

Guanajuato students thankful for sister-city exchange

by Kernan Turner Ashland Amigos Club
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Ashland Amigo Club photo Six University of Guanajuato exchange students and their faculty adviser joined Amigo Club members for snacks in November. Pictured (back row, left to right) are exchange student Luis Aurelio Murguía, Amigo Club board member Lynn Lamoree, and Southern Oregon University Student Services Associate Arturo "Tito" Onesto Jr; (front row, left to right) Amigo Club President Betzabe "Mina" Turner, students Sarai Buenrostro, Dayan Barroso, Luis Jesus Aguilar, University of Guanajuato adviser Alfredo Lara, students Daisy Baltasar, and Jorge Luis Chavez; Foreground: La Casa del Pueblo restaurant owner Salvador de la Cruz and Amigo Club board member Señora Chela Tapp-Kocks.

Six nursing students from the University of Guanajuato spent several weeks in Ashland in October and November as part of an exchange arrangement with the Ashland campus of the Oregon Health and Science Hospital School of Nursing.

The six students, accompanied by Guanajuato faculty adviser Alfredo Lara, divided into three teams, two of them attached to Celia's Hospice House in Holmes Park, Medford, and the third team assigned to the Ashland Middle School.

At the hospice facility, the team translated a manual into Spanish for new patients and their families and prepared a survey of the regional Latin population's views on end-of-life care.

The team at the Ashland Middle School identified student health issues and offered a short lesson to the students.

This was the fifth nursing student exchange between the two sister-city universities. Exchange students from the OSHS School of Nursing on the Southern Oregon University campus will spend three weeks in Guanajuato in April and May.

Scholarship Students Share Experiences

The Ashland Amigo Club asked the two University of Guanajuato recipients of Amigo Club scholarships about their fall-term experiences as exchange students at Southern Oregon University. Here are some lightly edited excerpts of their responses:

"This was a totally new place for me, but with the help of the Amigo Club and the SOU Amistad exchange program, it quickly became like a new home for me," wrote Francisco Javier Landin Cabrera, a 22-year-old Computer Systems major.

"The program greatly surpassed my expectations," he said. "Not only did I experience and admire some of the Oregon natural parks and landmarks, but also I made lots of new friends from many countries; the initial cultural exchange with the people of Oregon is just the beginning of a wonderful journey."

His extracurricular experiences included watching it snow at Mount Ashland, visiting Crater Lake, and celebrating Thanksgiving dinner with his housing hosts, Amigo Club members Karen Grove and Jay Ach.

Landin marveled at SOU's well organized classes and the park-like beauty of the campus.

He called the exchange program "an amazing life-changing experience" that prepared him to participate in multicultural environments and group projects, and made him more confident about personal decisions.

He wrote, "I now understand and appreciate the importance of the sister city relations between Ashland and Guanajuato. These three months will be forever engraved in my mind."

Saul Isaac Sanchez Flores, 21, majoring in computer science, has extended his studies through winter term. He described his daily routine.

"I wake up at 5:10 a.m. When the alarm rings, I just jump out of bed, ride my bike to a friend's house where the rowing team picks us up to go the Emigrant Lake for practice," he said. "Three months ago, I could barely stand at the bus stop in the cold, shivering like a bowl of Jell-O, but now I'm excited as we get in the water on the boats in the full darkness of the morning."

After a shower and a quick visit to the market, he's in class by 10 a.m.

"My major is computer science, but I'm also taking a sociology course, 'The Sociological Imagination,' my first class outside my engineering path."

Sanchez Flores said he eats his main meal at the Hawk commons, followed by library study with friends. During finals week, they studied through the night there, followed by rock-climbing at the recreation center.

“I feel happy about the opportunity that I have here, and I’m thankful for all the people who made it possible,” he said.

During the break between fall and winter terms, Sanchez Flores plans to ride his bicycle from Ashland to Crescent City and the Redwoods.