

# AMIGOS DE LOS ANIMALES

## de Guanajuato, A.C.

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## Guanajuato Prepares to Build an Animal Control Center

We were delighted to learn in mid-March that the city has drawn up plans and approved a budget of 1 million pesos (US \$92,846) to build a multipurpose facility for dogs and cats captured by its animal-control personnel or given up by their owners. Such a facility was envisioned in the state law passed in 2002 but not yet implemented here, to protect domestic animals from neglect and abuse. The building will be built at the edge of a sports field in Yerbabuena near an existing simple facility for holding captured animals. It will be staffed by a veterinarian and include a surgical unit for neutering animals, as well as individual cages and a crematorium for animals that must be sacrificed.

Dr. Jesús Cuello Barrera, director of municipal health, and Dr. Rolando Cristóbal Gabriel of the Municipal Health Directorate met with Amigos board members on March 14 to discuss the city's plans for the facility. Also present was Arno Naumann, president of Amigos de los Animales de San Miguel de Allende, who offered his advice and a copy of the physical plan for the facility constructed in San Miguel. Our group discussed the uses of the proposed building and made suggestions for modifying its layout or expanding it as additional funds become available. We offered to help the city by recruiting volunteers to assist in its day-to-day operations. We also urged that the city use humane euthanasia by injection instead of electrocution to sacrifice animals. The ad hoc working group plans to meet regularly and exchange ideas as the project proceeds.

## Amigos Celebrated Its Sixth Anniversary in February with a Gala Event

On Sunday, February 17, Amigos celebrated its sixth anniversary with a sumptuous brunch hosted by Dr. Virgilio Fernández and his wife Estela Cordero de Fernández in their Marfil home. Some 90 guests enjoyed the delicious regional dishes prepared in the Fernández kitchen. The brunch was the organization's major fundraising event of the year and an opportunity for the voluntary, nonprofit association to thank its supporters.

During the event Sandra Ward, president of Amigos, briefly summarized the organization's achievements in 2007:

- 733 dogs and cats were sterilized;
- 335 dogs and cats were rescued and placed in homes;
- Thousands of Guanajuato residents, including school children, were exposed to messages about the humane and responsible treatment of animals through talks, newspaper articles, and other educational materials.



Those achievements were made possible by the hard work of numerous volunteers, the generosity of donors, and the cooperation of the veterinarians who regularly participate in our sterilization and adoption program. In particular, Sandra thanked board members Bernardo Calzada, Marlene Davis, James Pyle, Martha Roberts, Julia Salido, and Lori Wilson for their unstinting work, and veterinarians Maru Herrera, Felipe Manríquez, Miguel Ochoa, and Moisés Rivera for their tremendous support.

*Guests enjoying breakfast in the Fernández atrium.*

The fundraiser included a raffle of numerous prizes donated by individuals, businesses, and the University of Guanajuato, all of which prizes were awarded during the party. Amigos is grateful to the following donors: the University of Guanajuato Extension Service for two sets of tickets to a concert of the University of Guanajuato Symphony Orchestra, Marlene Davis for a ceramic plate from the Cerámica de Santa Rosa, Lori Wilson for an acupuncture treatment, Dr. Susan Cofer Jones for a massage or health consultation, Martha and Don Roberts for a pearl necklace and a hand-crafted lamp, Ronald Mann for a six-course dinner for four to be served in his home, Hugo Anaya and Carol Summers for a night's stay for two people at the Casa de Espíritus Alegres B&B or the Alma del Sol B&B, Sam and Jean Edwards for an hour's flight for two in their hot-air balloon, and the Casa Museo Gene Byron for a framed print by the León artist Gerardo Cantú.

"Amigos" is especially grateful to Dr. Fernández and Estela Cordero de Fernández, owners of the Casa Museo Gene Byron, for their generous support over the years. The proceeds from the fundraising event totaled 17,920 pesos (US \$1,664) and will help Amigos continue our program of spay/neuter, rescue, and public education in 2008.

## **Neglected Roof Dog Finds Home with a Devoted U.S. Family**

Several weeks ago we received a call from Lynn Hill, an American woman who was visiting Guanajuato with her husband and two young children. They were distraught because their apartment looked down on a flat roof where an emaciated, lame dog was barely clinging to life. The dog had no shade, no water bowl, and received no food that they could discern. Lynn asked if we could help. Unfortunately, this is all too common a situation in Guanajuato, where many people keep dogs on their roofs for "protection" but provide minimal care to them. Unable to escape, the animals suffer from malnutrition and isolation.

We visited the dog's owner and asked if the Hills could bring the dog food each day, hoping that this would prod him into providing adequate care for the dog himself. He agreed, but after a couple days refused to accept their food. By this time the Hills were considering the idea of adopting the dog even though they already had two dogs in the States.

We visited the dog's home again and this time persuaded the owner to sell the dog to the Hills for a modest sum. Removing the dog, whom we began calling Pípila because her roof was near the city's main statue of that name, was a real challenge, because the roof was at least six feet above a roof we could reach and was not accessible by a staircase or ladder. Lynn climbed onto a utility sink and from there managed to climb onto Pípila's roof. After giving the dog some kibble to win her trust, Lynn picked her up, wrapped a leash around her body so that she could lower Pípila down to us standing below. Pípila was submissive and did not struggle. Lynn carried her in her arms to our nearest veterinarian for an examination, medication, and, of course, nourishment.

An X-ray showed that Pípila's left hind knee had been broken, perhaps from a fall or a kick. Except for that, a slight fever, and severe malnutrition, she was okay but could not travel until she was stronger and well. The Hills were supposed to return to the States in two days. They revised their schedule so that Lynn

and the children could stay here and care for Pípila until she was well enough to travel. Some days later we took them to the airport. By this time, Pípila was bonded to Lynn and the children, and she was putting on weight.



*Pípila the day we rescued her*



*Pípila with her new family*

On March 11 Lynn sent us the following message:

Pípila is doing very, very well. She has filled out and is starting to greet and kiss Rich [Lynn's husband]. We had some trouble with her fear-barking at him for a while, but 95% of that has been resolved. She is getting used to her crate, our routine, and the cold weather. The best news is that she and Rodeo are able to be off-leash together in the house. Yesterday they actually played together for about half an hour! She and Ruby have a way to go before they can be together off-leash; however progress is being made. They are able to be in the same room without trouble as long as Ruby is tethered. Today we will start walking just the two girls together around the block. We will add Rodeo to the daily walk tomorrow. Three dogs! Oh my!

## **Focusing on a Rural Community**

The village of Fortunada [not its real name], located in the Sierra 20 km from the city of Guanajuato, has about 40 farming families. In recent months Amigos volunteers have placed several dozen rescued dogs and cats with members of the community, who requested dogs to protect their rabbits and chickens from coyotes and cats to keep their homes free of mice. All the Amigos dogs and cats have been neutered and vaccinated before being offered for adoption.

The project was started by Paty Almanza, a Guanajuato weaver who has been teaching a weekly weaving class to women of the village. It was she who discovered that the villagers wanted to adopt dogs and cats. She invited members of the Amigos board of directors to visit the village to see how the animals were being treated. The board members immediately realized that the small village offered Amigos a rare opportunity to conduct an intensive education program.

Each person who adopts an Amigos dog or cat signs a pledge to take good care of it. But we were aware that many people have only a vague idea of what that entails. Throughout Mexico dogs and cats are routinely fed dried tortillas and scraps of food left over from human meals. Kibble is not even sold in Fortunada. Some people chain dogs to prevent them from chasing cattle or eating chickens. Children often mistreat dogs because they fear them.

We decided to begin by focusing on the children in Fortunada because they were a willing, if captive, audience. We talked with the children in the kindergarten and gave them copies of our coloring book "Lend them a Hand," about the basic needs of dogs and cats: proper food, water, shelter, medical attention,

companionship, and kindness. We then talked with the primary school children and gave them copies of our very moving short story, "Diary of an Abandoned Dog." We offered copies of the same story to the secondary students. Julia Salido, who has had a lot of experience talking with different age groups, pitched her talks to the appropriate level each time, engaging the children's attention. We gave copies of a brochure entitled "Breaking the Cycle of Abuses," about the connection between family violence and animal abuse, to the teachers at the three schools in the village.

*Left: A villager and her son with their adopted Amigos dog*



*Right: Julia Salido talking with secondary students about the humane treatment of animals*



Next we plan to talk with as many adults in the village as possible, encouraging them to have their dogs and cats neutered and to provide a wholesome diet to their pets, which can be done without going to great expense. We'll begin by chatting with the women in Paty's weaving class and the women who prepare a mid-morning meal for the school children. Our goal is to have virtually every dog and cat in the village neutered so that there will be no unwanted offspring and to create a climate of tolerance and kindness toward animals there.

## Amigos's accomplishments during 2007

On March 30 Amigos is holding its annual meeting of members, during which Amigos president, Sandra Ward, will present the following summary of the organization's work during 2007.

### Sterilization program

1. Thanks to the six Guanajuato veterinarians who participated in our clinic program and to the Guanajuato and visiting veterinarians who volunteered during our campaigns, during calendar year 2007 we neutered 733 animals (445 dogs, 288 cats), 518 of them through the clinic program and 215 during the campaigns.
2. The table below, which shows the number of cases sterilized each year through our clinic program and campaigns, indicates the continued growth of our clinic program.

Year	Clinic program	Campaigns	Total
2002	90	69	159
2003	175	204	379
2004	469	217	686
2005	390	385	775
2006	448	214	662
2007	518	215	733
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,090</b>	<b>1,304</b>	<b>3,394</b>

3. We held three campaigns during the year—a one-day campaign in April in the village of San José de la Luz, another one-day campaign in the village of the El Tejaban in August, and a two-day campaign in the city

barrio Pueblita de Rocha in November. Participating in the campaigns were local and visiting veterinarians, physicians, veterinary technicians, nurses, and many other volunteers.

4. We received material support for the campaigns from the Centro de Salud and from several veterinary and medical suppliers. We also received the cooperation of the State Secretariat of Education, the directors and teachers at the schools where the campaigns were held, and the villagers themselves, many of whom offered their assistance and prepared meals or donated food for the volunteers.
5. The veterinarians, physicians, technicians, nurses, and other volunteers who participated in the campaigns worked long, challenging hours; and to all of them we are very grateful.

**Rescues and adoptions**

1. Working with our participating veterinarians, Amigos volunteers rescued 335 dogs and cats (mostly puppies) during the year. The animals were taken to the clinics of participating veterinarians, where they were bathed, treated for intestinal parasites, in some cases treated for mange, and neutered and then offered for adoption. The rescuers paid for the baths, treatment, and boarding; in most cases Amigos paid for the surgeries. A few homeless animals were brought to our campaigns, neutered, and adopted afterward.
2. The following table shows the number of rescued and adopted animals by year and the dramatic increase in the number of cases during 2007:

Year	Rescues & adoptions
2002	110
2003	205
2004	209
2005	298
2006	261
2007	335
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,418</b>

3. Mex-Can Pet Partners continued its partnership with Amigos, placing eight dogs rescued by Amigos with carefully screened Canadian families. The dog shown below is one we recently rescued. She is one of 16 dogs who have gone to a Canadian family so far this year.



*Ugly Betty the day she was found*



*Pretty Betty today*

4. Several volunteers provided foster care to rescued animals awaiting adoption, and several also accompanied animals on flights to the U.S. and Canada to new homes. We are especially grateful to Marlene Davis, Susi Seidel and Hans Weisshaar, Julia Salido, and Dan Sholl and Lori Wilson for their foster care of rescued dogs and cats. The adopters paid the animals' medical and travel expenses.

## Education and publicity

1. We published 18 articles in Guanajuato newspapers, several of them in English as well as in Spanish.
2. We published three issues of our newsletter in Spanish and English in March, July, and December, disseminating them principally through the Internet to a mailing list of more than 300 recipients.
3. We prepared a brochure for teachers, entitled "Breaking the Cycle of Abuses," and offered it to DIF Municipal, the city's major family-welfare organization, for dissemination throughout the school system.
4. We made numerous presentations, some of them before spay/neuter campaigns, to children and adults.
5. We distributed copies of our coloring book entitled "Lend Them a Hand" our short story "Diary of an Abandoned Dog," and other educational materials to children attending the presentations and to families attending our spay/neuter campaigns.
6. We redesigned and updated our website.
7. We obtained a free YouTube site and made a short video (<http://www.youtube.com/user/AmigosAnimalesGto>).
8. We arranged for several city officials, including the mayor, to see the documentary film "Companions to None," and we had a public viewing of the documentary at the Cafe Zilch and during a spay/neuter campaign.
9. In the spring a group of high school students organized a "Run with your best friend" race that ended at the Jardín de la Unión, where we had several tables with literature about Amigos and items for sale.

## Members

As this issue of the newsletter goes to press, Amigos has 160 members: 28 individual members, 42 family memberships, 6 business members, 25 benefactors, 4 "best friends," 44 volunteer members (including veterinarians), and 11 donors of supplies and equipment. Many of the paying members are also volunteers. Many of our new members became members or renewed their memberships by attending the breakfast at the Fernández home last month.

## Cooperation with city and state authorities and other groups

1. At the request of Guanajuato Mayor Eduardo Romero Hicks, we submitted a draft set of regulations for implementing a state law in the municipality of Guanajuato. The law was passed five years ago to prevent the neglect and abuse of domestic animals but has never been enforced. Our draft drew on others prepared by other animal-welfare groups, including the Centro de Protección Animal. In December of 2007 the City Council approved a set of regulations, but their publication has been delayed while corrections have been deliberated.
2. At the request of the State Secretariat of Health, we continued to submit monthly reports to state and city health officials about our spay/neuter activities.
3. Our president was elected to a city Health and Social Welfare Commission that meets monthly.
4. We continued our cooperation with the local group Centro de Protección Animal and with the two animal-protection associations in San Miguel de Allende.
5. We offered our support in the form of advice to other groups and individuals in Mexico seeking to establish animal-protection organizations or place animals for adoption.

## Recent Memberships and Donations

We depend upon the donations we receive from our supporters to provide services to the community. Our sincere thanks go to the following donors and volunteers for their recent support:

**Best Friends:** Carolyn Crowder, Marlene Davis, Virgilio Fernández and Estela Cordero de Fernández, Sandra Ward

**Benefactors:** Jonathan Caulkins, Marsha Coarsey, Sam and Jean Edwards, Julie & Phil Etheredge in honor of Bette Parker, who was a great lover of dogs, Renee Giroux, Constance George, Mariana Grobet, Pat Heinke in memory of her sister Joan Summers, Doris Hoffman, Ron Mann, Carolyn Napoli, Sheila Oberst, Martha Roberts, Jeff and Cory Parker, Sherry Wolf, Glenda Woodward

**Individual memberships:** Colleen Cote, Branko Deronja, Miriam De Uriarte, Joan Eby, Roy Freed, Celia Grayson, Joanne Grieder, Connie La Pena, John Lichtwardt, Felipe Manríquez, Melissa Mayes, Pat Mould, Beth Murphy, Don Roberts, Joan Romero Hicks, Austin Starr, Helen Wolff

**Family memberships:** Jaime Arellano and Martha Guevara, Doug and Cindi Bower, Ruth Burchard, Jan and Renick Calender, John and Sue Corcoran, Vicki and John Fuller, Rosendo Gutierrez Sr., Alison and Colin Hall, Carlo Haskett, Megan Johnson, Mary Lewis, María de la Luz Martínez, Ian McCleod and Judy Dunbar, Jack Moore and Dolores Riley, Rod Murrillo and Lisa Bennet, Carmen Nieto and Betha Retana Reyes, Hadn and Pat O'Neil, Victor and Marcia Ramírez, Jim and Brenda Robillard, Eduardo Rodríguez, Simone Rodríguez, Ed and Betsy Schiff, Chuk and Donna Steadman, Michael Stromme, Jeff Tashman and Nina Johnson, Charles and Pamela Towill

**Business memberships and support:** Academia Falcón, Alma del Sol B&B, Casa Estrella B&B, Maria Chan (accountant)

**Government support:** Bajío/León International Airport, Centro de Salud Urbano, Secretaría de Salud

**Donors of carriers, leashes, muzzles, and other items:** Susan Coffey Jones, Stacey Tompkins

**Board members:** Bernardo Calzada, Marlene Davis, Martha Roberts, Julia Salido, Sandra Ward, and Lori Wilson

**Other recent volunteers not already mentioned in the newsletter:** Julián Gaxiola, Nancy Hager, Verónica Mares Flores, Patrick Riley, Fernando Romero, Alejandra Vázquez

If we have neglected to mention anyone, please accept our sincere apologies.

***Please consider making a donation to Amigos. It's easy: you can use your credit card and go to our website, [www.amigosanimalesqto.org](http://www.amigosanimalesqto.org). Amigos is designated by the IRS as a 501(c)3 charitable organization, and your donation is deductible from U.S. federal taxes.***

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