

ASHLAND DAILY TIDINGS

By Kernan Turner Amigo Club

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Guanajuato visitors join Fourth of July celebrations

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Ashland High School students Kate Joss-Bradley (left) and Halle Lowe ride in Ashland Fourth of July Parade. They traveled to Sister City Guanajuato in June to help represent Ashland at the Mexican city's annual summer festivals.

Photo by Graham Lewis / Graham Lewis Fine Photography

The nearly 2,000 miles separating Ashland from Sister City Guanajuato melted away two weeks ago through direct people-to-people contact with a Sister City delegation that joined in Ashland's Fourth of July celebrations.

Arriving the evening of June 28, the visitors awoke the next morning to an Amigo Club-coordinated, jam-packed agenda, starting with breakfast the following morning at the Emek Shalom Temple and ending six days later with the city's fireworks display, viewed from City Councilor Rich Rosenthal's back porch.

After returning home, one of the travelers, City Councilor Juan Carlos Delgado Zárate, emailed, "We left our hearts in Ashland. To all of you, thank you with all my heart. God bless you always. We wait for you in Guanajuato." It was a sentiment familiar to anyone from Ashland who has ever visited Guanajuato.

Delgado Zárate, traveling with his son Fabian, said the highlight for him was attending the city's dedication of the giant wall mural titled "Las Calles de Guanajuato" on Ashland's Calle Guanajuato behind the Plaza on Ashland Creek. Guanajuato artist Laura "Loreta" Rangel Villaseñor, commissioned by Kathryn and Barry Thalden, had been working on the mural since May. Its vast size and bright colors promise to make it a lasting icon of Sister City relations.

Other members of the Guanajuato delegation included City Councilor Carlos Enrique Ortiz Montaña, official representative of Guanajuato Mayor Edgar Castro Cerrillo; Festival Queen Graciela Pérez; and Guanajuato Rotary representative Guillermo "Billy" Smith. Everyone, including the artist, rode in the Ashland Parade.

Guanajuato delegations have been making Fourth of July visits every year since the establishment of Sister City relations 47 years ago. Ashland sent a delegation in June to celebrate Guanajuato's summer festivals.

The Guanajuato dignitaries' calendar of activities included city tours, separate breakfasts hosted by Ashland Mayor John Stromberg and Southern Oregon University President Dr. Roy Saigo, a Rotary Club luncheon, the annual Chamber of Commerce barbecue, Sunday Mass at Our Lady of the

Mountain Catholic Church, a Hellgate jetboat excursion, an inspection of the Ashland forest resiliency project, a winery tour and tasting, a Spanish-language tour of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Forensics Laboratory arranged by Ed Espinoza, and Hobie Cat sailing with Amigo Club Treasurer Sean Van Ausdall on Emigrant Lake. They also saw “The Wiz” at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival and participated in the Amigo Club’s annual Fourth of July party and its fifth annual Spanish-language poetry recital.

Amigo Club Secretary Jacqueline Milikien took Councilor Ortiz Montaña to the Jackson County Animal Shelter, where he shared information about Guanajuato’s Corazon Animal Shelter.

The visitors stayed with host families, including Milikien, Lynn and Tom Lamoree, Halle Lowe, Deedie Runkel, Juli and Bob Di Chiro and Linda and David Young.

Although he wasn’t able to join the delegation to Ashland, Guanajuato Fire Chief Daniel Barrera Vazquez emailed “greetings and congratulations on your Independence Day festivities.” He said, “The friendship between our two peoples exceeds the limits of courtesy, reaching complete confidence filled with intimacy, brotherhood and joy ... We are proud that there are people in this world so good, positive, hard-working and human as our brothers and sisters of Ashland.”

Guanajuato to Play in Sister City Little League Classic

Guanajuato and Ashland Little League teams will compete this month in the second annual Sister City Classic II.

Play starts at 7 p.m. Saturday at the U.S. Cellular Community Park in Medford, followed by double-headers beginning at 5 p.m. Sunday, featuring Ashland, North Medford and Guanajuato teams, and a farewell game between Guanajuato and Ashland at 9 a.m. Tuesday at the North Mountain Park JV Field.

Ashland played in the first Sister City Classic in Guanajuato in the spring of 2015.

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.

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