

By Kernan Turner, Amigo Club member.

Ashlanders join in Guanajuato festival

BY **BY KERNAN TURNER OF THE ASHLAND AMIGO CLUB** October 16, 2018



Photo courtesy of Karen Grove

Ashland visitors to Guanajuato stand at the entrance to the Teatro Juárez in Guanajuato before curtain time Sunday. Pictured are (back row, from left) Tim Lane, Lisa Lane and Lynn Frevert; (front row, from left) Jay Ach, David Frevert and Karen Grove.

It's Festival Cervantino time this month in Ashland's Sister City, Guanajuato, Mexico. At least three Ashland couples are already there to enjoy it.

Ashland Amigo Club members Karen Grove and Jay Ach had just ended a week of Spanish lessons at a Guanajuato institute when friends Lynn and David Frevert and Lisa and Tim Lane joined them in Guanajuato Wednesday.

That night the festival opened with a flamboyantly choreographed "Passage to Bollywood" performance featuring musicians, drummers, vocalists, acrobats and dancers and produced by the Navdhara Indian Dance Theatre from Bombay.

The 46th edition of the festival continues through Oct. 28, a cultural homage to Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, Spanish author of "Don Quixote."

The festival traces its roots to 1953 with university student performances in the city's plazas and open spaces of "Entremeses Cervantinos," brief, between-act plays penned in the 17th century in Cervantes' inimitable, humorous mixture of fantasy and reality. The word "entremeses" is Spanish for "hors d'oeuvres" or "snacks."

The festival has been described as "a cultural buffet of music, theater, art, folklore and more" and Guanajuato as the "Cervantes Capital of America."

The original homage to Cervantes has expanded over the years to include more than 2,400 artists and performers from Mexico and some 30 countries.

"It's been super-fun to watch the build-up this week to the Cervantino," Karen Grove said Saturday in a telephone interview from Guanajuato.

New art and street vendors began appearing on the sidewalks and people began filling the city center, she said; "it's like the whole city was developing an air of festivity," with bar music beginning before noon and continuing into the wee hours of the night.

Anticipating large crowds, Guanajuato beefed up its security measures, Grove said, with camouflaged security vehicles on the roads, one of them parked in the historic district's Plaza de la Paz.

Two former Guanajuato city councilors, Juan Carlos Delgado Zarate and Gabriela "Gaby" Cárdenas Vázquez, greeted the Ashlanders during their stay in Guanajuato. Delgado and Cardenas have made personal and professional visits to Ashland several times in the past.

Delgado and his son, Fabian, took the visiting Ashlanders, three of them professional geologists, on a tour of some mines outside Guanajuato Saturday.

It was a second visit to Guanajuato for Grove and Ach, who have traveled throughout Mexico.

“We’re just delighted it is our sister city,” she said. “It’s such a shining city and its people so lovely. Our visit reinforced our love for it.”

Guanajuato Nights set

The Amigo Club announced this week it has completed arrangements for holding its Guanajuato Nights dinner/auction on Nov. 10 at the Rogue River Room on the Southern Oregon University campus. The event is a fundraiser for the Amigo Club Endowed Scholarship for exchange students between the University of Guanajuato and SOU.

The fourth annual gathering will feature Mexican cuisine prepared from authentic, traditional recipes. A silent auction will open at 5 p.m., followed by dinner and a live auction of time in vacation homes in Oregon, California and Mexico, and language school certificates for a week of Spanish lessons and housing in Guanajuato for four people (two couples).

The silent auction will offer a variety of donated items, ranging from a night and dinner at the Ashland Springs Hotel, to Ashland small business and restaurant gift certificates and Guanajuato silver jewelry and quality textiles.

Several Guanajuato guests are expected, among them Frances “Faffie” Siekman Romero, former Guanajuato City Councilor Clarissa Arrache Mercado, and her husband, hotelier Luis Abascal Zender. Siekman is a major donor to the Amigo Club Endowed Scholarship.

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.