture of the chateau. French kings in the middle ages and the Renaissance had to travel the country regularly to maintain their legitimacy. Of course, their home away from home had to reflect the latest in architectural fashion.

I also heard all about the ubiquitous green Wallace fountains, found in many French cities, that were originally gifted by a British philanthropist to provide clean drinking water in Paris in the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian war in 1870. The artist, Charles-August Lebourg, who created these fountains was born in Nantes. Nantes has several, and for this year's summer arts festival Nantes commissioned an artist to create new fountains that tell the story in four chapters of how the four women holding up the dome above their heads escape from this unwanted confinement and wander off into the city. Le Voyage à Nantes website has more details on the project with pages on the [Fontaines Wallace](#) and [L'Évasion- chapter 1](#).



Original Wallace fountain



Wallace fountain revisité



continuation of 45th Anniversary: Seattle Delegation visits Nantes

The tour ended at another fountain in Place Royale, which looks a bit different this year than in previous years. The original allegorical sculptures of Nantes rivers and industries need renovation so have been temporarily replaced by contemporary figures representing Nantes in the 21st century. My favorite is the protestor! Very apropos given that we all experienced the nationwide September 10 protests on this trip.

Our guide for the tour of the île de Nantes explained that the reclaiming of this former industrial area is a sort of open air experiment where the city and especially artists and architects can try new things. They are intentionally eschewing homogeneity in the buildings, resulting in an eclectic and beautiful mix of styles. We walked through a small park that the city is re-wilding to see what grows naturally. We “played” ping-pong on some wonky tables. And, of course, no visit to this area is complete without getting sprayed by the elephant! Very refreshing on such a hot day!

Our tour of the history museum in the chateau focused on Nantes’ significant role in the Atlantic slave trade, a part of its history that Nantes has been intentionally coming to grips with in recent years.

Other highlights of the trip included our cruise down the Loire estuary amongst numerous art installations to Saint-Nazaire to learn about the cruise ship building industry that has thrived here since the late 1800s, the *Forgé Dans La Nature* exhibit of works by Barbara Earl Thomas and 8 Nantes artists, visiting the studio of Eric Fonteneau, the tour of the salt marshes in Guérande, and much more that you can find on our facebook page and website.





Councilmember Joy Hollingsworth visits Nantes

By Susan Kegel

For 4 days, Councilmember Joy Hollingsworth had targeted meetings and site visits with 5 deputy mayors, 12 Nantes city officials, and the US Consul for Western France, in addition to the festivities around the inauguration of the Jardin de Seattle. It was a jam-packed few days with excellent in-depth exchanges about how Nantes and Seattle deal with issues related to housing, cleanliness, parks, sports, and youth engagement. I describe here the key take-aways I heard in these meetings, but cannot possibly do justice to all that was discussed.

First up was a meeting with three officials at Nantes Métropole Habitat, which is the largest of 14 social landlords in the Nantes region. This public company was created in 1913, the second in France. There are a total of 70,000 social housing units in the Nantes metropolitan area, of which Habitat manages 25,000. They have a budget of 50 million euros per year. They build 400 new apartments per year and renovate another 1200. However, their target is to build 6,000 new per year, which is challenging since the building sector in France is in crisis with high interest rates and high cost of materials.

French national law requires cities to provide 25% social housing and Nantes just reached this target. Some cities in France choose to pay the fine rather than meet the target. Not everyone wants social housing in their city.

Funding comes from a tax on private companies - all companies with more than 100 employees pay 0.5% of total salaries for social housing. That's 3 billion euros for all of France.

The target is for 70% of the people in France to have access to social housing! Therefore the income limits are quite high. Social housing rent is 50% lower than the market average. A 3-bedroom social housing apartment in Nantes rents for 400 euros/month and the government subsidizes 200 euros of that so the tenant pays 200 euros. About 40,000 people are on the wait list, a 24-month wait.



After the office meeting, we donned hard hats and toured a social housing unit under construction on the île de Nantes.



continuation of Councilmember Joy Hollingsworth visits Nantes

Next up was a visit with the Deputy Mayor and city officials in charge of Cleanliness, Daily Life, and Public Spaces. Their mandate is to make the city an agreeable place to live, work, and visit. They have found that people use trash cans, rather than littering, if the cans are placed where they need them and emptied often. The same applies to recycling.

The biggest current problem is cigarette butts. It is illegal to drop your cigarette butt on the ground and there is a fine. But that's not enough to solve the problem. Now they need to train people. They start with education and also providing the means for people to dispose of their butts, such as a portable ash tray that people can get for free.

They were successful at changing public opinion in a similar campaign with dog poop. Twenty years ago it was common for people to let their dogs poop in the street. Now it is very rare. If someone does not pick up after their dog, they get dirty looks. The key is to change how people think about it, first with education then peer pressure.

Interestingly, there is a new law that grocery stores can't throw out food - they have to give it to local associations who distribute to those in need.

We then had a behind-the-scenes tour of the new expansion to the Jardin Extraordinaire. The existing garden, inspired by native son Jules Verne and his Voyages Extraordinaires, covers 8 acres of an abandoned quarry along the Loire just west of downtown. It features a 25-meter tall waterfall, tropical plants, and a 177-step metal stairway up the cliffs to viewpoints. The expansion, set to open in mid-October, adds an additional 4 acres to fill out the rest of the quarry with a wading pool and green grass "beach", picnic area, a marsh with carnivorous plants, 430 more trees, a via ferrata, and 90 different climbing routes on the cliffs. Extraordinary indeed!

There were many other discussions about hot topics in both cities, but perhaps the most compelling thing I noticed on this visit was that there were signs everywhere describing new urban renewal projects - more green spaces, more fountains, more walking trails, more bike lanes, a new tram line, innovative housing projects, and less pavement. I leave you with le débitumeur, rolling up the pavement in a (now smaller) parking lot downtown where "la nature gagne du terrain" as the sign says.



Barbara Earl Thomas in Nantes

By Susan Kegel

In September 2025, Barbara unveiled her work at the inauguration of the Jardin de Seattle - two corten steel gates flanking the path that welcome visitors into the garden. The project was two years in the making, starting with the Call to Artists from our colleagues in Nantes in fall 2023 and the selection of Barbara to create the piece for the garden in winter 2024. You can follow the whole project on our website, from Barbara's first visit to Nantes to see the site for the new garden and meet the team there to the inauguration this year of both garden and art. What an amazing journey for all of us!

To top it all off, Barbara also organized an exhibit with 8 other Nantes artists with a vernissage just before the garden opening. Included in this exhibit were the original paper-cut designs for the gates, hand-carried by Barbara on the plane, and in front of them the wood mock-up made in Nantes, in other words the two steps in the process before the forging of the finished metal gates.

Thank you, Barbara, for sharing your creativity, your smile, and your art with the Seattle-Nantes Sister City Association and our colleagues in Nantes!





45th Anniversary Gastronomy Collaboration

By Susan Kegel

A highlight of the 45th anniversary celebrations was the gastronomy project. Phase 1 was the week that Chef Lucie Berthier Gembara of Sépia Restaurant spent in Seattle in July, collaborating with Chef Kristi Brown of COMMUNION Restaurant and Bar. Phase 2 saw Chef Kristi in Nantes, meeting producers and touring the vineyards, culminating in the gala Saturday night dinner at the Cantine du Voyage, billed as La Nuit Américaine. The 4-course meal with Muscadet pairings was served to a sold-out crowd of 260 Nantais and Nantaises.

Le Menu

Mocktail d'Accueil

“19 Avril”: raisin noa et piment black pearl macérés du potager

Séquence #1

Gâteau à la Patate Douce garni d'un “Succotash”

Séquence #2

Chihuly Garden (Shiso du potager de la cantine/Sardines de Saint-Gilles-Croix-de-Vie)

Séquence #3

Poulet Créole et “Dirty Rice”

Séquence #4

“Seattle Vibe”: Melon brûlé, mascarpone infusée au bois de cèdre, biscuit avoine

Mocktail de Fin

“Blossom II”: Concombre, hibiscus, tonka, romarin brûlé

Thank you, Chef Kristi and Chef Lucie for an amazing evening!





Pétanque

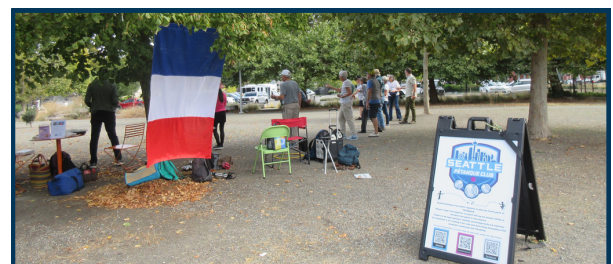
By David Asher

For it's third consecutive year, SNSCA partnered with our friends at the Seattle Pétanque Club for an afternoon of pétanque at Lake Union Park on Saturday, September 27th.

For those unfamiliar, pétanque is a boule-based game in which participants take turns tossing boules toward a target, or *cochonnet*. Despite its competitive-aspect, pétanque - at least at the casual level - is more centered on sportsmanship and camaraderie. Between games, folks enjoyed an assortment of cheese, crackers, and homemade brownies - as well as banter and conversation.

We're looking forward to having more events next year with the Seattle Pétanque Club - stay on the lookout for more information!

Looking to play sooner? The Seattle Pétanque Club plays at Lake Union Park every Saturday at noon, and there are a few other pétanque organizations around the state in Edmonds and Port Townsend. More information on the Seattle Pétanque Club can be found at: seattlepetanque.org.





Nantes Park

By Alaina McCallum

On Saturday, October 4, over a dozen SNSCA members and West Seattle neighbors tended to Nantes Park. We stayed busy for three hours as we winterized the park by pulling weeds, removing dead or encroaching tree branches, and covering the garden beds with mulch.

It is always amazing to see the final result after several hours of hard work. Thank you to everyone who came out to Nantes Park!





Membership Update

By Marsella Logan

We are excited to welcome the following new members to Seattle-Nantes Sister City Association:

- Melanie Bernstein
- Christopher Blado
- Susan Lynette
- JoAnne Lee
- Daniel Smith
- Inger Tangborn

If you know anyone who is also interested in becoming a SNSCA member, they can join by going to:
seattle-nantes.org/membership.

Join Us Today!

Meet fellow Francophiles and experience authentic French art, culture, and language in a way no tourist can. Members help shape what events and activities we offer. Your dues support all our programs and scholarships. Your participation keeps the association strong and lively.

Please renew your membership every January by check or online!

Individual Annual Dues

Student: \$10
Senior Citizen: \$15
Individual: \$25
Family: \$35
Sponsor: \$50
Patron: \$100
Donor: \$250
Benefactor: \$500

Corporate Annual Dues

Patron: \$50
Donor: \$100
Benefactor: \$500

Pay by Mail
Print an [application](#) and mail it with your check (to the order of SNSCA) to:
Seattle-Nantes Sister City Association
c/o Marsella Logan
17332 90th Drive NE Unit A
Bothell, WA 98011

Pay Online
Choose your category from the dropdown menu below, then complete this [online form](#).

Yearly Membership Dues

Student \$10.00 USD

[Add to Cart](#)

If you are a **new member** or have **changes** in your address or email address, please also send an application form to the address above or email it to seattlenantesca@gmail.com.



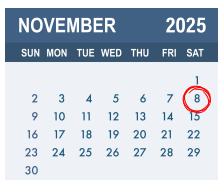

Upcoming Events

Friday, October 24: "Farm to Table" Member Reception at the Seattle Art Museum



SNSCA is delighted to partner with the Seattle Art Museum for a Farm to Table exhibit scheduled to run from October 23rd - January 18th. The exhibit will highlighting culinary exploration and impressionism, with a spotlight on Nantes, France. More information can be found here at seattleartmuseum.org.

Saturday, November 8: SNSCA Annual General Meeting



SNSCA will have it's 2025 Annual General Meeting (AGM) on Saturday, November 8th from 4pm-7pm at Ellen Taft's house. Please RSVP at SeattleNantesSCA@gmail.com for more information. We'll have local food, live music, and updates on the past year. We hope you can join us!

Saturday, December 6: Noël sans Frontières 2025 Christmas Concert



La Chorale Francophone de Seattle, founded and directed by SNSCA member Ellen Taft, announces its next Christmas concert: Noël sans Frontières 2025 (Christmas without Borders). The title reflects both the repertoire and the mission of the Chorale. LCFS sings traditional Christmas songs from France as well as other Francophone countries. Tickets can be purchased at lcfseattlefrenchchoir.org



SNSCA Board Members

OFFICERS

Co-President: Susan Kegel

Co-President: David Asher

Treasurer: Susan Hulbert

Secretary: Alaina McCallum

AT-LARGE BOARD MEMBERS

Judy Deignan

Margaret Johnson

Larry Laffrey

Marsella Logan

Bunny Schmidley

Tom Waite

Monthly Board Meetings

The Board convenes on the first Wednesday of the month. We are meeting via video conferencing. If you are interested, contact us at seattlenantessca@gmail.com.

Membership Renewal

Thank you to all who have renewed your membership in SNSCA! Your support is crucial for our programs and scholarships.

If you haven't yet done so, please pay online or send your check made out to SNSCA to:

Marsella Logan
11204 SE 192nd Pl
Kent, WA 98031

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