

Artwork sent with love, from Sarasota to Russia

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GRANT JEFFERIES/The Herald

Mayor Alexander Petrovich Rybakov of Vladimir, Russia, with artist and Rosedale resident Barbara Schicitano, as she shows a watercolor painting she donated to be given to the Russian mayor, at a luncheon Wednesday at the Sarasota Yacht Club.

SARASOTA - When the Sarasota Sister Cities Association asked Barbara Schicitano to donate a piece of her art to the association, Schicitano didn't think twice about it.

"I was happy to do that," she said Wednesday at the Sarasota Yacht Club, where her "Sunset Sarasota" was presented to Alexander Rybakov, the mayor of Vladimir, Russia, one of Sarasota's sister cities.

Schicitano, a Rosedale resident and president of Women Contemporary Artists, painted the watercolor in 2005. It's a beach scene that features soft blues and pinks that blend together.

The painting, its label printed in Russian, sat on an easel at the yacht club, where it and two other pieces of art were admired by all. The three works will travel back to Vladimir with Rybakov and his delegation.

"It's just a wonderful opportunity to have my artwork displayed in Vladimir," Schicitano said.

This is the first time Rybakov has led a delegation to Sarasota, though there's been a relationship between the two cities since 1994, said Bill Wallace, president of Sarasota Sister Cities. The delegation included Yuri Fedorov, director of the Department of International Relations, Foreign Business Cooperation and Tourism and Fyodor Lavrov, director of the Vladimir branch of the Russian International Academy of Tourism.

Sarasota Mayor Fredd Atkins said he feels honored to have Rybakov visiting the city. The delegation arrived Sunday and travels the nearly 6,000 miles back to Russia on Sunday.

It's a special occasion to signal the commitment the two cities have with each other, Atkins said.

"I believe it's also about something bigger, too," he said. "We're creating economic, educational, social and art opportunities for each other."

When they visit each other and exchange currencies, the mayors are helping each other's economies, Atkins said. He hasn't yet had the chance to travel to Vladimir.

President Dwight D. Eisenhower established the "sister cities" program in 1956 to create lasting partnerships between U.S. and international cities. Other sister cities of Sarasota are Hamilton, Ontario, Canada; Perpignan, France; Tel Mond, Israel; Dunfermline, Scotland; and Treviso, Italy.

Kathleen McDonald and Kim Northrop, also of Women Contemporary Artists, donated works that Sarasota Sister Cities will present to other sister cities in the future.

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