

Nursing students return from sister city exchange

by Kernan Turner of the Ashland Amigo Club
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Courtesy photo Ashland nursing exchange students during their three weeks in Guanajuato. Pictured in front of the Plaza Bartillo fountain are (from left to right) Andrew Harlan, KC Mahoney, Kevin Welnetz, Alaina Lehrberger, Jenny Jochum, Amanda Skaff, Annie Cannon, Holly Kuenzi.

Aspiring nurses from Ashland returned Saturday from three weeks spent in Mexico as part of a cultural exchange program between the Oregon & Health Science University School of Nursing in Ashland and the University of Guanajuato.

“This was the fifth year that students traveled to Mexico to form friendships, learn about the culture in Guanajuato and participate in service-learning projects in the small community of San Jose de Cervera,” said OHSU nursing instructor Rachel Richmond in an email from Guanajuato, Ashland’s sister city.

This year's exchange students were Annie Cannon, Andrew Harlan, Jenny Jochum, Holly Kuenzi, Alaina Lehrberger, KC Mahoney, Amanda Skaff and Kevin Welnetz.

They and Guanajuato nursing faculty and students explored together issues of nutrition, gender equality and healthy drinking water.

In October, OHSU will host eight University of Guanajuato nursing students in Ashland. OHSU's Ashland campus shares Southern Oregon University facilities.

Guanajuato firefighters attend Ashland controlled-burn training

Two volunteer firefighters from Guanajuato, Mexico, and 40 other firefighters are attending two weeks of controlled-burn training on the Ashland Creek watershed and nearby property.

The Mexicans, veterinarian Juan Armando Álvarez-Villegas and engineering student Luis Alfonso Campos-Martinez, joined firefighters from Spain and seven U.S. states at the Ashland Prescribed Fire Training Exchange (TRES) that ends this Friday. Álvarez-Villegas and Campos-Martínez belong to the Heroic Voluntary Firefighters Corps of Guanajuato, Ashland's sister city.

Ashland is hosting its fourth TRES event, a program of the Fire Learning Network, a cooperative effort of Department of Interior agencies and the Forest Service coordinated by the Nature Conservancy.

The TRES program allows firefighters to share knowledge and train in controlled burning to protect ecosystems and communities from severe wildfires.

"We're fighting fire with fire," said Chris Chambers, forestry division chief of the Ashland Fire Department, mentioning examples of two watershed lightning strikes last summer.

“One lightning strike hit a tree in a controlled-burn unit and did not result in a fire and another lightning fire ... was put out easily by the caretaker of the land,” Chambers said.

Ashland sister city delegation heads for Guanajuato

An Ashland delegation of more than 80 people is going to Guanajuato this week to celebrate the 50th anniversary of sister-city relations. A large group of Guanajuatenses visited Ashland in April.

Guanajuato has prepared a busy schedule of events, beginning early each morning and continuing late into the night on five out of the six days of the visit.

Among the scheduled activities are a lavish Mexican-style buffet sponsored by the Guanajuato volunteer fire department, breakfasts with city policemen and the Rotary and Lions clubs, a children’s parade through the historic district, art and museum visits, a visit to the mummies museum, a symphonic orchestra concert, night club disco dancing and a farewell taco party at the exclusive Virgen de la Cueva restaurant.

The Ashland Amigo Club will distribute donated baby clothes baskets to miners’ wives during a trip to silver and gold mines.

Other special events include 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). Juan Carlos is a past University of Guanajuato rector (president), State of Guanajuato governor, federal senator and currently is the National Action Party minority leader in the Chamber of Deputies (House of Representatives). José Luis held high positions in two presidential administrations and today is a University of Guanajuato trustee, member of the

Mexican Council on Foreign Affairs, and a national TV and radio commentator. SOU has granted Past Distinguished Alumni awards to each brother.

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.