



# PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2019

## **50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

2019 was a year of jubilee and total success. Ashland and Guanajuato celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Sister Cities. 56 celebrants from Guanajuato were hosted in Ashland early April and 85 people formed the Ashland delegation late May of this year.

Mayors John Stromberg of Ashland and Mario Alejandro Navarro Saldaña proclaimed the "Guanajuato Day" while unveiling a coat of arms donated by Guanajuato on April 8.

The visitors enjoyed breakfasts, dinners and receptions and activities ranging from playing in the snow at Mount Ashland to city tours and buffet dinners, and an Oregon Shakespeare Festival performance of the play "Hairspray."

At week's end, Graciela "Señora Chela" Tapp-Kocks flew to Guanajuato to receive honors as the first foreigner ever honored as a "Distinguished Citizen of Guanajuato" for her visionary leadership in the late 1960s that led to the link between the two cities and their universities.

Guanajuato prepared a busy schedule of events for the Ashland delegation, beginning early each morning and continuing late into the night on five out of the six days of the visit. One of the highlights of this visit among other activities was the traditional children's parade through the historic district singing songs in English. The Ashland Amigo Club donated baby clothes baskets to miners' wives.



Other special events included a “solemn bilateral agreement signing” at the University of Guanajuato, and a Mexico-USA Relations Symposium featuring the Romero Hicks brothers, Juan Carlos and José Luis, who each received two master’s degrees from Southern Oregon State College (now SOU).

### **Citizen of the Year Award**

The Ashland Chamber of Commerce named the Amigo Club as the “2019 Citizen of the Year” for helping sustain 50 years of sister city relations with Guanajuato.

The chamber presented the award at its 113th annual dinner Oct. 3 that had the theme of “Celebrating 50 Years of Sister City Friendship.”

The Citizen of the Year Award honors all Amigo Club members who over the years have put passion, energy and enthusiasm into supporting people-to-people connections between Ashland and Guanajuato.

The Amigo Club of Ashland is an active member of the Chamber.

### **World Peace Flame**

Irene Kai and ACPC Executive Director David Wick presented a World Peace ceremony during the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in Ashland.

In Guanajuato, Ashland representatives helped their sister city attain a World Peace Flame of their own.

Guanajuato will be the first Latin American city with a World Peace Flame and the first sister city flame holder.



## **Guanajuato firefighters attend Ashland controlled-burn training**

Two volunteer firefighters from Guanajuato, veterinarian Juan Armando Alvarez Villegas and engineering student Alfonso Campos Martinez joined firefighters from Spain and seven U.S. states at the Ashland Prescribed Fire Training Exchange (TREX) sponsored by the Ashland Fire Department. They attended two weeks of controlled-burn training on the Ashland watershed and nearby property.

## **2019 Ashland High School ambassadors and Ashland delegation to Guanajuato**

Ashland High School representatives Aubrey Reynolds and Taiga Sherman, coached by Sra. Chela Tapp-Kocks, traveled to Guanajuato in June, representing the City of Ashland at the Fiestas de San Juan y Presa de la Olla, Guanajuato's major summer festivals. Aubrey and Taiga danced, sang and delivered speeches during their 10-day visit. Also other members of the delegation were Amigo Club liaison Sra. Chela Tapp-Kocks, and Ashland High School Spanish teacher Gladys Contreras, who served as a chaperon.

## **Fourth of July**

The Amigo Club coordinated a packed calendar of activities for the visitors, including a city tour, City of Ashland-hosted breakfast, SOU breakfast, Chamber of Commerce BBQ, Water Treatment Plant tour, and a tasting visit to an Ashland winery. Other activities included an Oregon Shakespeare Festival play, "Hairspray," Chamber of Commerce Fourth of July parade, Amigo Club Poetry Recital and annual Fourth of July party, Hellgate Boat excursion, Emigrant Lake sailing, Fireworks display, and other private breakfasts, luncheons and dinners.



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The Grand Marshals were Sra. Chela Tapp-Kocks, founder of the Sister-City relations, and Juan Carlos Romero Hicks, Mexico Congress Representative, who could not attend the parade due to his multiple engagements in Mexico.

Representatives of the official delegation were:

- Guanajuato Queen Andrea I (Andrea Marina Maldonado), accompanied by her sister Claudia.

### **Guanajuato student nurses participate in exchange program**

Six nursing students from Ashland Sister City Guanajuato, Mexico, completed a three-week visit to the Rogue Valley before returning home early November 2019.

- Luis Aurelio Murguia
- Sarai Buenrostro
- Dayan Barroso
- Luis Jesus Aguilar
- Daisy Baltasar
- Jorge Luis Chavez, and
- Alfredo Lara – Guanajuato faculty adviser

They formed three teams, two of them assigned 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.



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The University of Guanajuato and the Ashland extension of the OHSU Nursing School have participated in student exchanges for five years. Ashland nursing students will next visit Guanajuato in April and May 2020.

Amigo Club hosted a “brindis” (toast) at the Casa del Pueblo restaurant in honor of the group before its departure.

## **Guanajuato Nights**

The Amigo Club celebrated its FIFTH ANNUAL “Guanajuato Nights” fundraiser for the Club’s endowed scholarship fund on Nov. 9, 2019, at the Rogue River Room on the Southern Oregon University campus. More than 130 guests attended.

The event featured a 50/50 raffle, silent auction, and a live auction of various vacation homes in Mexico and Oregon.

Amigo Club members and local businesses generously donated items to the auction, ranging from gift certificates to valuable articles and professional services.

Representatives from Guanajuato traveled to Ashland for the event, including Prof. Dr. Ericka Gonzalez, representing Universidad de Guanajuato Rector Luis Felipe Guerrero Agripino, and Guanajuato Fire Department Daniel Barrera Vazquez. Our scholarship fund benefactor, Faffie Siekman Romero could not attend this year.

Four SOU presidents, past and present caught up with each other at Guanajuato Nights. Dr. Joseph Cox, Dr. Elizabeth Zinzer, Dr. Roy Saigo and current president Linda Schott.

We deposited \$10,000 in the endowed scholarship fund, and will make another deposit as soon as all the expenses are counted in. Faffie Siekman donated \$25,000 from the Siekman Foundation. The current



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scholarship fund balance **is approximately \$200,000.**

In five short years, Guanajuato Nights has become our major fundraiser for the scholarships. We have granted nine so far.

### **Appreciation Awards**

The Amigo Club recognized the following contributors of sister city links:

- Susan Walsh, SOU Provost,
- Ashland mural artist Denise Baxter, Ashland mural artist
- Barry and Kathryn Thalden, mural sponsors
- Daniel Barrera Vazquez, commander of the Heroic Volunteer Firefighter Corps of Guanajuato,
- Karen Burstein, Guanajuato City Council representative,
- Jesus Antonio Borja Perez, Director General of Culture and Education
- Loreta Rangel, Guanajuato mural artist

Burstein, Borja and Rangel received their appreciation awards in Guanajuato as they had previous engagements and could not travel to Ashland. During the awards presentation, they committed to celebrate Thanksgiving in Guanajuato every year.

### **Amigo Club Endowed Scholarship**

2019 was the first year the University of Guanajuato participated in the Amigo Club Endowed Scholarship. In the past five years, we have already granted nine scholarships.

The 2019 grantees:

*University of Guanajuato*

Isaac Saul Sanchez Flores



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Francisco Javier Landin Cabrera

SOU

Hallie (Jack) Flukinger  
Orianna S. Alter

## **CLOSING**

We can feel proud for embracing peace and strong bonds of friendship between people from two different cultures.

Thank you for the time and effort you dedicate to the club's success as actively participating members and volunteers.

Our amazing past mirrors and projects another 50 years of total success.

Betzabé H. "Mina" Turner  
President



**AMIGO CLUB OF ASHLAND, OREGON, INC.**

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