

ASHLAND DAILY TIDINGS

By Kernan Turner Amigo Club

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Guanajuato dog rescuers raising funds for shelter



Regular meals turned Torombolo into a noble dog. He plays here with Guanajuato dog shelter co-founder Paulina Abascal. Courtesy photo

When Paulina Abascal and her mother, Martha Miranda, found themselves rescuing dogs almost daily from the streets of Guanajuato, Ashland's Sister City, they rented some property outside the city and created a rustic, no-kill shelter for abandoned, stray and abused animals.

For five years, they paid all the rustic shelter's expenses, including the rent, dog food, veterinary care, surgeries, sterilizations, vaccines and medicine.

After the landlord ended their lease, they formed the nonprofit Animal Heart Foundation of Guanajuato (Fundación Corazón Animal de Guanajuato), with Paulina as the president and Martha as the secretary. Also serving on the board are three other women living in Guanajuato, Paulina Vargas, Sharon Anton and Angeles Omedo. The foundation has no government affiliation or funding.

Foundation volunteers are rushing to build a permanent shelter before the 100 dogs at the original facility must vacate the property. The foundation sought \$20,000 in donations, received an initial \$8,500, and has spent 5,000 so far on construction of a nearly completed guardhouse and brick wall on an acre of donated land.

The foundation and the Jackson County Animal Shelter made contact in July when Guanajuato City Councilor Carlos Ortiz Montano toured the shelter with Executive Director Jim Ormand and volunteer Jacqueline Milikien, an Ashland Amigo Club board member.

Ormand said in an email message, “We feel that the most effective and best way to help is for people to donate directly to their shelter. We will provide information ... on our website and newsletters.”

Ormand added, “We are happy to promote this as a Sister City project.”

The Foundation website describes the struggle to care for the dogs at the original shelter as “a family labor of love ... Martha travels by bus to the shelter every day to clean the kennels, wash blankets, feed the dogs, and make sure they are all right. There have been no days off for Paulina or Martha, no vacations or sick days. Even with a team of devoted volunteers, it’s been an exhausting effort, and one that will never end until the last dog has found a safe and loving home.”

Sharon Anton of the foundation says in an email message that the original shelter is “pretty rough,” consisting of a small house surrounded by chain-link kennels covered by tarps to keep the wind and rain out and a large dirt front yard that turns to mud when it rains.

“There’s no electricity or drainage system,” Anton says. “Water is borrowed from a neighbor. We're desperate to get out of there, and the owner is desperate for us to go.”

Anton, who is from Los Angeles, said that when she first visited Guanajuato 14 years ago, feral dog packs roamed Guanajuato. She found some improvement when she returned to live in Guanajuato in 2008. Stores and veterinarians had begun selling pet foods and supplies and more cats and dogs were being kept as pets.

“The bad news is that there are still large numbers animals living outside ... and going hungry, getting diseases, or being hit by cars, since there are also more cars here than ever before,” she said.

The city opened its own dog-only shelter in 2009, where it euthanizes them after five days.

Anton said another animal rescuer has found homes in Canada for many of the foundation’s animals, and the foundation would welcome an arrangement with other responsible individuals or shelters in the United States.

“Our goal is to get as many of our rescues as possible into permanent loving homes,” she said.

For more information about the shelter, contact Sharon Anton at sharonmanton@gmail.com or visit <http://bit.ly/2bAe6Yu> and <http://bit.ly/2bAdqCv>.

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/20160815/NEWS/160819873>