

TASHLAND DAILY TIDINGS

By Kernan Turner Amigo Club

May 16, 2016 8:02PM

Entre Amigos: Sister City universities open new era of collaboration



SOU President Dr. Roy Saigo (left) receives a recognition award from University of Guanajuato President Dr. Luis Felipe Guerrero Agripino (right) as UG Provost Dr. Hector Efraín Rodríguez de la Rosa (center background) looks on. Saigo had just given a magister conference lecture on "University Leadership." Saigo led an SOU delegation to Guanajuato this month. UG Photo

Southern Oregon University President Dr. Roy Hirofumi Saigo went to Guanajuato this month to sign a document reaffirming close ties between SOU and the University of Guanajuato.

Saigo headed an SOU delegation to Guanajuato May 1-6 that included Provost Dr. Susan Walsh and Study Away Programs Manager Mary Gardiner.

Saigo and UG President Dr. Luis Felipe Guerrero Agripino signed a formal "memorandum of understanding" that renewed and extended 47 years of "academic friendship" and recognized "the mutual benefits to be gained through a collaborative program aimed at promoting scholarly activities and international perspectives." Walsh and UG Provost Dr. Hector Efraín Rodríguez de la Rosa also signed the document, with Guanajuato Mayor Edgar Castro Cerrillo serving as an honorary witness.

The agreement's objectives include exchanges of students and research and teaching-staff, joint academic and scientific activities and collaborative research projects. More than 1,000 students and academics have participated in the Amistad exchange program over the last 47 years.

At the signing ceremony, Saigo asserted the memorandum was more than "ideas, a promise of a relationship" and represented "a new era of love and respect" between the two universities. He said their collaboration founded on human relations guarantees that the new agreement will be more than just signatures on a paper.

"The trip was a wonderful visit full of friendship and hospitality and a very warm reception from everyone," Saigo told Entre Amigos after his return to Ashland.

While in Guanajuato, the delegation met with university and city officials, alumni of the Amistad student exchange program, volunteer fire fighters, federal Sen. Juan Carlos Romero Hicks and his wife, Faffie Siekman Romero, who is a significant donor to the SOU Foundation's Ashland Amigo Club endowed scholarship fund for Amistad exchange students.

Guanajuato artist to paint Calle Guanajuato mural

Inspired by a visit to Guanajuato last year, Barry and Kathryn Thalden have commissioned a Guanajuato artist to paint a mural in downtown Ashland they hope will further friendship between the sister cities.

They have selected Laura "Loreta" Rangel Villaseñor to paint the mural on the side of the building housing the Sesame Asian Kitchen restaurant at the upper entry to Calle Guanajuato, which parallels Ashland Creek behind the Plaza. The Thaldens said Rangel "has created a colorful design that incorporates the soaring mountains, colorful homes and beautiful buildings so that everyone in Ashland will have an experience of their sister city."

Rangel will begin painting the mural in late May with expectations of finishing in time for a dedication when the traditional Guanajuato delegation is in town for the Fourth of July celebrations.

In her project proposal, Rangel said, "Through my personal style, which simplifies forms and gives special attention to color, I focus on showing the joy and vibrant essence of not the superficial, but rather the inner character of my city."

Before moving to Ashland, Barry Thalden had been an architect whose firm designed resort and casino projects around the country. Before retiring and becoming the founding minister of a Unity Church in Las Vegas, Kathryn's landscape architectural firm in Kansas City focused on civic projects. They said they have combined their interest in art and design to promote "the importance of supporting art and enhancing the urban character of Ashland."

Their previous projects included commissioning Denise Baxter's "Seasons of Gratitude" mural at the Ashland Emergency Food Bank and the placing of flower baskets in the Plaza and throughout downtown. They are working on developing a Southern Oregon University farm pavilion and are partners in building a memory care center next to the Lithia Springs Inn.

Guanajuato sends firefighters to Ashland for training

Two firefighters from Guanajuato are participating with others from four countries and across the United States in the Ashland Prescribed Fire Training Exchange (TRES) that began last week.

The Guanajuato fire fighters, Capt. Juan Eduardo Luna Liva and Lt. Asael Vasni Torres Rodriguez, will be here through May 21, learning the effective use of controlled burning to benefit ecosystems and to protect communities from wildfires. When the training ends, Luna and Torres will drive the Ashland Fire Department's donated ambulance to Guanajuato.

Amigo Club's Entre Amigos (Between Friends) column about Ashland ties to its sister city Guanajuato, Mexico, appears on the third Tuesday of each month. Longtime AP reporter and bureau chief Kernan Turner is an Ashland resident and Amigo Club member.

<http://www.dailytidings.com/article/20160516/NEWS/160519847>