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<https://ashland.news/entre-amigos-sister-cities-ashland-and-guanajuato-celebrate-summer-festivities/>

Entre Amigos: Sister Cities Ashland and Guanajuato celebrate summer festivities

By Kernan Turner



The City of Guanajuato, Mexico, formally announced Sunday the selection of Cecilia “Ceci” Galindo Ayala as this summer’s festival queen. She will visit Ashland during the Fourth of July Independence Day celebrations. Pictured with her (l-r) her father and mother, Alfonso de Jesus Galindo Rodriguez and Monica Ayala Ortega, and Guanajuato Mayor Alejandro Navarro Saldaña and his wife Samantha Smith. Guanajuato municipality photo

Guanajuato summer festival queen participate in Independence Day celebrations

Two Guanajuato summer festival queens may travel to Ashland in late June to join its Fourth of July parade and celebrations, a sister-city tradition for more than 50 years.

This year’s queen, Cecilia “Ceci” Galindo Ayala, will be crowned June 19 to represent the City of Guanajuato during the festivals of San Juan (Saint John) and Presa de la

Olla. The festivities begin in late June and culminate with the opening of the La Olla dam floodgates in early July, a cleaning ritual since the 18th century.

Queen Cecilia is the 20-year-old daughter of Monica Ayala Ortega and Alfonso de Jesus Galindo Rodriguez.

In a digital message to the Amigo Club, Ayala said coming to Ashland is “a dream for me because ever since I was little my grandmother talked to me of her experiences (and it seemed to me) like a fairy tale ... and for me it is ... an enormous privilege to visit and represent my city.” Her Grandmother, Maria del Carmen Ortega Ayala, has visited Ashland many times and greets Amigo Club members when they travel to Guanajuato.



Andrea Guardado Ramirez, Guanajuato summer festival queen for 2020 and 2021, may also come to Ashland in June.

The City of Guanajuato also is considering sending its 2020-2021 queen, Andrea Guardado Ramirez, to ride in the Ashland Parade, an opportunity denied her for two years due to severe COVID conditions forcing its cancellation.

In 2020, Guanajuato Mayor Alejandro Navarro Saldaña said Queen Andrea’s crowning “filled all Guanajatenses with joy and hope.” In a brief ceremony where everyone wore masks and took other protective measures against COVID infection, Andrea committed herself to work on behalf of Guanajuato’s “most vulnerable (poorest)” citizens.

Only 18 at the time, Queen Ayala was enrolled in environmental studies at the University of Salle Bajio, and had worked for social aid organizations and participated in national contests in classical ballet, gymnastics, squash and boxing.



Admirers gather beside a section of the new cabinet display of sister city Guanajuato artifacts and paintings. Pictured (l-r) front row: library director Kari May, Elaine Hamlin and Amigo Club President Betzabe “Mina” Turner; second row: Teresa Montgomery, Amigo Club founder Señora Grace Tapp-Kocks; back row: Donna Wright and Kristin Anderson, Ashland branch manager. Hamlin, Montgomery and Wright are Friends of the Ashland Library members. Amigo Club photo

Library displays Guanajuato artifacts in lower-level makeover

Branch Manager Kristin Anderson and Library Director Kari May greeted a small gathering in May at the official opening of the revamped lower level of the Ashland Public Library. It includes the Guanajuato and Gresham meeting rooms and a brightly lighted display cabinet tucked under the stairway and filled with Guanajuato artifacts provided by the Ashland Amigo Club.

Several members of the club and other friends of the library attended the reopening, including Southern Oregon University (SOU) language professor-emerita Grace “Señora Chela” Tapp Kocks. In prepared remarks, she said, “I have been coming here since 1966. My family grew up with this beloved library.” She recalled receptions for visitors from Guanajuato, teaching evening and weekend Spanish classes in the library, and recommending its bilingual material to her SOU students.

Anderson coordinated the refurbishment, including adding digital technology to the meeting rooms with user-friendly microphones and screen casting, constructing the Guanajuato display cabinet, installing new mobile chairs and tables, improved kitchenette appliances, refreshed lighting, carpets and paint, and placing a plaque on the wall of the Guanajuato meeting room commemorating 52 years of Ashland and Guanajuato sister city relations.

Anderson said funding came from the Friends of the Ashland Library, the Kay Lee Lindberg Estate, and the Jackson County Library Foundation.

The opening of the Carnegie-supported building in 1912 marked the library's formal establishment, but it had been serving the public and lending books as early as 1877. The richest man in the world at the time, Scottish-American philanthropist Andrew Carnegie, bankrolled the construction of 2,509 namesake libraries around the world between 1883 and 1929.

Amigo Club prepares Fourth of July schedule of events

Ashland organizations are preparing multiple Independence Day activities this year following a two-year, COVID-forced interruption in the annual festivities.

The Chamber of Commerce has announced the return of the popular Fourth of July Parade that usually attracts thousands of spectators to Ashland, but the usual fireworks display won't be back this year.

The Ashland Amigo Club is busy putting together a schedule of events for a visiting delegation from sister-city Guanajuato, Mexico.

"This is our busiest and best time of the year," Amigo Club President Betzabé "Mina" Turner said in an interview. "The schedule is jam-packed for our friends from Guanajuato."

Among the planned activities are a City Band salute and invitations to a Lions Club barbecue, SOU breakfast, sailing at Lake of the Woods, an Oregon Shakespeare Festival musical, Amigo Club party, its annual Spanish-language poetry recital, and a Hellgate jet boat excursion on the Rogue River.

Amigo Club's Entre Amigos (Between Friends) column about Ashland ties to its sister city Guanajuato, Mexico, appears monthly. Longtime AP reporter and bureau chief Kernan Turner is an Ashland resident and Amigo Club member.