

ASHLAND TIDINGS

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By Kernan Turner, Amigo Club member.



Josie Wilson (right) and Meiwen Richards hold appreciation awards received at the Amigo Club's Guanajuato Nights scholarship fundraiser in November. (Photo courtesy of Jay Ach)

Entre Amigos: Club honors seven for boosting Sister City ties

BY [KERNAN TURNER / ASHLAND AMIGO CLUB](#) December 18, 2018

Many people in Ashland have developed close attachments to Mexico and people-to-people relations with Mexicans that are reflected in their personal and professional lives.

An outstanding example is Dr. Josie Wilson, a professor in the Psychology Department at Southern Oregon University from 1988-2015, where she taught human development, counseling skills and professional ethics, and held several administrative positions.

Wilson and six others received Amigo Club awards at the November Guanajuato Nights dinner/auction for their contributions furthering Sister City relations between Ashland and Guanajuato, Mexico.

The other recipients were Guanajuato Amigo Club President Clarissa Arrache de Abascal and Ashland Amigo Club members Meiwen and John Richards, Suzanne Haveman, Marty Fabian-Krause and Marina Kendig.

Wilson's introduction to Mexico may have been more romantic than usual. Her mother had taken her to Acapulco for Christmas break in 1963.

"On my 16th birthday (Dec. 31), I got my first kiss on the beach," she wrote in a recent email. "When I returned to high school a week later, I switched from French to Spanish, and started to correspond with Carlos. A year later, I spent the summer in Mexico to study Spanish and explore Mexico City."

Wilson would go on to receive her bachelor's in Spanish from the University of Wisconsin, her master's in counseling from Western Michigan University, and a doctorate in clinical psychology from Georgia State University.

At SOU, her administrative posts at different times included coordinator of the Mental Health Counseling Program, chair of the Psychology Department, and dean of Social Sciences and the College of Arts & Sciences.

Wilson's connection with Mexico resumed in the early 1990s when Hector Rodriguez de la Rosa attended her group-counseling class at SOU. Rodriguez, a University of Guanajuato faculty member, was working on his master's degree at SOU. Acting on his encouragement, Wilson went to Guanajuato twice to teach weeklong seminars at UG.

Later, Wilson participated in several Spanish language programs in Mexico, renewing contacts with colleagues at the university. In Ashland, she taught courses for several years at SOU about the psychology of immigration and the Latino community in Oregon.

She returned to the University of Guanajuato in 1999-2000 on a nine-month Fulbright teaching-research grant, working with UG psychology faculty to teach counseling theory, professional ethics and family therapy. While there, she helped develop an ethics curriculum for the psychology program.

With her colleagues Paul Murray at SOU and Leti Chacón Gutiérrez at UG, Wilson developed several short student exchanges — taking SOU psychology students to Guanajuato to develop cultural competency, learning about the Mexican family, the impact of migration, and the values and services provided in Mexico. Other groups of UG students and faculty came to Ashland for short courses on the challenges and strengths of the Latino community in Southern Oregon and the social services available. This model of week-long exchanges has continued between students at the Oregon Health and Science University's School of Nursing on the SOU campus and nursing students at UG.

Wilson served on the SOU Amistad student exchange program board of directors, orienting exchange students and advocating on behalf of the program to the SOU administration.

She participated in 2019 in 40th anniversary celebrations of the Amistad student exchange program, Sister City relations and the founding of the Amigo Club.

Although Wilson is retired and living five blocks from the beach in Pacific Grove, Calif., with her husband, Michael Belsky, a professional mediator in the Rogue Valley for 20 years, she hasn't forgotten Mexico. She remains a member of the Amigo Club and plans to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Sister City relations next year in Ashland and Guanajuato.

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.