

Mural of Ashland dedicated in Guanajuato

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A 75-foot mural titled “Ashland — Where Culture Meets Nature,” has been completed and was dedicated on Monday, June 18, in Guanajuato, Mexico, Ashland’s Sister City. The mural incorporates highlights of Ashland — Lithia Park, the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Southern Oregon University, Main Street, and, in the background, the Siskiyou mountains. It conveys a sense of music, theater, art and nature, all part of the Ashland experience.

A crowd of more than 50 local government officials, Ashland representatives, and TV and newspaper reporters attended the ribbon-cutting ceremony. The mural has already become a big hit with the local residents.

The mural is prominently located adjacent to a traffic circle at the intersection of the main boulevard entrance to the city and Calle Ashland. It is immediately across the street from Ashland Park. As an added attraction to the location, the University of Guanajuato commissioned and simultaneously installed a spectacular 30-foot tall sculpture in the center of the traffic circle showing two proud students holding up the emblem of the University.

After the on-site ribbon cutting, the mayor, El Presidente Edgar Castro Cerrillo, along with the Guanajuato City Council held a special meeting at city hall to honor the participants. The meeting opened with a flag ceremony and the Guanajuato Police Band playing the national anthems of both countries. The mayor, while presenting awards to the participants, expressed his city’s “deep

affection and interest in promoting art and reinforcing the links in academic life and the cultural activities that enhance the heritage of both cities.”

The mural was painted by Ashland artist Denise Baxter, who was there to receive accolades for her work. The mural was completed by Baxter with the assistance of five art students from the University of Guanajuato. In commenting on her experience, she said: “I was treated like family during the entire month I spent in Guanajuato instructing the students and painting the mural.”

Ashland Public Works Director Paula Brown represented Mayor John Stromberg at the ceremonies and read a letter from Mayor Stromberg to the City Council regarding the gift of the mural.

As part of the dedication, Señora Challa Tapp of Ashland was honored as the founder of the Sister City Amigo Club and for guiding its activities for almost 50 years. Kathryn and Barry Thalden were also recognized for having envisioned, sponsored and coordinated completion of the murals in Ashland and Guanajuato.

In speaking to the City Council, Barry Thalden congratulated them on their “continued commitment in supporting art as a way to foster tourism and create community pride.”

This new mural completes the two-mural sister city project. In Thalden’s words at the dedication: “We don’t create peace with other countries by building walls and fences, but by building relationships based on mutual respect, understanding and caring.”

In the typical Mexican tradition, celebrations continued into the late-night hours with a 50-person dinner hosted by the Guanajuato-Ashland Amigo Club. Events throughout the day included theater, singing and dance performances by Uma McGuire and Leila Kenner, two talented Ashland High School ambassadors, a speech by the recently-crowned “Princess of Guanajuato,” and the music of multiple mariachi bands.

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