

USCSCA

US-Cuba Sister Cities Association

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NO-MAS (New Orleans-Mariel Amistad Society) and the Society Mobile-La Habana Members Organize Historic US/Cuba Hurricane Summit

An historic meeting took place in late May in Monterrey, Mexico as Cuban and US hurricane experts gathered to exchange ideas and information just as hurricane season began. **US State Dept. Interfered at the last minute**, however, causing one US participant to miss the event.

The US-Cuba Hurricane Summit was the first event of its kind. Wayne Smith of the Center for International Policy and co-coordinators Randy Poindexter of NO-MAS (the New Orleans-Mariel Amistad Society) and Jay Higgenbotham of Society Mobile-La Habana assembled participants from along the hard-hit Gulf Coast region to attend the summit. They met with leading Cuban experts to discuss how the US could better prepare for hurricanes.

Unable to attend the Summit was US meteorologist Lixion Avila, from Miami, FL, who was detained

in Dallas en route on his way to Monterrey, Mexico when he received a message from the US State Department ordering him not to attend the US-Cuba Hurricane Summit.

Nevertheless, the Summit proceeded as planned, at the Tecnológico de Monterrey, hosted by Dr. Victor López Villafane. Guest speakers included Pulitzer prize-winning writers Jed Horne and Mark Schleifstein of the New Orleans Times-Picayune newspaper, a host of other hurricane experts from Louisiana, Florida, Mississippi, and Alabama, two former FEMA officials from DC, and conference organizers Wayne Smith, Randy Poindexter and Jay Higgenbotham. Poindexter and Higgenbotham are both executive board members of USCSCA.

Cuba was represented by Chief of the Cuban Interests Section in the US, Dagoberto Rodriguez as well as a delegation from the island, led by well-known Cuban meteorologist Jose Rubiera. He spoke about Cuba's weather prognostications and their civil defenses efforts.

Two medical doctors from the Cuban "Henry Reeve Medical Brigade," both of whom hoped to go to New Orleans to offer assistance, spoke of the offer of 1,600 medical doctors

Hurricane Preparedness, cont...

and 36 tons of medical supplies Cuba was prepared to send to the US in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. Norys de las Mercedes Maderas of the Ministry of Cuba's Foreign Relations told of what kind of assistance Cuba might provide in the future. **Note:** The Henry Reeve Medical Brigade departed for Indonesia and Pakistan following major earthquakes there not long after their help was refused during the Katrina crisis.



Top row, l-r, Dr. Victor Villfane, Director of North American Studies at Tecnológico De Monterrey, Dr. Jose Borges Rodriguez and Dr. Daniel Loriet Andreu, both of the Henry Reeve Medical Brigade

Bottom row, l-r, Randy Poindexter of NO-MAS in New Orleans, Jose Rubiera of the Cuban Institute of Meteorology, Chief of the Cuban Interests Section in the US Dagoberto Rodriguez, Wayne Smith of the Center for International Policy in Washington and Mercedes Vincente Sotolongo of the Cuban Embassy in Mexico

This unprecedented sharing of knowledge of disaster management preparedness was thanks to a special grant provided by the Ford Foundation. Another grant from the Brownstone Foundation in Geneva, Switzerland allowed the Cubans to attend, thereby avoiding violation of the Helms-Burton law. All agreed that the summit was a major success.- For more information, contact Randy Poindexter, rpoindexter@bellsouth.net 504-453-4827.

Cuba Vive of Tampa Bay

co-hosted a forum in Tampa's historic Círculo Cubano building on May 19 entitled "Speak With One Voice: Strategies to Change U.S. Policy Towards Cuba." The sponsors included FORNORM, a new coalition of anti-embargo groups from Miami and the Alliance for Responsible Cuba Policy of Tampa/Washington, D.C. Other organizations participated including St. Augustine-Baracoa Friendship Association, Cuban American Alliance Education Fund, Alianza Martiana, Madison Sister City, Bolivarian Circles, Antonio Maceo Brigade, and the CTC among others. More than 100 attendees walked to the Friends of Jose Martí Park to honor the Cuban patriot on the occasion of his death, May 19, 1895. Speakers at the forum included Max Lesnik, Al Fox, Jr., Tony Zamora, Elena Freyre, Henry Mendoza, Ricardo González and Maura Barrios.



Círculo Cubano building, Tampa

And there's more:

- CVTB's education coordinator, Maura Barrios, curated an exhibit for the Ybor Museum of Tampa, titled "Tampa Y Cuba: More Than One Hundred Years". The exhibit guide, published by the museum, discusses the City's historic Cuban community and the impact of Cuban cigar factories and workers on the city's cultural identity.

Cuba Vive of Tampa Bay, cont...

- CVTB member Noel Smith participated in a lawsuit brought by Florida's ACLU against the State of Florida for limiting academic travel to Cuba.

- CVTB member Abelardo Arteaga received honorary citizenship from Cuba in a ceremony at the Cuba Interests Section for his unwavering support of Cuba since the 1959 Revolution.

He celebrated his 85th birthday in April.
Congratulations, Art!



- submitted by Maura Barrios

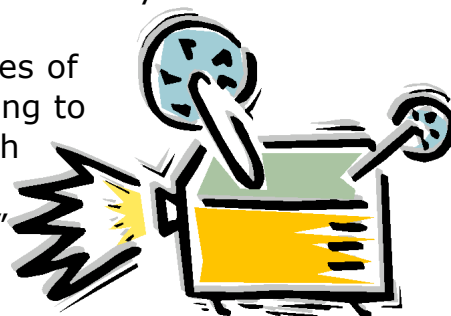
US Boulder-Cuba Sister City Organization

is getting into the health care debate by a recent screening of the film "Salud" (Health) at the University of Colorado. The film presents Cuba's health care achievements as an example to follow by countries that face serious problems in that field. The showing was part of a Conference on World Affairs that addresses health care problems around the world. "Although Cuba doesn't rank high on the list of the world's richest countries, the Cuban government has set up one of the best healthcare systems in the world," said Dr. Peter Bourne, who is executive producer of the film. Bourne chairs the nonprofit Medical Education Cooperation With Cuba. The US Boulder Sister City Organization has promoted sisterhood relations with the locality of Yateras, in the eastern Cuban city of Guantánamo, since 2002.

Bloomington, Indiana/Santa Clara's Cubamistad

and Indiana University's Department of Spanish and Portuguese are cosponsoring a film series which has spanned a year and in which both documentary and feature films are shown. This film series is directed/organized by Cynthia Roberts Hall and Michael Gasser. The films are shown at the Monroe County Public Library in Bloomington, Indiana and the price is FREE! Cynthia writes: "We try to have some type of informational presentation or discussion relating to the film being shown [and] we are always interested in receiving titles of

films relating to Cuba which you feel are good."



For a list of films they've shown, or for suggestions as to some that might be good, please contact either Cynthia Roberts Hall at cyndicat@riseup.net or Arthur Stein at astein52@yahoo.com <http://www.bloomington.in.us/~amistad/>

ALSO! Arthur requests that anyone who has information as to how one could travel legally to Cuba - that is, on a licensed trip - get in touch with the Bloomington group, as they are interested in visiting their friends in Santa Clara. *Ed.'s note: Travel to Cuba is virtually impossible these days, unless you're a journalist or a researcher doing work in your field. Most categories have been shut off entirely. Still, hope dies last. It doesn't hurt to look around for ways to travel there.*

The Society Mobile-La Habana

hosted Ron Sparks, Alabama's Commissioner of Agriculture and Industry, at their annual meeting in March. He spoke of the possibilities of increasing trade and how it has and will benefit the Port of Mobile as well as the farmers, businessmen, and citizens of Alabama, in addition to the citizens of Cuba. Sparks met with President Castro last year, and was pleased to report that during 2006, Alabama sold more goods to Cuba last year than did any other state in the Union.

In other news: The Latin American Working Group just completed showing its much-acclaimed photographic exhibit on Cuba in Mobile's Art Exhibit Hall.

And last but by no means least:

The Society's newest member is Ilsa Rose Schaefer, the 7 lb. 10 oz. daughter of Jill Shinault and Dr. Bob Schaefer, born in Mid-March. *Congratulations to the proud parents!*

- submitted by Jay Higgenbotham

Many **Richmond/La Regla Sister City** members attended a Cuba Photo Exhibit by Umi Vaughan entitled "Cuba en Colores." It celebrated "the vividness and distinctiveness of Cuba, from indigo sunsets and golden sanctuaries, to crystal sweat on chocolate skin at Carnival." Sales from collector postcards and framed works go toward the cost of publishing his book of photographs called Cuba: Part of My Soul.

Mr. Vaughan has traveled in many parts of the world including Italy, Mexico, Jamaica, and Zimbabwe, capturing the spirit of humanity and the African Diaspora. Although this exhibit was not a sister-city sponsored event, Umi has attended meetings and supported a number of Sister City functions.

- submitted by Shukuru

Northampton MA hosted a lively film series that deserves mention "Cuba in Film" was a string of nine films that ranged from documentaries to feature length films made in Cuba. The event was sponsored by the Pioneer Valley Cuba Solidarity Committee Over \$800 was raised to benefit the Pastors for Peace Caravan. You are invited to email lkelner@crocker.com if you'd like more information.

- submitted by Liz Kelner

The Brunswick-Trinidad Sister City Association

in cosponsorship with the Mid-Coast Regional Arts Program, organized a group of Brunswick residents to create a large "Maine Mural" during Cuba Week this last March. The mural shows some of the many kinds of plants, animals and earth forms found in Maine and is now packed and ready to be transported to Trinidad in July. They're hoping it finds a place in the Trinidad town hall or in a school. Then, in April, the drawings of some of the children in Trinidad arrived. They will be used as tiles in the "Dance of Two Cultures" mural. There are over a dozen pictures showing

Brunswick-Trinidad, cont...

various places in Trinidad. Chris Cart, the mural artist, has photographed them and will use various parts of each one for the tiles that will make up the arches connecting different scenes in the mural. Some of the drawings are being framed for mural presentations in June, July and October.

Two of the murals most exciting fundraisers took place in April. Bayview Gallery, Brunswick's primo art gallery, displayed fifteen of mural artist Chris Cart's mural studies. April was also the month for the mural's biggest fundraising event, A Salsa Dance Spectacular, held in the Maine State Music Theater dance studio and DJ'd by Galileo Lopez, a master salsa dancer and teacher from El Salvador and Washington DC. This event raised over \$2,000. for the mural project.



A thrilling moment was when the mural project received it's first grant from the Bowdoin College student-controlled Common Good Grant Committee. We received the \$2,000 we requested for artist fees and materials. In May, we received another grant of \$500.00 from the Brunswick Nathaniel Davis Fund. As of June 1st, we were over halfway towards our goal of \$48,000! For more information about this project, please check www.brunswicktrinidad.org or contact Susan: susanweems@gwi.net.

- submitted by Susan Weems

Oakland/Santiago de Cuba

Sister City will be hosting a a Day of Music and Peace on Sept. 11 outside of the Oakland City Hall, which will be covered on local TV. Oakland/Santiago de Cuba has received excellent support from both from their Congressional Representative, Barbara Lee, and their mayor, the Honorable Ron Dellums. That support has helped to make possible the continued vitality of their goin' group.

Hey, Folks! We need for everyone to get behind this generous offer! That means YOU!

Thanksgiving coffee makes a wonderful fundraiser for your organization any time of year, to say nothing of the fact that each bag sold benefits USCSCA directly.

~~~~~ Please go to [www.endtheembargocoffee.com](http://www.endtheembargocoffee.com) to order this delicious treat, or call the



Thanksgiving Coffee Company at 800.462.1999 and ask to speak to Jonah Katzeff (ex.47). You'll be selling delicious, shade-grown, organic, fair-trade coffee **and** getting out the word that it's time to make the embargo a thing of the past.

**Good coffee. Good deal. Please support them so they continue to support us!**