

Kotlas-Waterville Sister City Connection



The Kotlas Connection has accepted an invitation to participate in Kotlas's gala celebration of the 100th anniversary of the founding of the city. A delegation of Kotlas Connection members and other Mainerers will be there in June 2017.

Celebrating a 25-year Connection between Kotlas, Russia and the Greater Waterville Area was a major event in 2015. A delegation from the Waterville area went to Kotlas in April to celebrate the anniversary of the signing of the sister city agreement and to participate in the Kotlas American Sampler. In late June the mayor of Kotlas led a delegation to the Waterville area to continue the celebration. Displays throughout the area in June and July reminded all of the present and past events in the history of the sister city connection. The Connection strives to develop friendship and understanding between the people of Central Maine and of Kotlas in Russia. To that end, the Kotlas Connection sponsors educational and cultural programs in the Waterville area to raise awareness of Russia and of Kotlas.

Over the years through the Open World Organization, federal grants have made possible working visits for municipal leaders, educators, and social service workers from the Kotlas area. Additionally, a locally-sponsored delegation from Kotlas studied our medical programs. Throughout the period teacher/student groups have come to the Waterville area to participate in the Russian Sampler, a day-long program to expose area junior and senior high school students to Russian language, history, and culture, which is co-sponsored by the Colby College Russian Department. There have been many other official and private visits by people from Kotlas. From the beginning people from the Waterville area have returned the visits. The first meeting between Watervillians and Kotlasians occurred in April of 1989 when three Waterville area residents journeyed to Kotlas. In June of 1990 the mayor of Kotlas led a 4-person delegation to the Waterville area. During that visit he signed a proclamation with Waterville's mayor declaring Kotlas and Waterville to be sister cities. The relationship was commemorated with the planting of a cluster of birch trees near the Two-cent Bridge. Replanted birches were dedicated during a 2004 visit of a Kotlas mayor and a small delegation.

As a part of its community outreach the Connection has arranged Russian film series through the local adult education program, has participated in area festivals, and has sold Russian-made Christmas ornaments. It holds an annual meeting, open to the public, with a Russian-based program. Waterville area citizens, municipal leaders, and civic, social, and business groups have supported this project over the years. Thus, one small effort to develop and maintain friendly relations between our two countries has blossomed.

Visit our web site, where you will find our newsletter, pictures of Kotlas, and information about Kotlas and the Kotlas Connection. The URL is <http://www.kotlas.org>. We can also be reached at P.O. Box 1747, Waterville, ME 04903-1747.



Mark Fisher

Mark Fisher has served on the executive committee of the Kotlas-Waterville Area Sister City Connection since 2002. Mark made his first trip to Kotlas in 2012 to help celebrate the city's 95th anniversary. In 2015, he was among the delegates who travelled to Kotlas to mark the 25th anniversary of the sister-city relationship, and to teach a class at American Sampler, Kotlas's counterpart to our own Russian Sampler. In June, he will be in Kotlas to represent our organization in the gala celebration of the 100th anniversary of the city's founding.

Since 2003, Mark has hosted over 60 international students, mostly from Russia, China, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan, either for free or at cost. He encourages many to apply for admission to Kennebec Valley Community College, Thomas College, Colby College and local high schools. He assists them in arranging tours of universities such as MIT, Harvard, Yale, and Princeton.

Mark is president of American Academic Adventures and a member of the Town Council of Oakland.