

Guanajuato councilor updates Ashland on sister city

by Kernan Turner Amigo Club
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Travelers to Guanajuato, like those pictured, will find more rooms available as Guanajuato City hotels and motels begin reopening despite the COVID-19 pandemic in Mexico. El Correo photo

The Ashland Amigo Club received an email this week from Karen Burstein Campos, a long-time supporter of the sister-city relationship between Ashland and Guanajuato, Mexico. Burstein is a Guanajuato city councilor and chairman of the Committee on Tourism.

“My message is addressed to all our friends in Ashland,” she writes, quoting Aristotle: “Love is composed of a single soul inhabiting two bodies.”

“In other times and circumstances, we would already be preparing for the arrival of our friends from Ashland to join the city of Guanajuato’s traditional San Juan and Presa de la Olla summer festivals.

“However, today’s reality is quite different. Today both cities, like the rest of the world, are confronted by the COVID-19 pandemic, making it impossible also for us to make our traditional visits to Ashland.”

For nearly 50 years, Guanajuato has sent an official city delegation, sometimes led by the mayor and the summer festival queen, to ride in the Chamber of Commerce Parade and to join in other Fourth of July celebrations. Ashland, for its part, is accustomed to sending a city delegation to Guanajuato in June for its two summer festivals where two Ashland High School “ambassadors” join the festival queen’s “court.”

Burstein’s letter continues, “I know that both cities have taken the necessary measures to safeguard the health and lives of their citizens. Stay calm, because in Guanajuato we are working hard to prevent the spread of this virus. We are reinventing our way of life and traditional holidays, transitioning to a new normality.

“In order to move forward, it is essential to remember that the best way to fight the virus is to stay at home, not even going out to visit our family, loved ones, and our friends.

“This year we will not be able to see, embrace, or celebrate the 50 years of friendship between the cities.

“Although this brings me much sadness, it something that we must endure — and I’m sure that we it will be over soon.

“Although there’s long road ahead for both cities and we do not know for certain when things will return to normal and allow us to meet again, we do know that ties that have bound us for 50 years are strong enough to withstand this epidemic.

“This is not a see-you-later letter, but rather a see-you-soon. I send everyone in Ashland a big hug from their second home, Guanajuato.”

Meanwhile, the Guanajuato State Health Secretariat reported at week’s end 4,254 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 289 deaths, including 54 confirmed cases and four deaths in the capital city.

National health officials confirmed a daily record of 5,222 new cases Friday in Mexico, bringing the national total to 139,196. The number of deaths increased by 504 deaths Friday for a total of 16,448.

The newspaper El Correo said the Guanajuato City Hotel and Motel Association announced the reopening this week of more than 20 hotels and at least half of the city’s 58 hotels should be open by the end of the month.

Association President Liliana Preciado Zárate was quoted as saying “it’s a lost year for hotel employees furloughed for the pandemic.”

The online Mexico City News daily newsletter reported that hotels and beaches in Puerto Vallarta, Jalisco, were set to reopen Monday as new cases dropped slightly in Jalisco and 15 of Mexico’s 32 states.

Hotel occupancy levels were to be restricted to between 25% and 30% in Puerto Vallarta and nearby Bahias de Banderas in Nayarit State.