Peanuts plays role in St. Paul-Changsha sister-city ties

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Lucy and Charlie Brown likely will be on their best behavior as they head to China in the spring as part of a sister-city gift exchange between St. Paul, Minnesota and Changsha.  
"Miss Hmong Lucy" was introduced earlier this month and is one of five statues from the famous Peanuts cartoon that were constructed to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the sister-city relationship between the US Midwest city and the capital of Hunan province in Central China.  
The sister-park relationship between Yanghu Wetland Park and Phalen Regional Park in St. Paul was established in 2015.  
"The Minnesota Hmong and Minnesota Chinese communities would like to form closer cultural and business ties with their counterparts in Changsha and Hunan province," Linda Mealey-Lohmann, president and co-founder of the Minnesota- China Friendship Garden Society, told China Daily. "They feel that having a visible presence with these five Peanuts statues in Changsha will open doors for those conversations to begin."  
The Hmong are members of the Miao ethnic group, originating in China.  
In early April, Lucy, Charlie Brown, Linus and Snoopy and his Dog House will be shipped to Yanghu Wetland Park in Changsha.  
The statues, inspired by the late cartoonist Charles Schulz, who grew up in St. Paul, will go to China after a party in St. Paul in March at which the public can take photos with the statues, Mealey-Lohmann said.  
In exchange, Changsha Yangzhou Wetlands Park will send the Minnesota park a 25-by-25- foot replica of the Aiwa Pavilion in Changsha, which was built in 1792 during the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911).  
Hmong-American artist Kao Lee Thao designed the Lucy statue, and Chinese-American artist Yudon Shen created Snoopy's Dog House with Minnesota symbols, including the common loon, monarch butterfly,Norway pine and pinkand- white lady's slipper flower.  
Tivoli Too, a design company in Mendota Heights, Minnesota, fabricated the statues. Each of the roughly 5-feet-tall statues are made of polyurethane, foam, and steel and weigh about 700 pounds when combined with their nearly 500-pound concrete bases.  
The Garden Society raised the funds for the statues, including the custom-designed Lucy and Dog House - approximately $44,000 in total - and has raised $700,000 for the St. Paul-Changsha China Friendship Garden in Phalen Park.  
The purpose of the garden is "to honor the many contributions by the Chinese in Minnesota since the 1870s, integrate Chinese garden-design principles within the natural setting of Phalen Regional Park and be a bridge between the Minnesota Hmong and the Hmong ancestral home of Changsha, Hunan province, China," according to the Minnesota China Friendship Garden Society.  
Minnesota has the secondlargest Hmong population (66,000) in the US, according to the 2010 US Census. About 3 million Hmong live in China.  
"Many Hmong from the USA and other countries are already talking about going to Hunan, China to visit (Miss) Hmong Lucy," said Ganying Jeff Vang, a Hmong-American board member of the Garden Society.

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