

# Szeged welcomes 'sister'

## Toledo group gets warm welcome despite weather

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SPECIAL TO THE BLADE

**SZEGED, Hungary** — Called by Hungarians the city of sunshine, Szeged couldn't prove it to three Toledo city council members and other guests visiting this weekend as part of the International Sister Cities program.

The weather was cloudy and rainy again yesterday when Toledo Council President Jack Ford and Councilmen Peter Ujvagi and Eleanor Kahle attended the sixth annual celebration of "Szeged Day." The day recognizes May 21, 1719, when Szeged got special status from the king as a free royal city.

Also in attendance at yesterday's festivities were representatives of Szeged's other sister cities in Parma, Italy, and Turki, Finland.

Mr. Ford said the trip was his first outside the United States except for a trip to Canada. He said he was impressed by the "very deep cultural heritage" of Hungarians, particularly the old buildings and their architecture.

He also was impressed by the fact that a "lot of children are very mannerly."

Told that the German model of pedagogy may be responsible for the good manners of the children, Mr. Ford replied: "Whatever it is, I'd like to export a little bit."

Mr. Ford, who traveled to Hungary as Mayor Carty Finkbeiner's representative because the mayor had to remain in Toledo for the Chrysler convention, will return to the United States tomorrow.

The Toledo delegation is also hoping that their trip will result in the export of some Toledo-area products to Hungary and central Europe while attracting some Hungarian business back to Ohio.

On Friday afternoon, Mr. Ujvagi, who is fluent in Hungarian, met with Gabor Csonka, director of the Szege-

din International Fair to be held in July. Toledo will take part in the fair for the first time, and Toledo area business are expected to exhibit their products.

Among the exhibits will be a Toledo-made Jeep Cherokee. Mr. Csonka predicted the Jeep will be a very popular attraction because Szeged is in the middle of a large agricultural area.

Two years ago, many Hungarian farmers got back large pieces of land from the government and they could use a vehicle like this to get around, he noted.

Mr. Ujvagi also met with Attila Ambrus, a Hungarian businessman who has expressed interest in opening a Hungarian restaurant in Toledo.

During a dinner Friday night, Szeged Mayor Pal Lippai, who visited Toledo last fall, talked about the importance of continuing to improve the sister city relationship between Toledo and his city.

Mr. Lippai was presented with a gift from the Toledo delegation: a glass ball of the globe about the size of a tennis ball showing the continents. Two stars with the names Toledo and Szeged are engraved in the glass.

The Toledo delegation arrived in Szeged Thursday afternoon and were greeted by Eva Vanyai, the vice mayor of this Hungarian city and a visitor to Toledo last year. In addition to the council members, the group included Andrew Rakay, president of the Hungarian Club of Toledo.

Mr. Rakay was traveling in Europe with his daughter on a private trip and was invited to the Sister Cities events as a guest of the Szegedin government.

Mr. Rakay's parents came to the United States from the small Hungarian city of Encs. He was born in America, and this was his first visit to Hungary.

"I feel very much at home," Mr. Rakay said. "I don't feel like I'm in a foreign country. Everything is almost as I imagined."

Mrs. Kahle first came to Szeged in 1990 when she led a Toledo delegation to sign the Sister Cities agreement. She said she can see a noticeable difference in the attitudes of the Hungarian people between her first and second visits.

"When I first came, it was shortly after the change of the government system," she said. "... The people were optimistic, but also very concerned. I think it's settled down, and people that I have talked to, I think, realized that it is going to take a long time to change the whole system. Some people were discouraged."

This time, she said, "I have found the people welcome me, and the welcome and the warmth is fantastic."

After their arrival Thursday, the Toledo delegation had dinner with several Szeged city officials. Among them were Szeged Councilman Tibor Vincze and Balint Orosz, the chief architect of Szeged. Friday morning they did some sightseeing in Szeged and had lunch with leaders of the two Szegedin TV studios: Janos Ban, director of the regional studio of the Hungarian National Television, and Karoly Koroknay, director of the city channel.

Mr. Ford and Mr. Ujvagi told them that Toledo would like to arrange the conference of Sister Cities International in 1996 and would like to make a satellite link between the two cities. The international conference could bring some 1,500 people to Toledo, but the city is in competition with New York City; Roanoke, Va., and Orlando, Fla. and would have to raise some \$250,000 through private and corporate donations to finance the event.

Today, the Toledo delegation was to meet with two representatives of

Jozsef Geczi and Edit Rozsa, of the Free Democrats.

Mr. Ujvagi said he wants to gather more information about the political situation in Hungary. General elections were held in Hungary earlier this month.

"For a man like me, who left this country in 1956, it's very important," he said.

Mr. Ford, who operates Substance Abuse Services, Inc., was scheduled today to visit Drug Ambulance, a drug treatment center in Szeged. Although not as big a problem as in the United States, there are Hungarians who need drug treatment help.

Mrs. Kahle is expected to meet tomorrow with representatives of the Hungarian Zonta to present \$2,400 raised through donations from Americans.

On Tuesday, Mr. Ujvagi and Mrs. Kahle will extol Toledo as a gateway for trade at a press conference before the Hungarian Trade Association in Budapest.

Mr. Ujvagi is expected to return to Toledo Wednesday and Mrs. Kahle Thursday.