



MEXICO

by LANDEE W. BRYANT



Sabores y Saberes!

“FLAVOR AND KNOWLEDGE”

Local artists *of all stripes* painted a pertinent picture of Paducah for their Mexican hosts in a sister UNESCO city



▲ Chef Sara Bradley shares her spiced pecans, crafted with local flavors, with students of University de los Altos de Chiapas. ▼ Nathan Brown sits down with some locals for an impromptu performance.





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THE TIME WE SPEND IN OUR daily lives evaluating our place within the world is massive for some, an afterthought for others, and WAS somewhere in between for me.

As one of the individuals who traveled to San Cristóbal de Las Casas to participate in *Sabores y Saberes* as a UNESCO Creative City collaboration, I think I speak for everyone when I say we are all forever changed.

“While I cannot speak for all the amazing local artists of our region, I know that many of us who went on this venture have dedicated much of our lives, studies, and art to promoting Paducah,” said Nathan Blake Lynn. With that being said, I am humbled to have been able to share in such a meaningful cultural exchange and hope that in the future other artists will be able to do the same. The opportunity to represent Paducah at this inaugural festival was a gift. Not something we were entitled to, but something for which we all worked to make happen. And it wouldn’t have happened without the extreme generosity of the people of San Cristóbal de Las Casas giving us shelter, food, and a new perspective.

Fully realizing that there are an infinite number of citizens of Paducah that bring something uniquely wonderful to our community on a daily basis, the words “humbled” and “proud” were often part of every conversation that took place while we were in Mexico. Being able to cross a border, overcome a language barrier, embrace the cultural richness of a region and



Clockwise: Group photo outside the San Juan Chamula Church. • Mayor Brandi Harless meets with the “traditional governors” of the indigenous village of Chamula, along with representatives from the UNESCO Creative City of Icheon, South Korea. • The first course crafted by Chef Sara Bradley for the Paducah Day meal consisting of jicama, beets, and Broadbent country ham. • The Solid Rock’it Boosters perform on the stage at the festival.





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be invited to showcase ours, created a bond that will be unbroken.

“Paducah’s involvement with the Creative Cities Network is evolving,” says Mayor Brandi Harless. “This festival was the first time I have seen more creatives/artists attend an event than administrative leaders. This was very encouraging to me. The unofficial theme of the festival became ‘elevate the creative in our community and globe’ meaning we should work towards ensuring that our creatives/artists are revered for their contributions and considered an integral part of our economic and community development.”

Paducah was invited to this event to showcase two things for which we are known and which bring in far-reaching revenue to our community—fiber and culinary arts. However music, ceramics, and photography became an integral part of the experience. Without the massive appeal Paducah has as a community rich with arts and culture, the ebb and flow of local businesses, non-profit arts organizations, restaurants, and more would be greatly affected.

Being able to spread the word of what is happening in our western Kentucky town is imperative to so many facets of growth. As Chef Sara Bradley put it, “Paducah went to Mexico and killed it! We brought many of the things that make Paducah wonderful, but not everything. We showed off our delicious food, art, textiles, roots music, and camaraderie. We traded cooking techniques completely foreign to each other and grew as chefs. I witnessed an elderly indigenous women openly weep as members of our delegation sang roots music a capella all while sharing the space with a master potter from Icheon, South Korea and a chef from the local culinary school. But, most of all, Paducah showed up with good ole’ southern hospitality. In one plenary session we were sitting at a round table and discussing with people from four different continents what we can do globally to promote the creative spirit.”

The Saturday of the festival was “Paducah Day” in which Chef Sara Bradley offered up four distinctly creative courses, the Solid Rock’it Boosters performed (at the meal and later that evening on the main stage), artist Lexie Abra Johnson showed off her textile skills with hand-dyed napkins for attendees to take home, and Mayor Harless broke bread with representatives from across the globe. During the

Clockwise: Landee Bryant, storyteller and photographer. • Inside the kitchen of Tierra y Cielo Restaurante where chefs prepared appetizers for an artists’ reception. • Worlds collide as the Solid Rock’it Boosters play alongside a local mariachi band. • Nathan Brown builds ceramic pieces with master potters from Icheon as well as artists from Amatenango de Valle. • Mayor Harless represented Paducah at the celebration of La Candelaria Day. • Table setting for the Paducah Day meal with hand-dyed napkins made by Paducah artist Lexi Abra Johnson.





Sabores y Saberes Festival



Members of the city of San Cristóbal de las Casas, Mexico, were part of the UNESCO International Annual meeting in Paducah last fall. At that time, they invited members of Paducah's arts and culinary community to visit them at Sabores y Saberes in 2018. This new festival aims to promote local gastronomic and artisanal expressions and global connections in the UNESCO Creative Cities Network through cultural exchange and collaboration. "The event helped us all to contemplate the transversal connection between gastronomy and crafts and folk art," said Laura Oswald, Marketing Director of the Paducah Convention & Visitors Bureau. "It's difficult to put into words the experience and opportunity that this event was for Paducah. It was a privilege to stand alongside a delegation of proud Paducahans who represented so well Kentucky cuisine, craft, and music on the global stage."





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Paducah Day meal, musician and leather worker Todd Anderson remembered, “Everyone was talking and getting ready to leave. Our band went to do our final two songs. First we played “Las Chiapanecas” which was a regional anthem from Chiapas. As we started into this song the room came to a complete standstill. Everyone in the room stopped and turned toward us. We then finished with a full-throated arm in arm rendition of ‘My Old Kentucky Home’ and by the time we finished the room was in tears. Picture roughly 100 adults, at least three languages plus the language of music and half the room was hugging each other. It is the type of connection that can only be made by the heart when mutual respect and admiration exists.”

And all the while our amazing team

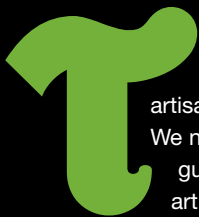
from the Paducah Convention & Visitors Bureau (Lynda Peters-Jones and Laura Oswald) hosted an informational booth each day at the festival providing information about Paducah. “The creative and cultural spirit of Paducah is strong. We have a lot to share, and our perspective can give life and new meaning to the creative cultures of other places,” added Nathan Brown. “It is collaboration and cooperation that bring energy and purpose to those around us. I understand that through shared experiences, all the citizens of the world can come to a place of understanding in real time, beyond the abstract. The willingness for the coordinators of this festival to allow the Paducah contingent to so intensely delve into their culture was magical.”

“San Cristóbal de Las Casas is coined as the ‘City of Magic’ and more than lived up to its name,” said Josh Coffey. “We still have much to learn and I can’t wait to see where our community goes next, not only globally but right here in western Kentucky.”

Going into this with a very limited perspective of what it would truly mean, I have returned to my beloved hometown with a new perspective; a new way of looking at Paducah and its broader reach; a pride that I have always felt, but that has been amplified. I desire to share with everyone I see the impact interactions can have as we are easily retired to our own individual life/work bubbles and rarely take the time to observe the world and our place in it through the eyes of others. Each moment was to be absorbed to the fullest, as we all knew how lucky we were to be able to participate in such a special inaugural event. I am forever changed and look forward to the collaborations that will be born and global impact this will have for all residents of Paducah and the region. **P**

A Message from Mexico

Commentary from Isaac Cordero, San Cristobal Creative City Team



THE PARTICIPATION OF THE OFFICIAL DELEGATION OF

Paducah as a Creative City of UNESCO in the first festival artisanal and gastronomic Sabores y Saberes, was just magnificent. We never expected to have a better city as the first international guest. We are so happy with the participation of the team of artisans, chefs, and coordinators of the CVB who worked hard to show us the true spirit of this event. Their participation was a key to make known to all 180 cities of the network and to the entire world the potential and importance of this initiative. (We couldn’t have made it without them).

We have left a huge inspiration, when we see all this team committed to dedicate their passion, heart, and soul to show the value of their culture and their city’s identity. They left us with high expectations for the future delegations. Without a doubt one of the biggest lessons for us was to have the opportunity to see the Mayor Brandi Harless, an admirable woman, working hand in hand with her delegation, leaving us the strong and clear message that government and creatives can and should work together for the sustainable development of our communities and the understanding between our cultures.”

