

International Friendship Club Awards Grants

By

Peggy A. Nelson, IFC Vice President

When I first became an International Friendship Club (IFC) member a few years ago, I learned that IFC members can identify serious needs in the local area and respond. So, recently, I joined the social services committee which, along with the education committee, meets with potential candidates and evaluates who best can be served by IFC grants. Visiting these candidates and meeting their leaders and the people they serve leaves me with a profound respect for the selfless and unrelenting efforts of those who establish and continue these charitable organizations day-in, day-out, to serve the community.

When IFC started in 1985, a friend of two members, Celia and Ron Walker, had a baby born with a cleft palate who needed corrective surgery available only in Guadalajara. It seems there are an unusual number of children in some areas around Vallarta born with cleft palate, with many children needing the specialized and expensive corrective surgery. The IFC's "cleft palate" program evolved from this, with the IFC marshalling resources (medical staff from Guadalajara, surgical space, family housing) to treat children born with this condition. Thus began the charitable activities of the International Friendship Club.

The cleft palate program at IFC stands on its own. In addition, IFC awards grants to community and education organizations. In the last two weeks, the IFC approved grants totaling \$745,000 pesos to be distributed to several area charities, a significant increase over last year's funding.

Among others, educational funding will go to:

- **Instituto de Artes Musicales Puerto Vallarta (IAMPV).**
- **Huichol Scholarship Fund.**
- **Volcanes**, which provides free after school education, computer skills, help with homework, remedial reading classes, and sewing instructions for mothers so they can set up their own small business.
- **Biblioteca Los Mangos**, the only public library in Vallarta, completely privately funded with no government support.

Funded community services organizations include:

- **Aid for Families of Children with Cancer.**
- Apoyo a la Mujer con Cancer (**BENNU**) (Support for Women with Cancer).
- **Clinica de Rehabilitacion Vallarta – Sta. Barbara**, a rehabilitation clinic for the disabled and injured.
- **Dives en Misericordia**, nutrition program with a community kitchen and provider of despensas (pantry supplies) to families.
- **Pasitos de Luz**, which supports children with severe disabilities to receive treatment.

Funding would not have been possible without generous homeowners allowing the IFC to use their homes for its now famous **Home Tours, ranked on Trip Advisor in the top 10 out of 415 tours in Vallarta.** These tours of exceptional homes and villas around Vallarta occur each

Tuesday and Wednesday, leaving on air-conditioned buses from Sea Monkey, a restaurant at Calle Aquiles Serdan and the Malecon, at 10:15 a.m., returning around 1:00 pm. Excellent or good mobility is required due to the sometimes challenging location of these homes! For more details, check out the IFC website at ifcvallarta.org. Funding also comes from other IFC programs and membership.

Update on Social Activities. I am excited about the IFC dine-around at Trio on March 17. This is a great chance to meet folks and enjoy some fine dining. Details are available on the IFC's on-line calendar on its website, ifcvallarta.org.

We'll be ringing in the weekend with Happy Hour at the IFC Clubhouse, upstairs at the corner of Calles Insurgentes and Iturbide, behind the HSBC bank, each Friday evening at 5:00 PM.

Bingo! every other Wednesday, 4:00 PM, at Nacho Daddy on Calle Basilio Badillo. Next date: March 22.

I caught a fascinating film at the IFC's Monday movie night last week and can't wait for these very moving upcoming films, showing at 7:00 PM at the IFC clubhouse:

- March 13 - **Billy Elliot**, 2000, a talented boy becomes torn between his unexpected love of dance and the disintegration of his family.
- March 20 – **The Painted Veil**, 2006, a British medical doctor fights a cholera epidemic in a small Chinese village, while being trapped at home in a loveless marriage to an unfaithful wife. Starring Naomi Watts, Edward Norton, Liev Schreiber.

Popcorn and beverages are served!