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By Kernan Turner, Amigo Club member.

## Entre Amigos: Guanajuato Nights fundraiser a success

BY **KERNAN TURNER / ASHLAND AMIGO CLUB** November 19, 2018  
All Photos by Jay Ach



Amigo Club President Betzabé "Mina" Turner shares pleasantries with major scholarship donor Frances "Faffie" Siekman de Romero of Guanajuato, Mexico.



Amy Lepon (far left), Brad Hildreth, and Karen Grove (far right) measure an arm's length of raffle tickets for Lisa Zingarelli.



Guanajuato visitors Luis Abascal and his wife, Clarissa Arrache (far left) and Guanajuato University Prof. Dr. Erika Gonzalez (far right) exchange pleasantries with their longtime friend, Sister City advocate Graciela “Señora Chela” Kocks at the Amigo Club’s Guanajuato Nights fundraiser on Saturday.



Southern Oregon University educators dine with Guanajuato Professor Dr. Erika Gonzalez (second from right). Pictures, from left: SOU Provost Dr. Susan Walsh, President Dr. Linda Schott, and Global Engagement Director Mary Gardiner (far right).

Frances “Faffie” Siekman de Romero and three other leading citizens from Guanajuato, Mexico, expressed surprise and admiration Saturday night for the large attendance at the fourth annual Guanajuato Nights fundraiser sponsored by the Ashland Amigo Club.

More than 130 guests filled the Rogue River Room at Southern Oregon University for authentic Mexican cuisine and silent and live auctions featuring items ranging from Guanajuato fine silver jewelry, clothing and language lessons to private vacation houses in Mexico and Oregon and California coats.

Speaking to attendees, Siekman said the work and enthusiasm of Amigo Club volunteers “have ensured the Amistad student exchange program will continue uniting our cities and cultures for many more years.” Some 1,000 students, academics and university administrators have participated in the 49-year-old Amistad exchange program between the University of Guanajuato and Southern Oregon University.

Amigo Club President Betzabé “Mina” Turner said the organization has raised more than \$170,000 in four years, including dinner proceeds and matching funds from Siekman, for its endowed scholarship fund administered by the SOU Foundation. Gross receipts from Saturday’s dinner/auction totaled nearly \$20,000, including \$6,300 in bids raised by live auctioneer Jay Tapp and \$1,984 in the silent auction. Siekman donated \$24,000 in matching funds.

“We’ve awarded five scholarships to SOU students for study in Guanajuato, including this year’s full-year scholarship of \$4,000,” Turner said. “We’re actively seeking applications from Guanajuato students for study in Ashland.”

Other Guanajuato guests included Clarissa Arrache and her husband, Luis Abascal, and Dr. Erika Gonzalez, representing University of Guanajuato President Dr. Luis Felipe Guerrero Agripino. All three marveled at the support shown at the dinner for Sister City relations.

Graciela “Señora Chela” Tapp-Kocks presented Amigo Club service awards to seven recipients, including Arrache, Meiwen and John Richards, Suzanne Haveman, Marty Fabian-Krause, Marina Kendig and Josie Wilson.

The Richards have hosted many Guanajuato exchange students in their home and actively supported the Sister City relationship in other ways. John Richards and Josie Wilson are retired professors who served as coordinators of the Amistad Program and spent time in Guanajuato teaching and recruiting Mexican exchange students.

Haveman, Fabian-Krause and Marina Kendig have served on the Amigo Club board of directors and actively supported multiple Sister City activities for years, including hosting visitors from Guanajuato.

Arrache, president of the Guanajuato Amigo Club for 20 years, has housed dozens of visiting Ashlanders in her house. She is a founder of Guanajuato parenting and women’s organizations, including one representing women tourism directors in the State of Guanajuato. Arrache has worked

closely with Ashland in coordinating Sister City anniversary celebrations, including the 50th next year.

#### Nursing school hosts exchange students

Eight nursing students from Ashland Sister City Guanajuato, Mexico, completed a three-week visit to the Rogue Valley before returning home earlier this month.

The students undertook several health surveys, visited a home hospice center in Medford, La Clinica in Medford, the Three Rivers Hospital in Grants Pass, and a home hospice center.

La Clinica, founded in 1989, provided 147,365 care visits for 29,736 people in 2017, offering “an affordable safety net for vulnerable low-income, uninsured and underinsured patients, many from the Latino community.”

The students worked in pairs on several studies, with themes ranging from obesity in Mexico compared with the rest of the world to differences between dental and end-of-life care in Mexico and the United States. They presented study results to a gathering at an OHSU Nursing School conference room in Churchill Hall on the Southern Oregon University campus.

The University of Guanajuato and the Ashland extension of the OHSU Nursing School have participated in student exchanges for four years. Ashland nursing students will next visit Guanajuato this coming spring.

*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.*