

# ASHLAND DAILY TIDINGS

## **Ashland, Guanajuato, continue to play ball — and love it**

By Kernan Turner Amigo Club

Political relations between the United States and Mexico may be tense at the national level, but a youth baseball cultural exchange program is keeping longtime sister cities Ashland and Guanajuato closer than ever.

Both sides of the border are preparing for the third annual Sister City Baseball Classic. This year's match-up features a team of 12-and-under Ashland Little Leaguers who are traveling over spring break (March 26-April 1) to play against their Guanajuato counterparts.

Founded in 2015 by Ashland City Councilor Rich Rosenthal and local Little League presidents Armando Preciado (Guanajuato) and David Johnson (Ashland), the exchange program is a new addition to 48 years of robust sister-city relations. Last July, a 13-and-under Guanajuato team played a four-game series in the Rogue Valley against the same Ashlanders who made the inaugural trek to Mexico in March 2015. Rosenthal said that by staying at host-family homes, the 11 players and their parents will foster lifelong memories and a deeper understanding of Mexican life, culture and cuisine.

"What is needed now, more than ever, are programs that help build bridges between our countries, not walls," Rosenthal said. "The Sister City Classic is an opportunity, through the sport of baseball, for our children to be great ambassadors for Ashland and our country, on a person-to-person basis." Coached by Ashland Little League President Greg White, this year's team includes sixth-graders Pueo Benson, Eyerá Nogues and Gabe Brabec; fifth-graders Keller Bloodworth, Jackson Rosenthal and Gavin White; and fourth-graders Sam Brabec, Bridger Foss, Joseph Harrower, Colin Lawrence and Even Rhoden.

Ashland will play four baseball games in Guanajuato and enjoy local tours and meals hosted by the Guanajuato mayor, city council, and the local Amigo and Lions clubs.

## **Guanajuato Nursing Students visit Rogue Valley**

Six University of Guanajuato nursing students arrived in Ashland this week as the latest participants in an Oregon Health and Science University exchange program that began in 2014 to increase "cultural competency" in university students.

Cultural competence has been defined as the ability to understand, communicate, and interact with people across cultures by being aware of one's own world view and developing positive attitudes toward other cultural practices and world views.

Patricia Kohan, clinical assistant professor at the Ashland campus of OHSU, said the program originally focused on obesity and nutrition, but current student projects have evolved out of the needs of the community.

On this visit to Ashland, the students will work in the Rogue Valley with Head Start and La Clinica. Their learning will focus on suicide prevention among middle and high school students. Studies indicate that suicide is the second cause of death in Mexico among adolescents between the ages of 15 and 19 and has been increasing between the ages of 10 and 14. Rates in Guanajuato are higher than the national average.

Kohan, a registered nurse with a master of science in nursing, said they also will be working on the benefits of functional medicine. "They will learn how yoga, Zumba, meditation and mindfulness help in overall wellness," she said, and attend a course called "Helping Babies Breathe," which teaches newborn-resuscitation techniques for use in areas with limited medical resources.

Last year, Guanajuato students hosted eight OHSU students from Ashland who worked in the nearby Puenteacillas neighborhood. They created a poster and learning materials about alcohol abuse for the community health center, held classes for teenagers, worked in the Jardín de Niños (Children's Garden) and developed a healthy-eating game for students and parents.

"Hopefully, we will continue these projects or different ones, depending on the needs of the Puenteacillas community, when OHSU exchange students travel again to Guanajuato this spring," Kohan said.

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.