

CONEXIONES

People Helping People • Gente Ayudando Gente



ANNIVERSARY

Searching for Neill James
Buscando a Neill James



Bilingual Publication
Publicación Bilingüe

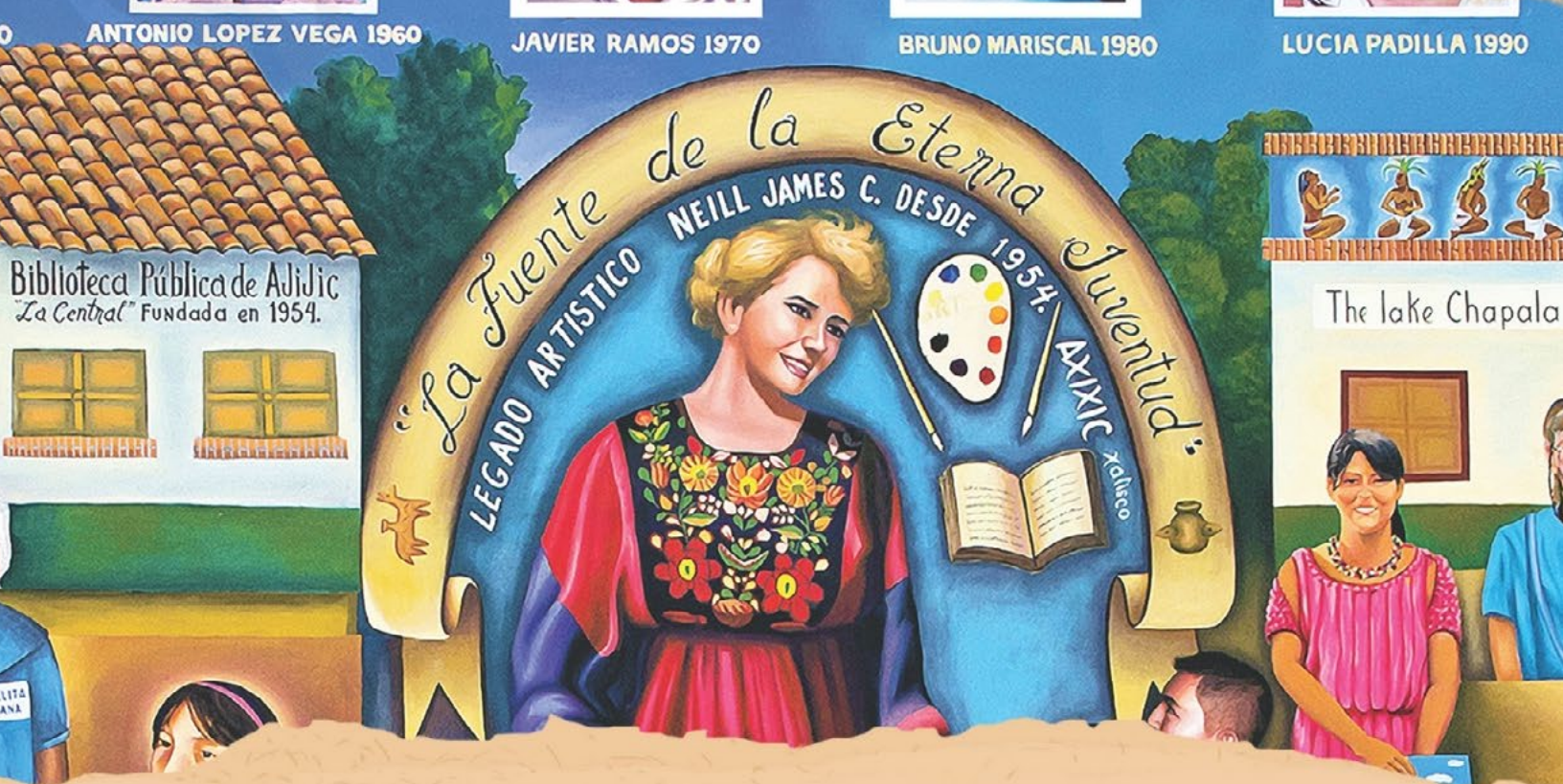


ANTONIO LOPEZ VEGA 1960

JAVIER RAMOS 1970

BRUNO MARISCAL 1980

LUCIA PADILLA 1990



HOMENAJE DE CUMPLEAÑOS A LA PATROCINADORA DE LCS
 BIRTHDAY TRIBUTE FOR LCS PATRON

Neill James

EVENTO PÚBLICO EN LCS
 FREE COMMUNITY EVENT AT LCS

DOMINGO 12 DE ENERO | SUNDAY, JANUARY 12
 10:00am - 4:00pm

Conferencias, mesas redondas, objetos históricos, arte infantil, música en vivo, espectáculos de danza, comida, audiovisuales conmemorativos y actividades infantiles.

Lecture, roundtable discussions, historic artifacts, children's art, live music, dance performances, food, audio-visual memorials, childrens' activities

Laguna
 La noticia como es

LAKESIDE
 NEWS
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REPORTER



President's Message

As President of the Lake Chapala Society, I am honored to be many things to many people, working to serve the needs of this unique and highly valued organization.

A primary focus since my election in August has been fostering a culture of engagement and accountability among all our stakeholders and building consensus and collaboration to meet the current needs and future vision of LCS.

By building strong relationships with Jalisco and Chapala governing authorities and social services, we ensure our communities work closely together, become more visible and supported in the region, and strengthen LCS's efforts to provide support and education to our Mexican neighbors.

I am proud of how the LCS Board of Directors, staff, volunteers and members have come together to look with clear eyes at both our needs for improvement and our many successes. This is key to providing the transparency on which I ran as president. We enter 2025 working together to ensure that LCS operations are open, inclusive of diverse opinions, and willing to tackle the challenges we face.



Immigration Services;
Photo by Domitzu



AGM 2023; Photo by Domitzu

Good governance is vital to LCS's future. At the **Annual General Meeting on March 19**, the LCS Board of Directors will have three officer positions (President, Vice President, and Treasurer) and five director-at-large positions up for election for two-year terms.

In the spirit of openness and inclusivity, we invite qualified members to apply for any of these positions, even if an incumbent is also in the running. We plan to host respectful, open forums where announced candidates can discuss their strengths and hopes for the future of LCS.

It is time to learn from the past and look to the future. As always, I welcome your input and thank you for your support!

Warmly,
Yolanda Martínez Llamas.
LCS President



Optometrist Services; Photo by Domitzu

Mission & Vision

—Our mission is to promote the active participation of Lakeside’s inhabitants to improve their quality of life Lakeside.

— Our vision is a future where all Lakeside residents continually have a role in enriching the community’s quality of life, vitality and prosperity through the exchange of knowledge, expertise, culture, heritage and language.

— Nuestra Misión es promover la activa participación de los residentes de la Ribera de Chapala, para mejorar la calidad de vida en la comunidad.

— Nuestra Visión es un futuro donde todos los residentes de La Ribera participen continuamente en mejorar la calidad de vida, vitalidad y prosperidad de la comunidad a través del intercambio de conocimiento, experiencia, cultura, patrimonio y lenguaje.

Board of Directors

President/Presidente: Yolanda Martínez Llamas

Vice President/Vice Presidente: Greg DiStefano

Secretary/Secretario: Mike Platt

Treasurer/Tesorero: Tim Boardman

Directors/Directores: Greg Custer, Madera Glenn, Linda Goman, Steve Graham, John Henry, Hunter Johnson, Leon Felipe Muñoz, George Radford.

Conecciones Team

The magazine’s name, Conecciones - Connections in English - reflects its purpose, which is to enable the Lake Chapala Society to connect with the Lakeside community.

El nombre de la revista Conecciones refleja su propósito, favorecer la conexión de The Lake Chapala Society con la comunidad.

Publisher/Editorial: Lake Chapala Society

Managing Editor: Sandra Baird

Assistant Managing Editor: Catherine Austill

Associate Editors/Editores asociados: Harriet Hart, Diana Hunt

Production, Art & Design/ Producción, Arte y Diseño:

Domitza Medrano

Translations/Traducciones: LCS

Editorial inquiries

Conecciones welcomes submissions of articles from Lakeside authors. We reserve the right to edit as necessary. Submissions should be in MS Word approximately 600 words and should be directed to: editor@lcsac.org

Conecciones agradece el envío de artículos. Nos reservamos el derecho de editarlos si es necesario. Los envíos deben ser en MS Word de 600 palabras aproximadamente y deben dirigirse a: editor@lcsac.org

Conecciones Advertising Prices Precios de los Anuncios 2024

	Cost / Precio
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Full page / Página completa (7.8 x 10.2”/ 20 x 26 cm)	\$4,590 MXN
1/2 page / 1/2 página (4.7 x 7.2”/ 12 x 18.5 cm)	\$2,775 MXN
1/4 page / 1/4 página (3.5 x 4.7”/ 9 x 12 cm)	\$1,465 MXN
1/8 page-business card / 1/8 página-tarjeta de presentación (3.5 x 2”/ 9 x 5 cm)	\$510 MXN

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Cover: Domitza Medrano
November Feria cover: Diana Hunt

All prices include IVA. All ads must be submitted by the 10th of the month for inclusion in the next month’s magazine. Send to sales@lcsac.org

Todos los precios incluyen IVA. Todos los anuncios deben ser enviados antes del día 10 del mes para su inclusión en la revista del mes siguiente. Enviar a sales@lcsac.org

Mensaje de la Presidenta

Como Presidenta de la Lake Chapala Society (LCS), es un honor para mí representar múltiples aspectos para diferentes personas, trabajando en todo momento para atender las necesidades de esta organización tan singular y altamente valorada.

Desde mi elección en agosto, uno de mis principales enfoques ha sido fomentar una cultura de compromiso y rendición de cuentas entre todas las partes interesadas, así como construir consensos y propiciar la colaboración a fin de responder a las necesidades actuales y la visión futura de la LCS.

Al establecer relaciones sólidas con las autoridades gubernamentales de Jalisco y Chapala, así como con los servicios sociales, aseguramos que nuestras comunidades trabajen estrechamente, se hagan más visibles y cuenten con mayor apoyo en la región, fortaleciendo así los esfuerzos de la LCS para brindar apoyo



Donación de audifonos, 2022; Foto por Domitzu

y educación a nuestros vecinos mexicanos.

Me enorgullece cómo el Consejo Directivo de la LCS, el personal, las personas voluntarias y los miembros se han unido para observar con claridad tanto nuestras áreas de mejora como nuestros muchos logros. Esto es clave para proporcionar la transparencia sobre la cual basé mi candidatura. Iniciamos el 2025 trabajando juntos para asegurar que las operaciones de LCS sean abiertas, incluyan diversas opiniones y estén dispuestas a enfrentar los retos que se presenten.

La buena gobernanza es vital para el futuro de la LCS. En la Asamblea General Anual del 19 de marzo, se someterán a elección tres cargos del Consejo Directivo (Presidencia, Vicepresidencia y Tesorería) y cinco puestos de consejeros generales, todos para un periodo de dos años.

Con un espíritu de apertura e inclusión, invitamos a miembros calificados a postularse a cualquiera de estos cargos, incluso si alguno de los titulares actuales también compite. Nuestro plan es organizar foros abiertos y respetuosos, en los cuales los candidatos anunciados puedan exponer sus fortalezas y sus aspiraciones para el futuro de la LCS.

Es momento de aprender del pasado y mirar hacia el futuro. Como siempre, agradezco sus comentarios y les doy las gracias por su apoyo.

Cordialmente,
Yolanda Martínez Llamas.
Presidenta de LCS



Servicio de toma de presión; Foto por Domitzu

Conecciones:

Connecting Hearts and Minds

By Sandra Baird

Conecciones Magazine? What will it be? **In the beginning, 70 issues ago**, that was the big question. What was this magazine going to do? Who would it serve? After the founders spent hours debating this, they decided **this magazine would connect all the expats who found their way to the Lake Chapala Society to each other and to their new Mexican community.**

Over the next six years, Conecciones covered many topics everything from the flora and fauna around us, to where to find a license for your dog, a place to have a suspicious mole removed, explanations of the food available here, explanations of the Day of the Dead celebrations and where you could get legal aid if necessary.

The far-ranging topics touched on all aspects of life, including a whole series on preparing for the end of life. **This magazine has been a connective tissue to all the various hearts that have passed through the archway to the Lake Chapala Society and said, "I'm new here. I wonder if you could tell me...?"**

Conecciones has **attracted writers of every stripe.** Poets, reporters, memoirists, illustrators, columnists and creative writers have filled the pages with their work. Proudly, the magazine has given emerging writers an opportunity to be published.

Photography? Conecciones has always made room for photos, especially those from our local photographers trying their hand at artistic photography for the first time. Colour fills the magazine as local life shines forth from its many photos.



Famous for its unusual and compelling covers, Conecciones mirrors the rainbow of Mexican love for every tint and blend of colour. Our own graphic artist, **Domitzu Medrano**, is the creator of many of our award worthy covers gracing the magazine stands.



Miguecosh



Crosswinds

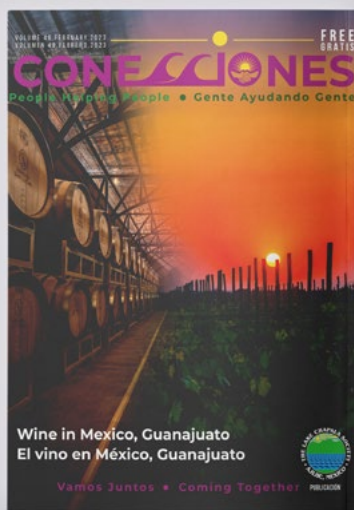


Paul Hart

Have a good cause that needs some publicity? Conexiones over the years, has championed many small and larger organizations with volunteers who see a need and gather to meet it. Everything from...

- We Wanna Help: ART Therapy
- Animal Rescue Services
- Ninos Incapacitados
- The Group No One Wants to Belong To (Spousal Support Dementia)
- Non-Profit Organizations Mama Cleo's Boys' Home

Have seasonal allergies? Sore feet? Stressed out? Trouble sleeping? Our health columnists have provided tips on many surprising ailments experienced by newbies to the shores of Lake Chapala.



Vaccines Clinics ---Hearing Testing Clinics--- Alternative health modalities---Hip Surgery---Care Options at Lakeside ---Stress-Free Living---Emergency---Preparedness---Good Digestion---Life After Cancer---Natural Allergy Remedies---Medicare Benefits in Mexico---Wheelchair Bound---A.I. A game Changer for Disabilities.

Hobbies? Retired, no more 9-5 daily commitment? Want to pursue a neglected hobby or find a new one? Let us tickle your curiosity. Below are just some of the multiple hobbies we have highlighted.

Astro-photography---Have Hammer Will Travel: Carpentry Nature Printmaking---Weaving---Photography---Ceramics Sketching---Hiking---Line Dancing---Embroidery Needle Pushers Acrylic and Oil Painting---Chess Club---Mudlarks Pottery Memoir Writing



Wood Carving; Photo by Diana Hunt



Chess tournament; Photo by V. Camarena



Volunteer Appreciation 2024; Photo by Domitzu

Giving Back is Your Juice?

A few of our spotlighted **volunteer opportunities.**

E.S.L teaching---Front Office Workers---Set-up Take Down for Events---Ticket Sellers, Takers Lake Chapala Society on-site volunteers---Teaching art, technology, yoga, dance Library assistant book & video Lakeside Friends of Animals

The Birds and the Bees

Cute Animals to Avoid---The Evolution of Honey---Mexico's Hairless Dogs---Saving Mexico's Birds---Gardening for the Season Best Exotic Pets---Service Dogs Mother Nature as Therapist The Birds at the Edge of the Lake



Lupita with Sultan; Photo by Diana Hunt

Food

Food Fusion Columbian Mexican Dates---Tajin Secrets Behind Apple Picking Cool Cooking in a Hot Climate Water in the Dry Season

Education

Symbolic Meaning of Mexican Flag---Staying Connected Across the Miles---Mexican Wines---Mindfulness discussion groups---TED Talks---There Ain't No Cure for Love---Navigating Life with Optimism---Recycling Lake Chapala Annual Earthshot Prize---Cracking the Friendship Code in Prime Time



Rosalia Bautista

Arts and Culture

The Feria Maestros del Arte: Mexico's Premier Traditional Art Fair---Mariachi School Ajijic---Three Kings Day Mexican Folk Art Merrill Collection---Candlemas Day La Majolica Pottery New Spain---Mata Ortiz Pottery Tlaquepaque Pottery and Ceramics---A Palette of Dreams---Ana Warren artist Q & A with Artist Mario Ramirez---Jesus Lopez Vega -Artist---Jalisco of Equals LGBTIQ+---The Virgin of Guadalupe Traditions---LCS Children's' Art Program Tours to Guadalajara Zoo, Mazamitla , Tlaquepaque "Mothers Day" Mexico Book Reviews---Bravo Theater.

As we look back on 70 issues and countless stories, photos, interviews, and explorations, it's clear that **Conecciones has been so much more than a magazine.** We set out to connect—and we did. Through pages brimming with creativity, community resources, cultural insights, laughter, and sometimes tears, **Conecciones has offered a steady, comforting bridge between newcomers and the Lakeside region, making the unfamiliar feel like home.**

We have showcased the infinite tapestry of life here at Lake Chapala: our organizations that lift the vulnerable, the flora and fauna that grace our seasons, the artisans and creators who leave us in awe, and the health tips and insights that guide us through our personal journeys. We have encouraged engagement—whether that's discovering a new hobby, learning about Mexico's rich traditions, or simply being present as part of a caring, diverse community.

For every question asked, every curiosity sparked, and every heartfelt piece written by our contributors, Conecciones has served as a lighthouse, illuminating the path forward for those drawn here from around the globe. **Each of the magazine's covers, articles, and photographs has been a stepping stone, a gentle invitation to connect, learn, and belong.**

Today, in 2025, the mission continues to hold steady: to bring hearts and minds together. Even as the world evolves, those connections remain as vital as ever. With gratitude to our readers, contributors, and community partners, **may we carry forward the spirit of Conecciones into all that lies ahead.**



Staff Bio

Live Life with Gusto!

By Sandra Baird

I've always approached life with enthusiasm and a willingness to tackle new challenges. I believe our real responsibility in life is never to bore ourselves. Over the years, I've embraced a variety of roles, reflecting a breadth of interests and a passion for learning. I have worked as a commercial artist and as a teacher of high school English, science, law, creative writing, and speed reading. My leadership experience includes serving as the principal of an alternative high school and developing expertise in both learning disabilities and gifted education.

Retiring from my mainstream educational endeavors, I founded a publishing company, producing over 90 original nonfiction titles—from bestselling cookbooks to guides on foreign exchange trading. Beyond nonfiction, I've also authored five contemporary romance novels.

At the same time, I developed an English-as-a-Second-Language tutoring service. My students traveled from Asia to immerse themselves in language and culture.

My professional journey has encompassed teaching writing classes for adults, as well as working as a developmental editor across multiple genres. Most recently, I've had the honor of collaborating with Conecciones magazine. After a year as an associate editor and contributing writer, I currently serve as Managing Editor, continuing to embrace every new professional adventure.

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The Oral History Project: LCS OVER THE YEARS

By Harriet Hart

The Oral History Society, University of Essex, defines *oral history* as “the recording, preservation and interpretation of historical information, based on the personal experiences and opinions of the speaker. It may take the form of eye-witness evidence about the past, but can include folklore, myths, songs and stories passed down over the years by word of mouth.” Oral history tells us not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing and what they think they did!

In 2012, LCS Executive Director Terry Vidal and history buff Todd Jonson decided that with the 60th anniversary of LCS approaching, an appropriate project was to conduct an oral history to capture the memories of foreign pioneers while they are still alive. They soon realized that Mexicans should also be included for their perspectives. After Todd resigned because of poor health, Terry asked if I was interested in coordinating the project.



Video caption 1st Oral History Project with John and Doris Molinari

I created a set of questions designed to capture people’s memories of coming to Lakeside. What was it like to live here back then? What could they share about benefactress Neill James, the author/adventurer who gave her property to LCS, and about the Lake Chapala Society itself?

We identified a list of early expats, including Doris and John Molinari, long time neighbors to Neill James; Dale Hoyt Palfrey, journalist with the *Guadalajara Reporter*; the Eager family who own and operate La Nuevo Posada; Dixie Nicolson, Georgette Richmond and Richard Tingen, representing the realty sector; past presidents of LCS; and representatives from the artistic community such as Javier Zaragoza, Jesus Lopez Vega and Antonio Lopez Vega. We conducted 32 interviews with expats and nine with Mexican nationals.



Video caption 1st Oral History Project with Javier Zaragoza

What we learned about LCS

LCS evolved from an informal social club to a modern organization with a paid executive director and staff, a computerized English library and various programs and services that contribute to making this community such a desirable place to retire.

Past Presidents who agreed to interviews (see page 12) discussed physical improvements such as paved pathways, the Gazebo, and the Ken Gosh Pavilion, as well as membership participation, strategic planning and other important matters.

Every expat I interviewed spoke of the natural beauty of Lakeside back in the old days and the simple life without telephones, supermarkets, traffic snarl-ups, imported goods or adequate roads. Expat lives were closely interconnected.

Georgette Richmond, who moved here in 1981, summed it up by saying: “We bumped into each other all the time, which was a good thing because there were no phones. We made our own fun. There were two hotspots at the time -- The Old Posada and Big Momma’s. And there were lots of costume parties.”

She spoke about the collection of eccentrics who washed up on the shores of Lake Chapala. “There were some real characters drawn to this place by mysterious forces. There was no Internet to use for researching the area in those days.”

You can now find many of the interviews on the LCS website. I hope that all 41 will be available by the end of 2025. The LCS Oral History Project demonstrates that learning about the past from people, not books, can be insightful and fun.



Find more videos at Youtube channel

El Proyecto de Historia Oral:

LCS A LO LARGO DE LOS AÑOS

Por Harriet Hart

La Sociedad de Historia Oral de la Universidad de Essex define la *historia oral* como “la grabación, preservación e interpretación de información histórica basada en las experiencias personales y las opiniones del orador. Puede tomar la forma de testimonios presenciales sobre el pasado, pero también puede incluir folclore, mitos, canciones e historias transmitidas de generación en generación de manera oral.” La historia oral no solo nos cuenta lo que la gente hizo, sino también lo que deseaba hacer, lo que creía que estaba haciendo y lo que piensa que hizo. •

En 2012, el Director Ejecutivo de LCS, Terry Vidal, y el aficionado a la historia, Todd Jonson, decidieron que, con el 60.º aniversario de LCS acercándose, un proyecto adecuado sería realizar una historia oral para capturar los recuerdos de los pioneros extranjeros mientras aún viven. Pronto se dieron cuenta de que los mexicanos también debían ser incluidos para conocer sus perspectivas. Después de que Todd renunciara por motivos de salud, Terry me preguntó si me interesaría coordinar el proyecto.

Creé una serie de preguntas diseñadas para captar los recuerdos de la gente sobre su llegada a la Ribera. ¿Cómo era vivir aquí en aquel entonces? ¿Qué podían compartir sobre la benefactora Neill James, la autora/aventurera que donó su propiedad a LCS, y sobre la propia Lake Chapala Society?

Identificamos una lista de los primeros expatriados, incluyendo a Doris y John Molinari, vecinos de muchos años de Neill James; a Dale Hoyt Palfrey, periodista del Guadalajara Reporter; la familia Eager, propietarios y operadores de



Captura del video Oral History Project con Tom Thompson



Captura del video Oral History Project con Salvador, Tio Domingo

La Nueva Posada; Dixie Nicolson, Georgette Richmond y Richard Tingen, del sector inmobiliario; expresidentes de LCS y representantes de la comunidad artística, como Xavier Zaragoza, Jesús López Vega y Antonio López Vega. Realizamos 32 entrevistas con expatriados y nueve con mexicanos.

Lo que aprendimos sobre LCS

LCS evolucionó de un club social informal a una organización moderna con un director ejecutivo asalariado, personal, una biblioteca en inglés computarizada y diversos programas y servicios que contribuyen a que esta comunidad sea un lugar tan deseable para jubilarse.

Los expresidentes que accedieron a ser entrevistados (ver recuadro) hablaron sobre mejoras físicas, como la pavimentación de senderos, el quiosco (Gazebo) y el Pabellón Ken Gosh, así como la participación de los socios, la planificación estratégica y otros temas importantes.

Cada expatriado con el que hablé mencionó la belleza natural de la Ribera en aquellos tiempos pasados y la sencillez de la vida, sin teléfonos, supermercados, embotellamientos, mercancías importadas o caminos adecuados. Las vidas de los expatriados estaban estrechamente entrelazadas.

Georgette Richmond, quien se mudó aquí en 1981, lo resumió así: “Nos topábamos todo el tiempo, lo cual era bueno porque no había teléfonos. Organizábamos nuestra propia diversión. Había dos lugares de moda en ese entonces: La Antigua Posada y el Big Momma’s. Y había muchas fiestas de disfraces.”

Habló sobre el grupo de excéntricos que recalaban en las orillas del Lago de Chapala. “Había verdaderos personajes atraídos a este lugar por fuerzas misteriosas. En esos días no había Internet para investigar la zona.”

Ahora pueden encontrar muchas de las entrevistas en el sitio web de LCS. Espero que todas las 41 estén disponibles para finales de 2025. El Proyecto de Historia Oral de LCS demuestra que aprender sobre el pasado a través de la gente, y no de los libros, puede ser esclarecedor y divertido.

RECLAIMED AND RENAMED: ARTISTS OF LAKE CHAPALA

By Chris Small



Photo by www.artistsoflakechapala.org

A new local art organization rises from the ashes refreshed and renewed.

After a previous group dissolved, a small group of artists attempted to restore confidence and trust in the Lakeside art community. With strength, positivity and clarity, their mission is to rekindle, reclaim and revitalize the creative spirit.

Artists were invited to meet in an open forum. The initial turnout was small, but gradually increased. Leaders proceeded with an inclusive and welcoming agenda. Notes were taken, proposals were voted on and financial contributions were offered. The wheels of a smooth transition were in motion, and the groundwork for the new Artists of Lake Chapala/ Artistas del Lago de Chapala organization was set into place.



Photo by www.artistsoflakechapala.org

ALC leadership formed a bylaws committee and drafted a comprehensive, easy-to-read document. The criterion at the core of the draft was transparency, and the bylaws were passed overwhelmingly.

ALC's mission statement includes the following objectives:

- ALC's purpose is to promote the appreciation and practice of arts in various media among residents of the greater Lake Chapala area in Mexico.
- As an inclusive organization, ALC celebrates a cultural exchange among Mexican artists and all other Lakeside artists.
- ALC provides opportunities for artists to showcase and sell their work.
- ALC's social benefits include enjoying mutual interests, and fostering artists and patrons to share, support and learn from one another.

The organization has also renewed the popular ArtMarket at The Garden of Dreams, a boutique hotel in Ajijic. ALC members exhibit their works in this

garden setting, displaying a wide variety of media, including paintings, photography, pieces made from glass, mosaic, ceramic, collage, textile materials, jewelry and fashion accessories. ArtMarket visitors can meet with artists, browse the displays and gardens, and enjoy lunch provided by the "taco ladies," bar service and soothing music. Admission is free and open to the public.

The ALC Art Market will be held the following Saturdays from 10am to 3pm at The Garden of Dreams, 105 Constitución, Ajijic:

January 25, 2025
February 15, 2025
March 15, 2025
April 19, 2025

Exhibit space is available to active ALC members for an annual fee of 300 pesos. To secure a space to exhibit, contact ArtMarket coordinator B.J. Hardin at bjhardin0@gmail.com.

ALC Board of Directors is as follows
President—Anne McFarland
Vice President—Vonn New
Secretary—Nancy Diamond
Treasurer—Gretchen Johnston
Membership Coordinator—Barbara Logan
Social Media Administrator—Claudia Essenburg

ALC holds regular meetings the first Monday of each month at the Lake Chapala Society's South Campus Sala and social gatherings at local restaurants on the third Thursday of each month.

For more information, contact membership coordinator Barbara Logan at barbara.logan6@gmail.com, or visit www.artistsoflakechapala.org

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A Decade of Memories

What Past LCS President Had to Say

By Harriet Hart

Charlie Smith was president of LCS from 2004 to 2008. He described LCS back then as “Informally run, friendly, pleasant enough ... but getting a little run down.”

Socially, it was an “island of expatriates in a sea of Mexicans.” Charlie discovered that some community members experienced LCS as “unfriendly” so he established a policy of having a board member on site every day. Unfortunately, this wasn’t a popular plan, so Charlie personally came to LCS every day. “That way, people could complain directly to me, and not talk about LCS behind our backs,” he pointed out.

Charlie instigated some physical improvements—such as getting rid of the pond where the back patio now is, and improving the pathways. He allowed the membership to vote on projects – calling meetings, outlining plans and calling for a vote a month ahead. The organization evolved over those years from a social club to a service orientation.

Nancy Crevan succeeded Charlie Smith. She came to Lakeside on vacation, visited LCS and “was wowed by the whole place.” Almost immediately, she began volunteering in the office, twice a week for four years. She valued LCS as being a place of physical beauty, where she could meet people and contribute to her new community.

LCS “used to have a private club atmosphere,” she noted, “but over time it got bigger and more formal.” She described all the hard work it took to draft a new constitution and how the re-



Video caption Oral History Project with Nancy Crevan

cession of 2008 meant fewer members and less income, while operating costs continued to rise. LCS managed to break even.

Howard Feldstein was President from 2010 to 2014. The biggest development on his watch was the hiring of an executive director. In his Oral History interview, Howard said: “I wish we could have made more physical improvements,” but he was very proud of one social event—the introduction of the Mexican Independence Day celebrations held on campus on September 16th. “They were our most successful social events and really helped both sides (expats and nationals) to understand one another.”

These comments were excerpted from the Oral History Project



Video caption Oral History Project with Howard Feldstein

Una Década de Recuerdos

Lo Que Dijo un Pasado Presidente de LCS

By Harriet Hart

Charlie Smith fue presidente de LCS de 2004 a 2008. Describió a LCS en ese entonces como “dirigido de manera informal, amigable, bastante agradable... pero empezando a deteriorarse un poco.”

Socialmente, era una “isla de expatriados en un mar de mexicanos.” Charlie descubrió que algunos miembros de la comunidad percibían a LCS como “poco amistoso,” por lo que estableció una política de tener a un miembro de la junta en el lugar todos los días. Desafortunadamente, este plan no fue popular, así que Charlie personalmente asistía a LCS todos los días. “De esa manera, la gente podía quejarse directamente conmigo y no hablar de LCS a nuestras espaldas,” señaló.

Charlie impulsó algunas mejoras físicas, como eliminar el estanque donde ahora está el patio trasero y mejorar los senderos. Permitió que los miembros votaran sobre los proyectos, convocando reuniones, presentando planes y organizando votaciones con un mes de anticipación. Durante esos años, la organización evolucionó de ser un club social a tener una orientación de servicio.

Nancy Crevan sucedió a Charlie Smith. Ella llegó a Lakeside de vacaciones, visitó LCS y “quedó maravillada con todo el lugar.” Casi de inmediato, comenzó a ser voluntaria en la oficina, dos veces por semana durante cuatro años. Valoraba a LCS como un lugar de belleza física, donde podía conocer gente y contribuir a su nueva comunidad.

LCS “solía tener una atmósfera de club privado,” señaló, “pero con el tiempo se hizo más grande y formal.” Describió todo el arduo trabajo que tomó redactar una nueva constitución y cómo la recesión de 2008 significó menos miembros y menos ingresos, mientras que los costos operativos seguían aumentando. Aun así, LCS logró equilibrar las cuentas.

Howard Feldstein fue presidente de 2010 a 2014. El mayor logro bajo su dirección fue la contratación de un director ejecutivo. En su entrevista para el Proyecto de Historia Oral, Howard dijo: “Ojalá hubiéramos podido hacer más mejoras físicas,” pero estaba muy orgulloso de un evento social en particular: la introducción de las celebraciones del Día de la Independencia de México realizadas en el campus el 16 de septiembre. “Fueron nuestros eventos sociales más exitosos y realmente ayudaron a que ambos lados (expatriados y nacionales) se comprendieran mejor.”

Estos comentarios fueron extraídos del Proyecto de Historia Oral.



Staff Bio

Harriet Hart

I'm a Canadian who grew up in a small prairie town, escaped to Winnipeg to attend university at sixteen and stayed on to pursue various careers at the University of Manitoba -- as editorial assistant, admissions officer and correspondence program coordinator -- before obtaining a Social Work degree. I worked with people with spinal cord injuries for seventeen years.

When my husband and I retired to Lakeside in 2001, we did not know that the next twenty years would be the best of our lives. He took up tennis and photography, and I volunteered at the Lake Chapala Society as coordinator of the Information Desk and Oral History Project.

My desire to be a writer was fulfilled when I discovered a thriving writing community at Lakeside. I started attending the Friday writers group, served on the writing conference committee for eleven years, and wrote essays and articles for the Ojo del Lago, The Chapala Review, Roll Call, and Living at Lake Chapala. One of the founders of Conecciones, I continue as Associate Editor.

Everyone who knows me says that I am a storyteller. My favorite quote is: “We tell stories in order to live.” – Joan Didion

Searching for Neill James

By Greg Custer

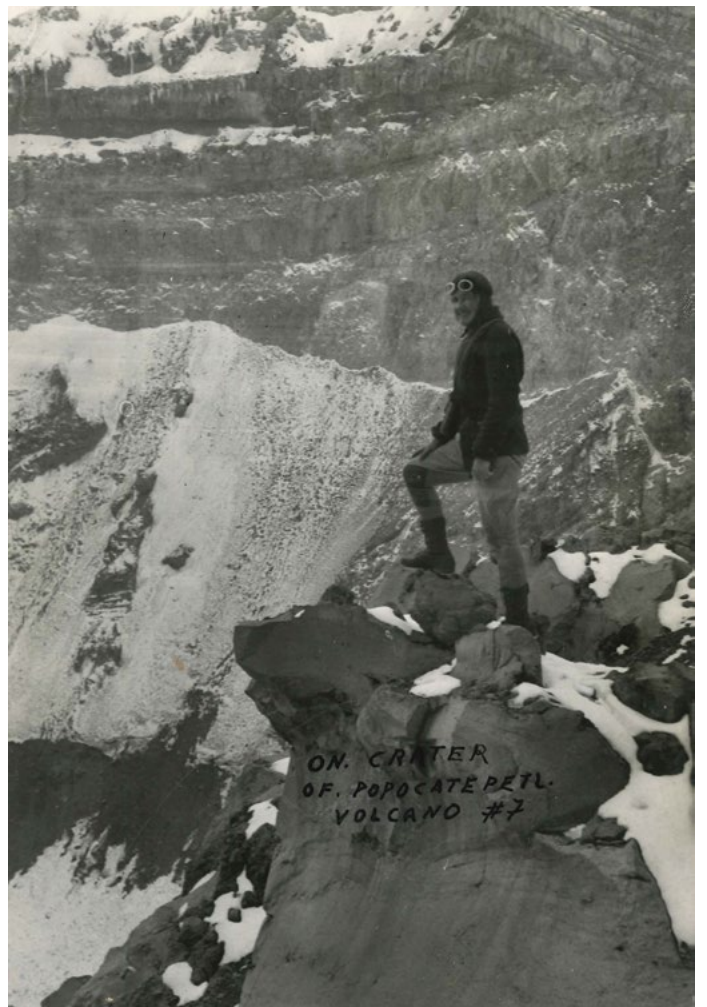
Photos by Neill James archive

The legacy of one woman drapes the Lake Chapala Society campus. In some ways, Ms. Neill James' legacy is a shroud that softens and blurs how we interpret and celebrate her remarkable life. Celebrations of Ms. James' 130th birth year throughout 2025 (including a special remembrance on Sunday, January 12th) rely on archival documents, testimonials from her expat and Mexican neighbors, fond memories from legacy artists she mentored decades ago, a historical fictional novel ("Kokio"), and her own writings.

James died months before her 100th birthday in 1994, leaving a wake of memories and materials. Moving to Ajijic in 1943 at age 48, James arrived as a published travel adventurer, with four books to her credit. Her "Petticoat Vagabond" series (Charles Scribner & Sons) about global travels to exotic places earned her the moniker "The modern-day Miss Marco Polo." The LCS library has a copy of her 1942 book, the last of the series.

Her globetrotting life before moving to Ajijic is a mishmash of fact and fiction. Some claims about her pre-Ajijic acquaintances (Ernest Hemingway and Amelia Earhart) seem dubious to historians. She also had a reputation for misrepresenting or exaggerating other grand claims about her pre-war adventures. Shrouded as well is the question of her intrepid travels linked to the U.S. War Department, as an undercover agent in exotic and geopolitically sensitive parts of the world.

Neill James's 50-year Ajijic residency (1943-1994) revealed a life shaped by pivotal encounters with Mexican volcanoes. Nearly dying on two occasions in 1942-1943 visiting Popocatepetl and Paricutin, a post-hospital respite from her injuries brought James to this shore in September 1943. Her subsequent book, "Dust on my Heart" (published in 1946) was her last. She writes of Ajijic:



“Many foreigners who come to Ajijic are misfits elsewhere, and there is a tendency among them to lead unorthodox lives here.” Jesus Lopez Vegas, an art student and renowned Ajijic painter/muralist, said, “She was something like a Buddhist and taught her garden-er how to eat lots of vegetables. Sometimes she dressed in an Asian style, and she had the Japanese garden on her property with the goldfish pond.”



Certainly, James brought her global perspective to Ajijic. Two of her initiatives were transformative for many village residents -- an embroidery/silk loom business and the village’s first library, which began Ajijic’s renowned children’s art program. The current LCS library was back then the Casa Seda Looms (operating from 1952 to 1973 - see the plaque at the LCS library entrance), while the 1950’s era children’s art program continues at LCS each Saturday morning.

Legacy artist and grand muralist Javier Zaragoza, a student in her 1950’s art classes recalls, “Neill worked hard to sell our paintings, and the small income from my art

made me feel that my life had value -- that I had value. She changed Ajijic. The art and cultural education she provided for the children, her library and her teaching changed our awareness. We learned to think for ourselves while being awakened to a broader world.

“Neill James had a heart for helping. Her actions changed everyone she touched. The community of fine artists who today live and work around Lakeside is a tribute to Neill’s wise intervention.”

James writes of her adopted country: “Mexico is mankind’s super paradise. The proud, beautiful Indian republic possesses the

charm of the Occident and the mystery of the Orient, enhanced by a spirit of *mañana*, which solaces the procrastinator.”

Curiously, the last words of “Dust” suggest a pending departure -- “...there is no real excuse for remaining in the private little paradise. I must be on the move.” But her legacy remains, touching the lives of her foreign-born friends and village families.

Neill James’ grave rests next to her former home, at the center of the LCS campus. Her giving spirit lives on in the hearts of those she influenced.

Neill James' Legacy Continues Through Scholarships

By Greg Custer

Photos by Neill James archive



Neill James dedicated 50 years of her life to supporting and developing education and arts in the communities along the shore of Lake Chapala. Her impressionable influence continues to extend to young students, thanks to an endowment established at her alma mater, the Mississippi University for Women (Ms. James graduated in 1918).

Since 2006, the department of Languages, Literature and Philosophy provides five students each year with a \$4,000 Neill James Scholarship. Recipients must declare an English major with a concentration in creative writing -- a fitting memorialization for such a creative life.

Chartered in 1884, the University made educational history as the first state-supported college for women in America. Alumni and friends affectionately call the Columbus, MS University "The W." Admitting men since 1982, MUW provides a high-quality liberal arts education with a distinct emphasis on professional development and leadership opportunities for women.

For more information on the Neill James scholarships, visit <https://www.muw.edu/llp/scholarships/neilljames/>



El legado de Neill James continúa a través de becas

Por Greg Custer

Fotos tomadas del archivo de Neill James



Neill James dedicó 50 años de su vida a apoyar y desarrollar la educación y las artes en las comunidades a lo largo de la ribera del Lago de Chapala. Su profunda influencia continúa extendiéndose a jóvenes estudiantes, gracias a un fondo establecido en su alma mater, la Universidad para Mujeres de Mississippi (donde la Sra. James se graduó en 1918).

Desde 2006, el Departamento de Lenguas, Literatura y Filosofía otorga cada año cinco Becas Neill James de \$4,000 dólares. Las personas beneficiarias deben especializarse en la carrera de Inglés con concentración en escritura creativa, una forma muy apropiada de honrar una vida tan creativa.

Fundada en 1884, la Universidad marcó un hito en la historia educativa al ser la primera institución estatal para mujeres en Estados Unidos. Exalumnas, exalumnos y amistades la llaman cariñosamente “The W”. Desde 1982 admite también a hombres, y la MUW ofrece una educación de artes liberales de alta calidad, con un énfasis especial en el desarrollo profesional y oportunidades de liderazgo para mujeres.

Para más información sobre las becas Neill James, visite: <https://www.muw.edu/llp/scholarships/neilljames/>



Staff Bio

Cathy Austill

*My husband's post-retirement focus on the Lake Chapala area brought us to Ajijic two years ago, but the **people, culture and opportunities made it my home.***

It took me two years to slow down here – after a whirlwind of selling everything we had in the States, getting our last college graduate settled and employed (ie., on her own insurance), packing what was left into four suitcases and searching for a place to live in Mexico.

*My degree in Journalism led me into editorial positions with several trade publications, where I was able to travel internationally. During sixteen years with Xerox, I **helped bring technology-changing digital print solutions to the US market**, working with engineers, printing companies, corporations, agencies and marketers.*

But, how do you balance relaxing and finding something meaningful to do when you retire? I joined many groups and activities here, and offered to help with Conecciones, as it was transitioning Managing Editors last year. This has opened new doors and new friendships for me.

I look forward to 2025 as the year I finally start focusing on my own writing projects – organizing scraps of paper and journals, ideas and thoughts. Happy 2025!



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Grounds open: Monday to Friday 9:00 am to 5:00 pm / Saturday 9:00 am to 2 pm

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LESSONS (M)

Being Love & Bliss Meditation	W 10:15-11:15
Bordado Artístico (Spanish)	M+W+F 4-6
Children's Art - Open to all (Children 5 years & under must be accompanied by an adult)	Sat 10-12
Children's Huara Chess Club	Sat 10-12
Crochet Class	TH 12-2
Exercise	M+W+F 9-9:50
Gentle Yoga & Body Awareness	W 10-10:50
Intermediate Hatha Yoga	T 2-3:30
Iyengar Yoga	F 11-12
Learn to Knit	T 11-12:30
Line Dancing, gail@doughertynet.com	T + TH 10-11:15
Move to the Beat	M 10-11
Mudlarks Pottery Open Studio	M + F 10-2
NIA Fitness Seasonal	F 10-10:50
Stretch & Balance Resumes February <i>harry_bertram@hotmail.com</i>	M + TH 8:45-9:45
Spanish in Action classes (español en acción) See LCS website or in the office for more info	
Tech Help via Email <i>lcs.tech.training@gmail.com</i>	
Write to a Prompt Writers' Group	TH 10-12

LIBRARIES (M)

Book + DVD Libraries	M-Sat 10-2
Books on Tape & Library of Congress Talking Books. To order books on-line, you must use a computer or a tablet/iPad. It is not possible to order using a cell phone. Go to lakechapalasociety.com & select libraries/English.	

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES (M)

American Mah Jongg	TH 10-1
Bridge For Fun -Resumes November	F 1-4:30
Discussion Group	W 11:30-1
Duplicate Bridge	W 1-4
English/Spanish Conversation* (Open to public)	Sat 12-1:30*
Everyday Mindfulness	M 10:30-12
Game Group	TH 1-5
Open Circle	S 10:30
Scrabble	F 11:30-1:30
TED Talks	2nd & 4th TH 12:30-1:45

Tournament Scrabble	T 12-1:50
UFO Cafe Discussion Group	3rd T 1:30-3:30

HEALTH INSURANCE*

Hospital San Antonio	TH 10:30-12:30
IMSS & Immigration Services Call Veronica for an appointment 333-157-9472	M+T 11-1:30
Lakeside Insurance	T+TH 11-2
Ribera Medical Center	T 10:30-12:30
Shiatsu Chair Massage By appointment only, call 331-604-0971	1st & 3rd TH 10-12

HEALTH & LEGAL SERVICES*

Audiology Oir Bien- hearing care specialists (Consultation fee) Call for appointment 332-945-3267	M+W+F 9-3
Becerra Immigration	TH 10:30-12:30
Blood Pressure Screenings -seasonal	F 10-12
Finestra Investment Consulting	3rd TH 10-1
Intercam Banking Services	M - F 10-1
Optometrist Claravision Call for appointment 331-411-1178	TH 9-4
Solbes & Solbes	2nd M 10-12
SkyMed	1st W 11-1

SERVICE & SUPPORT GROUPS *

AA Women's Meeting	T 4-5
AI-Anon (Spanish)	M 6-7:30, W 5:30-7:30
Caregivers of Spouses with Dementia (Support Group)	T 11-12:30
Diabetes Support Group contact welchk4diabetes@gmail.com	Zoom 1st F 1:00
Information Desk	M-Sat 10-2
AA Open Meeting	M+TH 4-5
Macular Degeneration Support Group	1st W 2-3
Needle Pushers	T 10-11:45
Toastmasters	M 7-9



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LCS office | Mon to Sat | 10 am to 2 pm
www.lakechapalasociety.com

There is no refund

For any questions related to classes
Please contact education@lcsac.org



Introduction to Spanish By Inez Dayer

- Thursday, Jan 9, 16 & 23
 - Thursday, Feb 6, 13 & 20
- 10:00 am to 12:00 pm

General fee: \$790

This three-session class is for people without any Spanish language background. Your instructor will introduce you to Spanish pronunciation, basic vocabulary and social protocols.

Mexican Manners and More

By Víctor Camarena

- Wednesday, January 10
 - Wednesday, February 5
 - Wednesday, March 5
- 10:00 am to 12:30 pm

General fee: \$760

This one-session class explores cultural shock, Mexican mindset, language, body language, politeness, time structure, and traditions for smoother integration.

Building Resilience & Emotional Intelligence

By Sheila Ford

- Wednesday Jan 15, 22 & 29
- 10am to 12:00pm

General fee: \$720

This three-session class helps you anchor new skills and create harmony in real-life conflicts. Learn to stop anxiety, uncover helpful insights, and reframe your mindset. Recognize what's truly happening, repair relationships, and transform challenges. Discover how to feel empowered and create a fulfilling, enriching life you deserve.



Living Tarot Interactive Storytelling

By Tzivia Stein-Barrett

- Friday, Jan 17
 - Friday, Feb 21
 - Friday, Mar 21
- 1:00 pm to 3:30 pm

General fee: \$560

In this 2.5-hour session, connect conscious and unconscious actions to achieve your goals. Explore movement, sound, and storytelling using Tarot cards. Enjoy discussions, mutual support, and dynamic activities that inspire spontaneity, personal growth, and deeper self-awareness in a fun setting.



Getting your Jalisco Driver's License... Without Losing Your Mind

By Víctor Camarena

- Wednesday, Jan 15 CLASS
9:30 am to 11:30 am
Wednesday, Jan 22 TEST
visit to the Secretaria de Transporte
- Wednesday, Feb 12 CLASS
9:30 am to 11:30 am
Wednesday, Feb 19 TEST
visit to the Secretaria de Transporte

General fee: \$850

In this class, participants will learn all the requirements to obtain Jalisco's drivers License.



Is Misalignment Causing Your Muscle or Joint Pain?

By Sophie Hawkins

- Monday Jan 27
- 10am to 11:30am

General fee: \$560

Join a 90-minute workshop on skeletal misalignment, its impact on muscle and joint pain, and ways to relieve discomfort. Learn to identify misalignments, evaluate yourself, and practice tips for proper body use in daily activities. Includes demonstrations and Q&A.

CLASSES

MEMBERS GET A 30% DISCOUNT



Advanced Care Planning - Living Well and Dying Well at Lakeside

By Loretta Downs

Friday, Feb 21 & 28

10:00 am to 12:00 pm

General fee: \$780

This is a two class course. Empowers you with the knowledge and tools to navigate this delicate but essential aspect of life, ensuring your choices and values are upheld.



Spanish Pronunciation Made Easier

By Gareth Collingwood

Wednesday, Feb 5, 12 & 19

10:00am to 12:00pm

General fee: \$860

In this 3-week course, master Spanish phonology (sounds) to avoid confusion and improve understanding. Learn correct pronunciation of vowels and consonants, sound more natural when speaking, and better comprehend spoken Spanish in everyday situations. Language begins with sound—start here!

Tools for Spanish Verbs

An in-depth explanation

By Gareth Collingwood

Wednesday, March 5, 12 and 19

10:00 am to 12:00 pm

General fee: \$860

This 3-week course will give participants a clear, easy-to-grasp explanation of what verbs are, how verbs are controlled, and how Spanish verbs work in the context of sentences. Special attention will be given to the pattern of Spanish verbs and how they look and sound in realistic conversation.

In Our Library: Lakeside Reading Focus

By Deb Gang - LCS Librarian

This month, with the LCS celebration of Neill James, the library is featuring her books and all things Ajijic and Lake Chapala. As many of you know, “*Dust on My Heart*” is James’ most popular work as it is a memoir and a love letter to her beloved Ajijic, where she spent the last 50 years of her life. She also penned 2 books in her “*Petticoat Vagabond*” series, which feature her travels to exotic, remote places. “*House in the Sun*” and “*Village in the Sun*” are also loving tributes to life in Ajijic.

Tony Burton is another well-known author who writes about Lakeside. His “*Foreign Footprints*” details the way foreign entrepreneurs, artists, hippies and other assorted characters have transformed this once tranquil fishing village. For more interesting history, you can read Burton’s “*Lake Chapala Through the Ages*” or “*If Walls Could Talk: Chapala’s Historic Buildings and Their Former Occupants.*”

Another informative book is “*Ajijic: 500 Years of Adventures,*” compiled by Alexandra Bateman and Nancy Ollenbach. Local author David Ellison has written an interesting take on the history of Mexico. His book, “*Mexican Streets,*” contains short biographies of Mexico’s most famous figures. Learn why we have street names like Benito Juarez, Javier Mina and many more. You will also discover the namesake of Adelita’s restaurant.

For those of you who may not have decided whether or not to move to Lakeside yet, we have a few guides that can be useful. The first guide, “*Living at Lake Chapala,*” is written by Judy King, a woman known and loved by everyone in the community. Another is “*Mexico’s Lake Chapala & Ajijic: The Insider’s Guide.*” Lastly, we have “*Moving to Mexico’s Lake Chapala*” by Mexico Expat Express.

To round out our list, we have many guides for traveling in Mexico, for those of you who want to explore beyond Lakeside. We also have several anthologies written by local authors about their experiences living here.

Happy reading and we look forward to seeing you in the library!

TOURS

IKEA SHOPPING TRIP

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 18
10:00am to 6:00pm

GENERAL FEE: \$1,100

Visit IKEA Guadalajara Expo, the largest IKEA store in Mexico! Explore 37,000 square meters of furniture and accessories across two immersive levels, designed to replicate real homes. Enjoy the Swedish restaurant, market, and bistro. Plus, discover the unique identity museum, showcasing IKEA's history. A must-visit destination for home inspiration and delicious dishes!



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JANUARY 10&11
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- Neill James Legacy Artists
- Lush Gardens
- Local Artists
- Handicrafts
- Art Cards
- Children's Art Program
- Artisan Creations

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LakeChapalaSociety.com

EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL PROGRAMS

Promoting the value of education and culture by providing appropriate tools for personal and professional development.



THE WILKES EDUCATION CENTER (WEC)

Public Library, Children's Reading Room,
Language Learning Center

Location: Galeana 18, Ajijic, Jalisco

Hours: Monday to Friday: 9:30 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Saturday: 9:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Phone: 376 766-2940

Email: wilkes@lcsac.org

education@lcsac.org

Located two blocks from the main LCS campus, the LCS Wilkes Education Center is a hub of educational activity. The Mexican community affectionately refers to the WEC as the “Biblioteca” (library), while the expats simply call it the “Wilkes”.

The WEC houses the English as a Second Language (ESL) program, Library, and Spanish conversational Classes. The library offers students a quiet setting to do their homework. This Library holds a collection of around 4000 books in the Spanish language.

See our website or send an email to education@lcsac.org to find out what programs and activities run.

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (ESL)

Hours: Depends on availability.

Email: ingles@lcsac.org

We are looking for volunteers interested in teaching English, who are native speakers with a lot of enthusiasm. No Spanish is required.

COMPUTER CLASSES

A new computer classes will be offered at WEC to help the community to learn basic computer programs, this program will be open to members and non-members.

ENGLISH / SPANISH CONVERSATION CLUB

Class Location: LCS Ken Gosh Pavilion

Hours: Saturday, 12:00 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.

Phone: (376) 766-1140

E-mail: prylett@msn.com

The Spanish/English conversation club consists of native Spanish and native English speakers. The focus of the group is to enjoy and maintain a conversation in a second language, without concentrating on grammatical correctness.

CHILDREN'S ART PROGRAM (CAP)

Hours: Saturdays 10:00am - 12:00 noon

Phone: 376 766-1140

Email: childrensart@lcsac.org

In 1954, Neill James started the Children's Art Program. Since then, it has helped thousands of Mexican children develop their creative talents, producing many well-known local artists. The tradition of Ajijic as an art colony lives on through these children.

FREE ART CLASSES FOR ALL CHILDREN

About 60 local children attend the program each Saturday rain or shine. Classes are free, and open to all children aged 3 and over. Art materials are supplied free of charge. The program has flourished with the support of LCS and its many dedicated volunteers.

THE BUSINESS OF ART

To teach the children about the business of art, their work is used to make greeting cards for all occasions. These are sold at various LCS events, and each child artist earns a portion of the sale. Some youth from the program have pursued formal art education with help from the LCS. Some have illustrated books, others have been commissioned to paint murals and unique artwork.

SUMMER ART CAMP

Since 2013, CAP has held a week-long Summer Art Camp at LCS, free to all children. Camp activities include papel maché, jewelry, mosaics, drawing, painting with acrylics, oils and watercolors, as well as a special workshop for children aged 6 and under. Annually the program attracts over 125 young participants.

CHILDREN'S ART PATIO MURAL

The Children's Art Patio has a mural painted jointly by Javier Zaragoza and Jesús López Vega, renowned artists and graduates of the program. Both still volunteers every Saturday to teach the children. The mural celebrates six decades of the CAP.

LEGACY ART COLLECTION

In 2012, the Legacy Art Collection was placed in the care of LCS. This collection has art from our program's Legacy Artists – kids who took part in the program when Neill James was running it from 1954 to about 1990. Also included is art from the following ten years, when Mildred Boyd took over. Almost 400 framed pieces have been catalogued in a database. The cataloguing of hundreds more pieces continues.

LCS STUDENT AID

E-mail: apoyoeco@lcsac.org

LCS has within its mission to contribute to the improvement of the quality of life of the Mexican community through relevant programs and services, and since 1994 has been administering the Student Aid Program with which it grants financial aid to bright, low-income students from the Chapala Lakeside area who intend to carry out or are carrying out university studies. This economic support, which in no way constitutes a scholarship, is intended to cover a fixed amount for each school calendar that the beneficiary can use for enrollment fees, tuition, school books, materials related to the performance of their academic activity, transportation, maintenance, etc.

Buscando a Neill James

Por Greg Custer

Fotos del archivo de Neill James

El legado de una mujer envuelve el campus de la Lake Chapala Society (LCS). De cierta manera, el legado de la Sra. Neill James es un velo que suaviza y difumina cómo interpretamos y celebramos su vida extraordinaria. Las celebraciones del 130º año de su nacimiento a lo largo de 2025 (incluyendo un homenaje especial el domingo 12 de enero) se basan en documentos de archivo, testimonios de sus vecinos expatriados y mexicanos, memorias entrañables de artistas a quienes ella apoyó hace décadas, una novela histórica de ficción (“Kokio”), y sus propios escritos.

James falleció meses antes de cumplir 100 años, en 1994, dejando tras de sí un cúmulo de recuerdos y materiales. Al llegar a Ajijic en 1943, a los 48 años, ya



era una aventurera de viajes publicada, con cuatro libros en su haber. Su serie “Petticoat Vagabond” (Charles Scribner & Sons), sobre viajes globales a lugares exóticos, le valió el apodo de “La Srita. Marco Polo de la era moderna”. La biblioteca de la LCS conserva un ejemplar de su libro de 1942, el último de la serie.

Su vida trotamundos antes de mudarse a Ajijic es un revoltijo de hechos y ficción. Algunas afirmaciones sobre sus relaciones previas a su llegada (con Ernest Hemingway y Amelia Earhart) parecen dudosas para los historiadores. También tenía fama de tergiversar o exagerar otras hazañas de sus aventuras antes de la guerra. Otra incógnita es si sus viajes intrépidos estuvieron ligados al Departamento de Guerra de Estados Unidos, actuando como agente encubierta en regiones exóticas y geopolíticamente sensibles.

Los 50 años que James vivió en Ajijic (1943-1994) muestran una vida marcada por encuentros decisivos con volcanes mexicanos. Casi muere en dos ocasiones entre 1942 y 1943, al visitar Popocatepetl y Parícutín. Tras su recuperación en el hospital, buscó reponerse en estas orillas en septiembre de 1943. Su libro posterior, “Dust on my Heart” (publicado en 1946), fue el último. Allí escribe sobre Ajijic:

“Muchos extranjeros que vienen a Ajijic son inadaptados en otros lugares, y hay una tendencia entre ellos a llevar vidas poco ortodoxas aquí.” Jesús López





Vega, alumno de arte y reconocido pintor/muralista de Ajijic, comentaba: “Ella era algo así como una budista y le enseñó a su jardinero a comer muchas verduras. A veces se vestía al estilo asiático, y tenía el jardín japonés en su propiedad con un estanque de peces dorados.”

Ciertamente, James trajo su perspectiva global a Ajijic. Dos de sus iniciativas transformaron la vida de muchos residentes del pueblo: un negocio de bordados/telares de seda y la primera biblioteca del pueblo, que dio origen al reconocido programa de arte infantil de Ajijic. La actual biblioteca de la LCS era entonces la “Casa Seda Looms” (que operó de 1952 a 1973; véase la placa en la entrada de la biblioteca de la LCS), mientras que el programa de arte infantil de la década de 1950 continúa impartándose cada sábado por la mañana en LCS.

El artista de legado y gran muralista Javier Zaragoza, quien fue estudiante en sus clases de arte en los años cincuenta, recuerda: “Neill trabajó duro para vender nuestras pinturas, y el pequeño ingreso que obtuve de mi arte me hizo sentir que mi vida tenía valor, que yo tenía valor. Ella cambió a Ajijic. El arte y la educación cultural que proporcionó a los niños, su biblioteca y su enseñanza cambiaron nuestra conciencia. Aprendimos a pensar por nosotros mismos mientras despertábamos a un mundo más amplio.



Javier Zaragoza en la biblioteca 1957; Foto del archivo de Neill James

“Neill James tenía un corazón para ayudar. Sus acciones cambiaron a todos los que tocó. La comunidad de artistas plásticos que hoy vive y trabaja alrededor de la ribera es un tributo a la sabia intervención de Neill.”

James escribió sobre su país adoptivo: “México es el superparaíso de la humanidad. La orgullosa y hermosa república india posee el encanto de Occidente y el misterio de Oriente, realzado por un espíritu de ‘mañana’ que consuela al que posterga.”

Curiosamente, las últimas palabras de “Dust” sugieren una próxima partida: “...no hay una verdadera excusa para permanecer en este pequeño paraíso privado. Debo seguir en movimiento.” Pero su legado permanece, tocando las vidas de sus amistades extranjeras y las familias del pueblo.

La tumba de Neill James reposa junto a su antigua casa, en el corazón del campus de la LCS. Su espíritu generoso vive en los corazones de aquellos a quienes influyó.



Si LCS Abriera un Museo de Neill James

Por Harriet Hart

Recientemente regresé de un viaje a Nuevo México, donde visité el Museo de Georgia O’Keeffe. ¡Qué lugar tan encantador! En exhibición había algunas obras de arte, fotografías gigantes y objetos personales como libros de cocina, recetas y atuendos favoritos. Esto me hizo pensar: si LCS abriera un museo de Neill James, ¿qué habría en él?

Hace un año entrevisté a Marianne O’Halloran, archivista que desempeñó ese rol de 2011 a 2023. Marianne trabajó junto a Terry Vidal, el primer Director Ejecutivo de LCS, quien, con una maestría en Estudios de Museos y experiencia como director de museo, mostró un interés especial en los archivos.

“Los ojos de Terry brillaban cuando veía algunas cosas, como el recibo del Volkswagen Beetle de 1964 que Neill compró,” recordó O’Halloran. “Me ayudó a pedir suministros de almacenamiento adecuados, como cajas libres de ácido, papel de seda y carpetas de archivo. Clasifiqué y leí montones y montones de documentos, incluyendo actas de reuniones de la Junta Directiva de LCS, directorios telefónicos antiguos y registros financieros.”

Marianne creó un inventario maestro con largas listas de objetos personales de Neill James: álbumes de fotos, joyas, cajas de ropa, planos del Malecón de Ajjic fechados en 1972 e incluso expedientes médicos pertenecientes a Ed Wilkes, cuya casa ahora es el Centro Wilkes.

Recientemente contacté a Marianne y le pregunté qué objetos se destacaban para ella. ¿Qué pondría en exhibición? Su respuesta:



Biblioteca pública de Ajjic; Foto del archivo de Neill James

“No sé ni por dónde empezar. Neill era muy interesante y hay mucha información contradictoria en sus propias palabras y en lo que dicen otros. Dio tres años diferentes como fecha de su nacimiento; y aún hay preguntas sobre su historia familiar en Misisipi, su supuesto matrimonio y algunos de sus movimientos y puestos en su carrera.”

O’Halloran continuó: “Los archivos contienen diarios, cartas a sus editores y cartas a la escuela de arte en San Miguel para gestionar becas para Javier Zaragoza y otros. Hay ropa, joyas, su colección personal de libros, muchas fotos, documentos sobre sus propiedades y ese recibo por la compra en 1964 de un VW Beetle rojo.”

Al parecer, su forma de conducir era terrible. Nadie quería viajar con ella, y el auto estaba muy abollado cuando murió; su paradero actual es desconocido. Era muy sociable. Le gustaba entretener y a veces llevaba libretas con anotaciones sobre lo que había usado en diversos eventos locales para no repetir. Mantenía listas de zapatos, sombreros, faldas, blusas y posibles combinaciones para todas las ocasiones durante sus viajes internacionales. Y siempre viajaba en barco en sus primeros días, con baúles que contenían su abrigo de piel y palos de golf.

Una vez le sugerí a Terry Vidal que LCS abriera un museo, pero frunció el ceño y respondió: “¿Sabes cuánto trabajo implicaría eso?” Por supuesto que no sabía, pero tengo esperanza. Hay un nuevo Comité de Archivos de LCS (presidido por Greg Custer) trabajando arduamente para decidir qué mostrar en 2025, cuando LCS planea celebrar su 70º aniversario. Yo sugeriría una exposición, y me encantaría ver los sombreros, vestidos y collares de Neill, su biblioteca y álbumes de fotos. ¿Habría una foto de ese VW Beetle abollado?

If LCS Opened a Neill James Museum

By Harriet Hart

I recently returned from a trip to New Mexico, where I paid the Georgia O’Keeffe Museum a visit. What a charming spot! On display are some works of art, giant photos, and personal items like cookbooks, recipes and favorite outfits. This got me thinking. If LCS opened a Neill James Museum, what would be in it?



Photos by Neill James archive

A year ago, I interviewed archivist Marianne O’Halloran who served in that role from 2011 to 2023. Marianne worked with Terry Vidal, the first Executive Director of LCS, who, with a Masters Degree in Museum Studies and as a former museum director, took a special interest in the archives.

“Terry’s eyes lit up when he saw some things, like the receipt for the 1964 Volkswagen Beetle Neill purchased,” O’Halloran recalled. “He helped me order proper storage supplies such as acid-free boxes, tissue paper and file folders. I sorted and read stacks and stacks of documents, including minutes of LCS Board meetings, old phone directories, and financial records.”

Marianne created a master inventory with long lists of Neill James’ personal items: photo albums, jewelry, boxes of clothing, plans for the Ajijic Malecón dated 1972, and even medical records belonging to Ed Wilkes whose home is now the Wilkes Center.

I contacted Marianne recently and asked what items stood out for her. What would she put on display? Her reply:

“I don't even know what to emphasize. Neill was very interesting,

and there is much conflicting information in her own words and from others. She gave three different years as her birth date; and there are still questions about her family history in Mississippi, her supposed marriage, and some of her career moves and positions.”

O’Halloran continued: “The archives contain journals, letters to her publishers and letters to the art school in San Miguel arranging for scholarships for Javier Zaragoza and others. There are clothes, jewelry, her personal book collection, lots of photos, documents concerning her properties, and that receipt for her purchase in 1964 of a red VW Beetle.”

Apparently, her driving was terrible. No one wanted to ride with her, and the car was badly dented when she died; its current location is unknown. She was very social. She liked to entertain and sometimes kept notebooks of what she had worn to various local events so as not to duplicate. She kept lists of shoes, hats, skirts, tops and possible combinations for all occasions during her international travels. And she always traveled by ship in early days with trunks containing her fur coat and golf clubs.”

I once suggested to Terry Vidal that LCS open a museum, but he scowled and replied: “Do you know how much work that would be?” Of course I didn’t, but I have hope – there is a new LCS Archives Committee (chaired by Greg Custer) hard at work deciding what to showcase in 2025 as LCS plans its own 70th anniversary celebration. I’d suggest an exhibition and I’d love to see Neill’s sombreros and dresses and beads, her library and photo albums. I wonder if there is a photo of that battered up VW Beetle?

EDUCATION AND CULTURE

2024 A Year of Growth & Connection

By: Victor Camarena

The Department of Education at the Lake Chapala Society (LCS) has had an extraordinary year in 2024, marking significant milestones in its mission to bring the expat and Mexican communities closer together through learning and cultural exchange. As the year has ended, the department reflects on its successes while setting ambitious goals for an even more impactful 2025.

The work of this department goes far beyond providing classes, tours and activities. It serves as a bridge that connects the Mexican community with the expat residents who call lakeside home. Through shared learning experiences, cultural celebrations, and open dialogue, we continue to foster mutual understanding and respect, breaking down barriers and building friendships.

The Education Department plays a vital role in helping expats deepen their understanding of Mexico and integrate seamlessly into the local community. Through cultural and educational workshops, Spanish language classes, and events that highlight Mexican traditions, history, and customs, the department fosters meaningful connections between expats and locals.

In 2024, we witnessed the transformative impact of community engagement through various educational programs and cultural activities that enriched lives and fostered meaningful connections between both communities. Our **Children's Summer Art Camp** in August was a resounding success, with over 300 students taking part. This program not only nurtured the creative talents of young minds but also provided a space for expression, collaboration, and growth.

Our **Halloween Party for Kids** was another highlight of the year, marking the largest attendance we have ever seen. Additionally, our **Intercultural Celebration of Life and Honoring the Death** brought the com-



Children's Summer Art Camp 2024; Photo by Domitzu

munity together to honor traditions, share stories, and celebrate the richness of our diverse heritage.

During 2024, we continued implementing cornerstone programs such as **Youth Photography and Children's Art**. We are also delighted to introduce a brand-new program, **Kids Pottery**, enabling young participants to explore their creativity.

Our Wilkes Education Center remains a vibrant hub for **English as a Second Language (ESL)** for youth and adults, and we are excited to begin a new cycle of beginner, intermediate, and advanced courses in January.

The energy and momentum we've built in 2024 inspire us to embrace 2025 with enthusiasm, fresh ideas, and ambitious plans. We will launch a **new English class for children** in January, held every Saturday from 12:00 PM to 1:30 PM, to empower the next generation with vital language skills, and we will add more classes and workshops to our repertoire.

The department's work is vital in the Ajijic area, where a growing expat presence has created many opportunities. Another important goal is to attract more volunteers to sustain and grow the department's initiatives. With the support of the community, this program can continue to be a beacon of learning and understanding in the Lake Chapala area.

As the Department of Education looks to 2025, its success depends on the continued involvement and support of both the expat and Mexican communities. As we begin this year, let us remember the true meaning of community: the spirit of giving, learning and supporting each other, and the hope for a brighter tomorrow. On behalf of the entire Education Department, I extend my heartfelt thanks to each of you.

EDUCACIÓN Y CULTURA

2024 Un año de crecimiento y conexión

Por Víctor Camarena

El Departamento de Educación de la Lake Chapala Society (LCS) ha tenido un año extraordinario en 2024, marcando hitos significativos en su misión de acercar a las comunidades de expatriados y mexicanos a través del aprendizaje y el intercambio cultural. Al terminar el año, el departamento reflexiona sobre sus éxitos mientras establece metas ambiciosas para un 2025 aún más impactante.

La labor de este Departamento va mucho más allá de ofrecer clases, visitas y actividades. Sirve de puente que conecta a la comunidad mexicana con los residentes expatriados que residen en la ribera. A través de experiencias de aprendizaje compartidas, celebraciones culturales y un diálogo abierto, seguimos fomentando el entendimiento y el respeto mutuo, derribando barreras y creando amistades.

El Departamento de Educación juega un papel vital en ayudar a los expatriados a profundizar su comprensión de México e integrarse sin problemas en la comunidad local. A través de talleres culturales y educativos, clases de español y eventos que destacan las tradiciones, la historia y las costumbres mexicanas, fomentamos conexiones significativas entre los expatriados y la población local.

En 2024, fuimos testigos del impacto transformador del compromiso comunitario a través de diversos programas educativos y actividades culturales que en-

riquecieron vidas y fomentaron conexiones significativas entre ambas comunidades. Nuestro **campamento de arte infantil de verano**, celebrado en agosto, fue un éxito rotundo, con la participación de más de 300 alumnos. Este programa no sólo apoyó el talento creativo de las mentes jóvenes, sino que también proporcionó un espacio para la expresión, la colaboración y el crecimiento.

Nuestra **Fiesta de Halloween para niños** fue otro de los momentos culminantes del año, con la mayor asistencia que hemos visto nunca. Además, nuestra **Celebración Intercultural de la Vida y el Homenaje a la Muerte** reunieron a la comunidad para honrar las tradiciones, compartir historias y celebrar la riqueza de nuestro diverso patrimonio.

Durante 2024 seguimos implementando programas fundamentales como **Fotografía Juvenil y Arte Infantil**, y también estamos muy contentos de haber iniciado un programa totalmente nuevo, **Cerámica Infantil**, que permitió a los jóvenes participantes explorar su creatividad.

Nuestro Centro Educativo Wilkes sigue siendo un dinámico centro de enseñanza de **inglés como segunda lengua (ESL)** para jóvenes y adultos, y estamos felices de comenzar en enero un nuevo ciclo de cursos para principiantes, intermedios y avanzados.



Fiesta de Halloween 2024; Foto por Domitzu

La energía y el impulso que hemos construido en 2024 nos inspiran para iniciar 2025 con entusiasmo, ideas frescas y planes ambiciosos. En enero, lanzaremos una nueva **clase de inglés para niños**, que se impartirá todos los sábados de 12:00 a 13:30, con el objetivo de brindar a la próxima generación de conocimientos lingüísticos vitales, y se añadirán más clases y talleres a nuestro repertorio.

El trabajo del departamento es especialmente vital en la zona de Ajijic, donde la creciente presencia de expatriados ha creado muchas oportunidades. Otro objetivo importante es atraer a más voluntarios para sostener y hacer crecer las iniciativas del departamento. Con el apoyo de la comunidad, este programa puede seguir siendo un faro de aprendizaje y comprensión en la zona del lago de Chapala.

A medida que el Departamento de Educación mira hacia el 2025, su éxito depende de la continua participación y el apoyo tanto de los expatriados y las comunidades mexicanas. Al comenzar este año, recordemos el verdadero significado de la comunidad: el espíritu de dar, aprender y apoyarnos unos a otros, y la esperanza de un mañana más brillante. En nombre de todo el Departamento de Educación, extendo mi más sincero agradecimiento a cada uno de ustedes.

MEXICO TAKES CHRISTMAS SERIOUSLY

By Diana Hunt

Christmas, or Navidad, is celebrated in Mexico throughout the year, both symbolically and through crafts.

Four towns in Jalisco bear the name Navidad

Viceroy Antonio de Mendoza landed at **Barra de Navidad** (Christmas bar) on December 25, 1540. Today, this village is a popular beach town along the tourist corridor known as Costa Alegre -- alongside the Pacific Ocean on the western coastline of the Mexican state of Jalisco. **Isla Navidad**, opposite Barra de Navidad, is not really an island but an exclusive tourist complex on the Culebra Peninsula. Also along the western coastline in the municipality of Cihuatlán, **Bahia de Navidad** hosts major international fishing tournaments and offers quiet mangrove lagoons. High in the Sierra Madre mountains of western Jalisco is perched the Magic Town of **Navidad**, a former mining and agricultural center. Today less than 200 inhabitants call Navidad home.

Five villages throughout Mexico specialize in crafting Christmas decorations

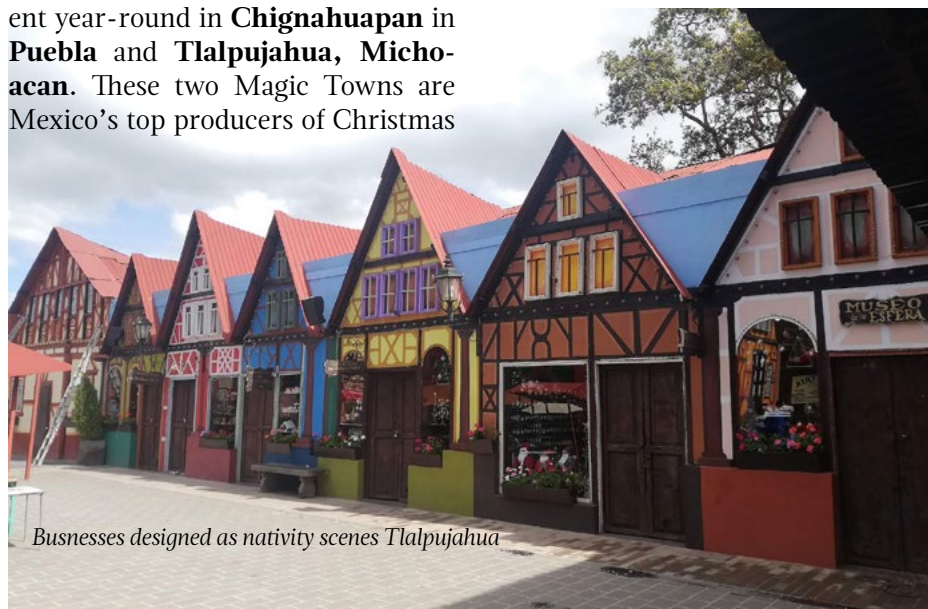
The Christmas spirit is present year-round in **Chignahuapan** in **Puebla** and **Tlalpujahua**, **Michoacan**. These two Magic Towns are Mexico's top producers of Christmas

ornaments. Each hosts a traditional ornaments fair in December with hundreds of vendors selling hand-blown glass ornaments. Most residents in both towns make their living selling Christmas to buyers around the world.

Chignahuapan, nestled in Puebla's rugged Sierra Norte mountains, is Mexico's top Christmas ornament producer; its Esnaviso factory is famed for its stunning creations. Hundreds of other workshops churn out hand-painted blown glass called Spheres. The Esnaviso factory alone produces millions of ornaments annually.

Known as the "Town of Eternal Christmas," **Tlalpujahua** is a Magical Town where the Sphere Fair (Feria de Esferas) is celebrated every year. This tradition combines Christmas festivities with the talent of local artisans who dedicate their lives to creating ornaments and other items to bring the Christmas spirit into peoples' homes. The contrast between the colonial architecture of the town and the facades of the 400 workshops with Santa Clauses painted on the walls gives it a strange charm.

Several more villages sell Christmas goodies



Businesses designed as nativity scenes Tlalpujahua



Xmas ornament chignahuapan

The Magical Town of Creel, Chihuahua, known as the gateway to the Copper Canyon, will undoubtedly put anybody in the mood for Christmas with its snowy winters. The population of the Rarámuri or Tarahumara indigenous people, one of the best-preserved ethnic groups in the Americas, keep busy selling Christmas decorations to visitors.

The Magical Village of Arteaga, Coahuila, close to Saltillo, is nestled among the highest peaks in northwestern Mexico. Called the "Switzerland of Mexico," Arteaga is famed for its wooded landscapes, apple valleys and snowy peaks. There is even a ski slope, with a 45-meter-long beginner trail. The village is also famous for its liquors, wines and fruit preserves.

The Magical Town of Atlixco, Puebla, located at the foot of the Popocatepetl volcano, is known for its cultivation of hundreds of varieties of flowers. "The Christmas Eve Fair" is held during November and December and 25,000 Poinsettias are exhibited in 27 varieties, from the typical red color, to the two-color flower. The light decorations are perhaps one of its most famous attractions during Christmas and New Year's Eve with thousands of people visiting the city.

Behind the Municipal Palace in Atlixco sits Helados Ximit, an institution where they offer up to 60 ice cream flavors daily and 40 more seasonal flavors. Flavors in December include ponche navideño, polvorón, chiles en nogada, gansito, marzipan and even a curious flavor called "del que sea" (meaning whatever or whoever).

The holiday spirit can be experienced throughout the year in these neighboring villages.

HOLIDAZE AND THE HOT TAMALE

By Dr. Ted Rogers, Ph.D.

Ahh, the holidays! Time with family! Comfort food! One could argue, especially North of the border, that time with family is the causal factor for needing comfort food, but I digress...

The holidays mean special meals: turkey, standing rib roast, honey-glazed ham; and sides of mashed or scalloped potatoes and dressing. We all love these foods but making them from scratch for just a few people is an inefficient use of time and effort. So, we usually reserve these foods for when we have a house full of guests.

In Mexico, we have our own holiday foods, which are typically made from scratch during the holidays. One of the most popular being the tamale. If you're going to make ten tamales, you might as well make a hundred, as the effort involved for a small batch is nearly as great as the effort needed for a big batch. In fact, to garner more family time during the holidays, families often have "Tamaladas," or tamale-making parties.

Where and when did this heaven in a husk come from?

What I call "proto-tamales" existed as far back as 8,000 BC in Mesoamerica. These tamales consisted of corn mush around a protein filling and were typically wrapped in a corn husk or banana leaf. But they were not yet a true tamale, in that they did not have the necessary ingredients to be a full meal by themselves. The problem with corn is that while it is a way to get butter into one's mouth, the nutrients in corn by itself are not digestible by the human body.

Around 2,000 BC, with the development of the Mayan culture, we see the advent of the nixtamal process in Southern Mesoamerica. The nixtamal process refers to soaking corn in lime (the mineral) or wood ashes (which produced lye), then drying it and grinding it. The lime or lye from the wood ashes interacts chemically with the corn, making the amino acids of the grain digestible for humans. This first true tamale was fully digestible and provided a full meal in one tightly wrapped package.

This became a boon to the Mayan military. Bringing cooks along to feed an army slowed the army down. With the tamale, with its masa and oil coating around a meat protein such as turkey, fish, or frog, no oxygen could get to the filling, keeping it shelf stable. One warrior could easily carry twenty tamales, so they could march without having to wait for a food supply line and cooks. Each tamale was a relatively balanced meal of vegetable matter and meat, with the husk serving as the plate. With the



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arrival of the Spanish, fillings for tamales changed to more savory pork and beef.

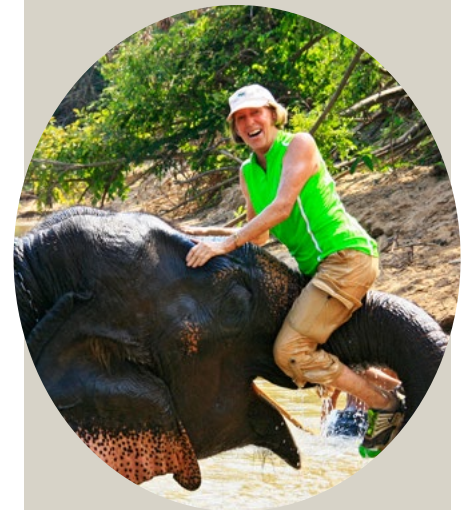
If you're going to make ten tamales, you might as well make a hundred and feed an army. Tamaladas celebrations is one way of extending family time during the holidays.

Thus, the tamale, weaponized by the Maya, is now a holiday comfort food in Mexico.

Gotta run, I'm getting hungry...

The Meaning Behind Christmas Piñatas

By Diana Hunt



Staff Bio Diana Hunt

Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover. ~ Mark Twain

I am grateful to have had an exciting, high-octane, high-energy, high-adventure life.

Two of my life-long passions have been horses and skiing, both of which led to international travel. I had to quit sooner than planned, but the love affairs still linger in my mind.

*My life really began in Europe. It was on a de rigueur post-college trip that I discovered I wanted to make a living in the travel business. Two years later, during a seven-month solo backpacking trip throughout Latin America, I got serious. **I began working for Pan American World Airways' inflight magazine in NYC and eventually became editor. Besides traveling the world, I sailed competitively along the East Coast, spent summer weekends in The Hamptons and winter ski weekends in Vermont.***

I continued working for various publications in NYC, Colorado and South Carolina, and I co-owned a public relations firm. I now live in Mexico — still writing and traveling with the same curiosity I've always had.

Condensed from my future obituary

While there is no solid documentation about the origin of piñatas, oral history gives some idea of where they come from.

Walther Boelsterly, Director of the Museum of Popular Art in Mexico City, states "What is said is that piñatas have an Eastern origin, basically Chinese. They used a mud pot where they put seeds, and it was broken at the best moment of sowing to have good luck in the harvest."

Boelsterly says Marco Polo brought that idea to Europe, and when Spanish missionaries arrived in Mexico in the 16th century, the Augustinian friars received authorization from the Vatican to celebrate Christmas masses. They used piñatas in services ahead of Christmas. It was also around the same time that the Aztecs in Mexico celebrated one of their gods.

Originally, the piñata was made using a common clay pot covered with tissue paper of various colors that, according to the Church, "represent superfluous pleasures." The piñatas were crowned with seven conical peaks symbolizing the

capital sins of the Christian faith: Lust, Gluttony, Envy, Pride, Greed, Wrath and Sloth.

After the Mass of Aguinaldo, these sins were "destroyed" using sticks while blindfolded. When the clay was cracked, sweets, seasonal fruits and coins would fall out of the piñata, as a reward for having overcome earthly temptations. In turn, these allude to the riches of the kingdom of heaven, which would come to the faithful Catholics after death.

The Mass of Aguinaldo, also known as Misa de Aguinaldo or Simbang Gabi, is a series of nine dawn masses that take place from December 16 to 24. It is a privileged votive mass that does not correspond to the liturgical calendar, but has an intention as a festive novena mass honoring the Blessed Virgin Mary.

"So, it's a tradition that from the 16th of December when the Posadas start, until practically Christmas Eve on the 24th, people use piñatas to deck their Posadas and celebrate," Boelsterly concludes

Holiday Pets as Gifts — — A Good Idea?

By Diana Hunt

If you have ever considered gifting a pet for a young child, there are a couple of caveats that bear discussing.

Is the child emotionally mature enough to understand that the new pet is not a toy to be thrown about and then ignored? Is the child ready and able to take some responsibility for the animal? There is a better chance of the child bonding with a new pet if they share some of the responsibility.

It can be a great idea to have a puppy or kitten grow up with a child, but young animals can be fragile, and rough housing can harm a pet emotionally and physically.

The last thing anyone wants is to surrender a new pet to a shelter because a child lost interest in it. A normally friendly animal could turn on a child in self-defense.

Rather than buy a pet from a puppy or kitten mill or be smitten by that “doggy in the window,” consider a shelter pet. There are plenty of shelter animals that need loving homes and reliable breeders who can help you choose the right pet for your home.



Preparing for the new pet's arrival

If you do decide to gift a pet around the holidays, consider taking these precautions:

- **Secure your Christmas tree**

Use a wide base to stabilize the tree or secure it to the wall or ceiling with fishing line so it can't be knocked over.

- **Keep decorations out of reach**

Hang breakable ornaments higher on the tree and keep tinsel and gift wrappings out of reach of curious pets.



- **Keep lights out of reach**

Pets can burn themselves on bulbs or get tangled in wires. Cover exposed cords or tape them to the wall.

- **Avoid toxic plants**

Holly, mistletoe, lilies, amaryllis and poinsettias are toxic to pets.

- **Keep chocolate, festive foods, grapes, nuts, onions and garlic out of reach**

These foods can cause gastrointestinal upset, cardiac and neurological side effects, and other conditions.

- **Provide a safe, quiet space**

Make sure your pet has a quiet area to retreat to where they won't be disturbed. Loud noises such as fireworks and thunder can lead to anxious behavior like shaking, whimpering, destroying objects, hiding and even running away. Comfort them if they are visibly distressed. Consider using a snug-fitting Thunder Shirt or medication for your pet to reduce any anxiety.

- **Stick to a routine**

Keep food, exercise, bed and toilet break routines the consistent to help your pet feel more secure.

- **Interview veterinarians**

Find one you like who is familiar with the type of animal you plan to have, especially if the animal is rather exotic.

- **Arrange for pet care**

Plan ahead to find a good, reliable kennel or cattery, or arrange for a pet sitter so you are not stressed trying to make last-minute arrangements if you travel.

If you choose to gift a pet to a child, put some thought into it to set everybody up for a positive, long-lasting experience.

Creator of Ajijic Chic

By Barbara Hildt

Although Lakeside has an amazing variety of creative individuals, I was surprised to learn that my neighbor from Portland, Oregon, **Catherine Stephenson**, founded and directed the Association of Sewing and Design Professionals (ASDP). This is a professional trade association for dressmakers and tailors with members and chapters throughout the U.S.

When in 2014 Catherine and her artist husband, Allan, came to live in Ajijic she brought her talent, experience and her passion for creating customdesigned clothing as a couturier. Now retired from her 35 years as sole proprietor of her business, she continues to design and create women's clothing.

She named her collection **Ajijic Chic** with a by-line *of easy fit clothing designed for Lakeside living. A Fashion Show at LCS will showcase her latest collection on January 22nd 2025.*



Photo by Allan Stephenson



Photo by Allan Stephenson

Catherine discovered her passion for sewing and clothing design in high school when she created a mint green mohair suit. She earned a Bachelor of Science in Textiles and Clothing from the University of Wisconsin in 1972.

Rejecting opportunities in the ready-to-wear industry, Catherine returned to Portland, Oregon, in the late 1970s and founded her own custom dressmaking business, which she operated for 35 years. Working from her home studio, she handled every aspect of the enterprise herself, from designing and patternmaking to draping, sewing, fitting, bookkeeping, and managing client relations. Over the decades, she created wedding gowns, formal eveningwear, tailored suits, casual dresses, pants, and blouses, always striving for impeccable quality.

“Designing clothing is not the hard part,” Catherine explains. ***“The true challenge lies in constructing the garments, ensuring top-notch sewing standards, and achieving the perfect fit.”***

For seventeen years, Catherine taught clothing design and couture sewing as an adjunct professor at the Art Institute of Portland, where she also developed a fine-sewing curriculum. In 2008, she earned a Master's degree in Instructional Leadership.

Alongside building her own successful couture business, Catherine has consistently helped others master professional standards in sewing and design. Since 1984, she has volunteered with the Association of Sewing and Design Professionals (ASDP), serving on both local and national boards, including as National Chair. Under her guidance, the ASDP established the Standards of Quality for Custom Clothing and created a Certification Program for advanced practitioners. She is currently collaborating with the U.S. Department of Labor to launch an Apprenticeship Program that will train professionals in alterations.

Beyond her annual fashion shows, Catherine sells her one-of-a-kind garments year-round from her home studio in Rancho la Salud Village, a sustainable community near Ajijic. Visitors are welcome to explore and purchase her Ajijic Chic collection, which includes swing tops, dresses, palazzo pants, skirts, jackets, vests, and wraps—all crafted from high-quality natural fabrics sourced in the U.S. and Guadalajara. As a collaborative designer, Catherine encourages appointments to view her work; email catherine@cscouture.com to schedule a visit.

Discover the pleasure of wearing a custom outfit made especially for you.

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Conecciones Leap of Faith 2019

By Rachel McMillen

It is said that the only constant in life is change, and that is certainly true for Conecciones. The first edition came out in 2019, but the work to bring it to life began long before that. It was early 2018 when Marianne Carlson, the founder of the wonderful Feria Maestros del Arte, and Harriet Hart, who was then in charge of the Information desk at the Lake Chapala Society, came up with the idea of a bilingual magazine. It would inform both expats and Mexicans of events and activities at LCS while also providing more general information on topics of interest. They had worked together on the Legion's Roll Call and approached then-Executive Director Terry Vidal with their idea. They then jointly offered me the Managing Editor position. Marianne, with her background and expertise in art, would be the graphics designer, while Harriet, with her skills as a writer and her vast network of connections, would take on the role of recruiting writers and writing the articles as well.



Rachel McMillen

I was volunteering at the LCS Service Desk, something I started shortly after moving to Ajijic as a full-time resident. I lived on Nicolas Bravo, barely a block away from the lovely LCS campus, and, like many other expats, LCS eased my way into my new life in Mexico. It provided the opportunity to meet new friends and learn new things. The idea of a bilingual magazine seemed to me the perfect extension of that, and I was happy to say 'Yes'.

A draft of the original mission statement reads: "The intent of the publication is to promote and celebrate LCS, the Lakeside community, its people and the activities that make living here special. We showcase short fiction, poems, and articles in English and



Marianne Carlson



Terry Vidal

Spanish, plus photographs and artwork by local authors and artists."

Early categories included: LCS, Navigating the System, Leisure & Pleasure, Arts & Entertainment, Community Outreach, Eco Verde, Buen Provecho, Understanding Mexico, Guadalajara, Petcetra, Local Color, Know your Neighbours, Explorations and The Hobbyist.

Many things have changed since then. Terry Vidal moved on to establish and operate his motorcycle touring business. Marianne Carlson left to spend more time on the Feria Maestros del Arte (it has become Mexico's largest traditional Art show), which left just Harriet and I. Luis Pacheco replaced Terry, Domitzu Medrano, the LCS Director of Communications, succeeded Marianne, and while Harriet and I remained in our roles, I relocated from Ajijic to Comala, a small Pueblo Magico in Colima.

More changes ensued. Steve Balfour temporarily replaced Luis. We found new volunteers to help Harriet write stories when Diana Hunt and Sandra Baird joined the team. Covid created challenges, not only with meeting and communicating but also with distribution, necessitating a stronger online presence.

Now I have returned to Canada where I live with my daughter (and two dogs) in the lovely lakeside city of Penticton, and Sandra Baird, a talented and experienced writer and publisher, has taken over my role as Managing Editor. Catherine Austill, an expert in digital print media, has joined the team as Assistant Managing Editor,

Through all the changes, and the challenges, and the years, Conecciones has, as its name implies, continued to fulfill its goal of informing and connecting the communities. I am proud to have been a part of that.

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Ajijic Nature Up Close

Green Lacewings: Resilient, Beautiful & Great for the Garden

By Dane LaBlanc

What's not to like about green lacewings? As adults, their appearance is striking, with large, lacy, transparent wings, long antennae, pale green bodies and bright, copper-colored eyes.

If you are an avid gardener, you may be familiar with using green lacewings (family: Chrysopidae, order: Neuroptera) as a biological pest control, and you may have even ordered green lacewing eggs or larvae for your garden. In their larval stage, green lacewings have a voracious appetite for mites and soft-bodied insects such as aphids, caterpillars and leafhoppers. Their effectiveness on minimizing aphid populations has earned them the nickname "aphid lions".

Beyond their beauty and utility, they also possess some remarkable defense mechanisms. For example, green lacewings can detect and avoid bats! They have a tympanic membrane at the base of each forewing that is sensitive to ultrasound. They can also escape orbweaver spider webs, aided by the hairs on their wings.



Green Lacewing; Photo by D. LeBlanc

I was only recently introduced to these wonderful creatures. While hiking on the El Tepalo trail above Ajijic, I noticed a mysterious, thread-like arrangement on the bark of a tree. Eleven strands looked like tiny, flexible ear swabs sticking out of the tree. A small amount of research revealed this formation was green lacewing eggs.

An adult female green lacewing lays her eggs on fairly evenly-spaced stalks to prevent newly-hatched larvae from cannibalizing each other. Some species of lacewings will also coat the egg stalk with droplets that contain an ant repellent, for added protection.

After about five days, the eggs hatch and the emerging larvae start looking for prey. The larvae are long and flat, somewhat resembling a tiny alligator. They use their sharp mouthparts (mandibles) to pierce their prey, inject venom and then suck out the body contents. Some larvae species will cover themselves with debris, including bits and pieces of their prey (earning them the unflattering nickname "trashbugs"), making them appear like walking pieces of lint.

After progressing through three successive larval stages (instars), which takes about two to three weeks total, the green lacewings spin a white, silken cocoon and enter the pupal stage. Within five to seven days, the pupae transform into fully-winged adults, completing the life cycle to adulthood.

Clearly, green lacewings have a very impressive resume and possess a "unique set of skills". They are elegantly beautiful as adults and will continue to play an important role in biological pest control.

For more photographs and a field guide, visit my website: <https://ajijic-up-close>



Staff Bio

Domitzu Medrano

*I was born and raised in Chapala, where the lake's serenity and mystery have always been my refuge and inspiration. **Growing up here taught me to love art in all its forms, from editorial design to tattooing, photography, painting, and makeup.** I studied Graphic Design at the University of Guadalajara with a scholarship from LCS, and I've been incredibly fortunate to find a job in my professional field without leaving the place I cherish so much.*

***Six months after joining LCS, the magazine we celebrate today was born. Since then, I've been part of its evolution, embracing every creative challenge, even when deadlines are tight.** But design isn't my only canvas; in my spare time, I tattoo—a craft that allows me to connect deeply with people's stories and emotions.*

*Spiritual work is also a vital part of my life. **I participate in moon circles, temazcales, and other practices rooted in Mexican shamanism,** which help me stay balanced and grow as a person. I'm also a devoted fan of *The Lord of the Rings* and live by the quote: **"All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us."** For me, **that time is for creating, healing, and living fully.***

TEDxAjijic Debut

“The Art of Possibility”

By Jennifer Thietz

The debut of TEDxAjijic on March 22 at the Centro para la Cultura y las Artes de la Ribera (CCAR) promises to be an impactful event. This inaugural TEDx event will bring the global TED Talks (Technology Entertainment and Design) experience to our local Lakeside community, focusing on "The Art of Possibility."

TEDx Talks feature a group of speakers who present a new idea and a compelling argument that may challenge the audience's beliefs and perspectives – in under eighteen minutes. The speakers encourage us to leave our comfort zones and consider their unique insights. By focusing on community-driven ideas, we can create meaningful impact locally while dreaming globally.

TEDxAjijic will feature local voices of **David Ellison, Kat Miller, Francisco Nava, Michael Nuschke, Kat O'Sullivan, Phil Rylett (as Master of Ceremonies) and Barbara Wilson.** Guests from **Guadalajara, the U.S. and Scotland** will also share their insights and experiences.

The theme, “The Art of Possibility,” is particularly inspiring, given Ajijic's designation as a Magical Town (Pueblos Mágicos) and its notoriety for creativity and learning.

Creativity is an extraordinary power of the human mind, and is the spark that drives artists to paint, writers to craft stories, scientists to innovate and thinkers to unravel complex problems. At some point, we've all experienced that “eureka moment” when a brilliant idea seems to pop into our minds out of nowhere. It might feel like a magical gift, but it's your brain cleverly piecing together information to solve problems.

The diverse range of speakers at TEDxAjijic tap into their creative genius to share insight that will inspire, challenge, and open new possibilities. Their presentations are the product of their curiosity, exploration and an unrelenting drive to find better ways forward. Maybe their great “eureka moments” might be the impetus to change your world.

According to TEDxAjijic organizer Rex Gale, who previously organized the TEDxHiltonHead, the committee's goals are “To create a sustainable annual event that will become one of the most anticipated and widely attended cultural events in the community.” People can look forward to an afternoon and early evening of English speakers, artists, performers and “ideas that will provide perspectives on how to change our lives, our local community and the world around us.”

Join us in making this a sustainable, annual gathering that will be the beginning of a transformative tradition for the Lakeside community.

- Date & Time: Saturday, March 22, 2025, from 1:45 to 5:30pm (doors open at 1:00pm)
- Location: Centro para la Cultura y las Artes de la Ribera (CCAR), Carretera a Chapala-Jocotepec 168, Colonia La Floresta, Ajijic
- Tickets: Available via Eventbrite. General Admission is \$200 MXN and Reserved Seating Tickets are \$350 MXN.



You can find more information and purchase tickets at <https://bit.ly/tedxajijic> or email us at tedxajijic@gmail.com.

An advertisement for Lakeside Print Service. It features a blue background with a red banner at the top that says "GIVE MEMORIES". Below the banner, it says "Print with us" and "You will be surprised by the prices and quality". There are images of various photo prints and a Polaroid print with a colorful eye graphic. At the bottom, it says "All the photo paper and canvas prints" and "We are in The Plaza de San Antonio Tlayacapan". Social media icons for Instagram and WhatsApp are also present, along with the text "lakesideprintservice" and "33 1349 4646". The logo "Lakeside Print Service" is in the bottom right corner of the ad.

Healing 2.0: Unleashing the Superpowers of Regenerative Therapies

By Sharon Brooks



Regenerative Therapies are like having a team of precision superheroes on call for your body's health. Their **focus is on repairing, replacing, or regenerating human cells, tissues, or organs to restore and establish normal function.**

Repair and Regenerate: The Magic Behind Modern Medicine?

Imagine cuts to the skin patching up like a wizard with its wand, broken bones mending like they're auditioning for a quick-fix commercial and a donor's liver growing back faster than you can say "superhero liver". It's all about harnessing the body's natural healing powers to tackle a variety of conditions and efficient restoration.

Using breakthroughs in **cell therapy, bioengineering, gene therapy, ozone therapy, medical acupuncture, and even traditional Chinese herbal magic**, healthcare is embracing the future. These advancements are shaking up the medical world and represent a seismic shift away from traditional medical treatment.

Stem Cell treatment has been gaining significant popularity and momentum over the past few years, becoming a major player in the world of medicine, offering hope for many patients and exciting possibilities for the future. Consult a trusted healthcare provider about reputable stem cell therapy practitioners and thoroughly research the treatment's benefits and risks before proceeding.

Five Reasons to Consider Regenerative therapies:

1. **Reduced Invasiveness:** If you're not a fan of going under the knife, these therapies could be a more appealing option.
2. **Faster Recovery:** Often speeds up the healing process, which means you might get back to your usual self quickly. Who wouldn't want to fast-forward through recovery?
3. **Versatility:** Whether it's for injuries, degenerative disorders, or even some skin conditions, regenerative therapies have a wide range of applications. It's like the Swiss Army knife of medical treatments.

4. **Chronic Conditions:** For those dealing with chronic diseases or conditions that just won't quit, regenerative therapies can offer a fresh approach. Consider trying a new strategy when the old ones aren't cutting it anymore.
5. **Personalized Treatment:** Regenerative therapy often involves treatments that are tailored to you. It's like having a custom-made solution for your health issues. **A past diagnosis does not define you.** Everyone's health journey and quirks are as unique to them as their DNA. By tuning into individual life stories and reviewing habits, highly skilled practitioners identify the underlying root causes of one's chronic pain and internal imbalances. That's why holistic health care professionals listen carefully, **taking time to understand the one-of-a-kind you.** They then focus, with precision, on bringing your body back into balance and harmony. Many conventional doctors now offer both traditional medicine and holistic approaches to create personal plans for successful outcomes.

By focusing on quality of life, regenerative therapies can comprehensively address health issues, resulting in positive outcomes.





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