

## ASHLAND DAILY TIDINGS

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### **Annual Guanajuato Nights dinner bolsters scholarship endowment fund**

#### **Tuesday**

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By Kernan Turner Amigo Club

The Ashland Amigo Club's second annual Guanajuato Nights dinner/auction raised more than \$12,000 in November for the club's endowed scholarship fund.

"We surpassed last year's dinner/auction proceeds by nearly \$2,000," club President Betzabé "Mina" Turner said. "We're thrilled that more than 120 guests from Ashland and its environs joined us for a second year and so generously responded to our fundraising efforts."

The club presented a check for \$12,024 last week to Janet Fratella, Southern Oregon University vice president of development and executive director of the SOU Foundation, which administers the endowment. She said Monday the donation and matching funds from major Mexican donor Faffie Siekman de Romero had pushed the total in the Amigo Club endowment to \$92,000.

The dinner/auction featured Mexican cuisine prepared by Guanajuato chef Salvador de la Tejera Alcalde, who directs gastronomic studies and teaches foreign languages at the University of Santa Fe in Guanajuato. Some 20 Ashland High School students volunteered as waiters.

Siekman was the featured speaker at the dinner. She predicted that the fund will surpass \$100,000 by the time Ashland and Guanajuato celebrate their 50th Sister City anniversary in 2019.

Two other Guanajuato visitors at the dinner were University of Guanajuato officials Provost Dr. Raúl Arias Lovillo and Dr. Sergio Antonio Silva Muñoz, director of academic collaboration and international affairs.

Local dignitaries featured on the evening's program included Ashland Mayor John Stromberg and SOU President Linda Schott and Provost Susan Walsh.

The club began raising funds for the scholarship last year after first securing nonprofit, tax-exempt, charitable status.

The Amigo Club granted its first scholarships this year to two Southern Oregon University students and expects to offer grants next year to SOU and University of Guanajuato students participating in the Amistad (Friendship) exchange program between the two universities.

The club presented appreciation awards at the dinner to two longtime supporters of Sister City relations, former Ashland City Administrator Brian Almquist and Dr. Joseph Cox, retired SOU president and Oregon chancellor of higher education.

### **Amigo Club founder eulogizes Rick Mattos**

The death of Richard "Rick" Allen Mattos last month moved Sister City visionary Señora Chela Tapp-Kochs to recall his fervent support for Sister City relations and the Amigo Club's focus on cultural, student and people-to-people exchanges with Guanajuato.

Mattos, 84, retired in 1987 as business manager of Southern Oregon University. He was an active member of more than a dozen civic organizations in Ashland and was once named as Ashland's "Man of the Year."

"While he was at Southern Oregon State College (now SOU), he supported the idea of international exchanges among students of all countries," Sra. Chela recalled this week. "He was especially fond of the unique Amistad (Friendship) exchange program between SOU and the University of Guanajuato that included not only students, but also administrators, department heads and faculty."

Sra. Chela said Mattos helped arrange financial support for exchanges of folkloric ballets, artists and art exhibits, university bands, choral and opera ensembles. He hosted at his own home many visiting Guanajuato artists and faculty members.

Mattos was a dues-paying member of the Amigo Club for 47 years and traveled to Guanajuato, including at 10-year-interval Sister City anniversaries.

"Mattos always knew that supporting the Amistad Program and the Amigo Club would directly support the students of both institutions and allow them to participate in life-changing academic and cultural experiences," Sra. Chela said. "He was fortunate to have witnessed for 47 years the fruits of these exchanges and three generations of students who have served their communities so excellently well.

"The Amigo Club is proud and honored to have been blessed by Mattos' diverse supportive endeavors for our unique Sister City/University/people-to-people exchanges."

*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.*