

President's Message

At our March 12, 2013 General Meeting a new team was elected to lead our organization for the next 2 years. Though I will still be part of that team, Dan Grippo has been elected to carry on the important work that has been done over the years and he certainly has my congratulations and full support.

I have served over the last 5 years as President and I must say that it has been exciting. Many new challenges came our way but we have succeeded in having a healthy, vibrant, enthusiastic meeting center where new ideas have been embraced.

Just 5 years ago we barely sent our members messages via email! Our website was a disaster and we were far from being media savvy! Thanks to the help of Janie Blank and T.J. Hartung and the new addition of Daniella Badke, who is handling Face Book and other media postings, we are doing a much better job communicating with all of you and keeping you informed.

I thank Fred Forbes for his total dedication and fabulous work. I must also say a special thank you to Josue Santiago, our office administrator, on whose support I have depended over the last 5 years.

Mike McGee and Kathleen Phillips, who have volunteered the last 5 years in their positions and brought success to our Home Tours throughout the challenges of the economic downturn, my many thanks to you both for your dedication!

Our organization is a member/volunteer club where the work is done by all of us for zero financial gain and all of you who participate via your membership, donations, volunteering, attending classes or lectures, events and others all contribute to the success of our mission. This club was built on that philosophy and this has been our mission base since 1985.

I have been lucky to have such a great team of people committed to our mission. You have made the club what it is today: A center of learning, friendship, care and giving and having fun while doing it!

For me it is a harbor where friends meet and enjoy their life and bring a better life to the community in need. I am grateful to have been given this great opportunity to learn and grow through my experiences. It has been a blast!

So, I wish to thank all of our volunteers and active members. You are all very important to the health of our organization. I give a great welcome to our entire new elected team; their full titles and names are listed under our Officers list with details on how to reach them.

Have a great summer,

Mandy MacLeay
President



INTERNATIONAL FRIENDSHIP CLUB
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Libertad corner of Miramar, El Centro,
Puerto Vallarta
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from the US/Canada 1-514-418-2123
www.IFCVallarta.com
Email: info@ifcvallarta.com
ADMINISTRATOR - Josué Santiago



A Brief Note of Thanks from Incoming President Dan Grippo

I thank club members for placing your trust in me to help guide this wonderful organization over the next several years. I will have more to say about ideas and goals in the fall, but for now I also want to thank our current president, Mandy MacLeay, and all current board members for their vision and hard work over these past years, which has resulted in a Club that is far larger and stronger than it was a few years ago. I look forward to working with all of them, and with all members, in the coming years.

I believe that one of my principal functions as incoming president is to be a good listener and I welcome your ideas or suggestions. My email is dangrippo@yahoo.com. Drop me a line if you like!



Home Tours

This past season our advance purchases via Paypal have increased significantly. We have established a dynamic presence in the media. Virtually all Vallarta websites list the IFC Home Tours within their calendar of events. Every week, an article appears in the print media talking about the IFC and its numerous programs, events, and charities, prominently featuring our Home Tours.

We have created an IFC Facebook page with over 500 “friends.” This has proven to be a valuable vehicle for letting people know of upcoming events. Please “friend” and “like” our page if you use Facebook!

A new web page, www.pvhometours.com, was created to further focus attention and make it easier for our guests to find us, make reservations, and post pictures. Throughout the season volunteers have distributed flyers and posters in designated areas of Vallarta, such as the Marina, Centro, Hotel Zone and Zona Romantica.

Another successful effort was to encourage IFC members to go on the Home Tours through several promotions and discounts. Rough estimates is that 20 percent of our membership took advantage. And this year, many of our guests have recommended Home Tours on Trip Advisor, making it one of the most highly rated tours in Vallarta.

We continue to add new homes to our portfolio and to create unique tour options. For example, one of the tours not only included 4 fabulous villas, several of historical significance, but featured a walk through Isla Cuale which contains the Cuale Cultural Center and art center as well as the new bridge connection to Gringo Gulch. In the last week of March at the last stop of the tour, the owner offered coffee and cheese cake for those guests who want to remain and chat. About half of the tour remained. How fun!

The proceeds from the tours fund local charities that benefit the children of Vallarta. One of our primary efforts is the Cleft Palate program. The IFC also assists Becas Vallarta, the Refugio Infantil Santa Esperanza (RISE), and many other local charities.

As is true every year, Home Tours would not be possible without our volunteers from those who work diligently behind the scenes, such as TJ Hartung who looks after our internet sales, Janie Blanc who superbly handles media relations and advertising, and IFC President Mandy who provides oversight, encouragement, and direction.

I can't say enough about our great volunteers every Wednesday and Thursday throughout the season. It is very heartening how our volunteers are very flexible, taking on various tasks as necessary. And our docents, in the opinion of many, are the best in the business, period. Thank you all.

Elements of Design continues to be a major supporter; Ron and Bill have been great. And we could not run our

program without our hosts, Restaurant La Albufera from where the tours depart.

Regarding total tour attendance, it appears this season we have turned the corner. For the prior three seasons, our numbers had been declining. We still have until April 11 left in the season, and it sure looks like we will top however slightly the total number of tour guests for last year. And best of all, the club is still raising sufficient revenue to continue funding our charitable programs.

Next season we again begin the middle of November and continue until mid April. We always are looking for volunteers. If interested, please contact the IFC office. As many of you know, this is my last season as Director. The experience this past five years truly has been rewarding. But it is time for new leadership. If you are interested in discussing a leadership role for Home Tours, please contact me or Mandy as soon as possible, and after April 14 contact incoming president Dan Grippo.

Thank you, everyone, for your support and contributions these past 5 five years. It's been a great ride--literally!

Mike McGee

Outgoing Home Tours Director



WHO WE ARE

The International Friendship Club was founded in 1987. Today there are members from the USA, Canada, Mexico, Europe and many other countries. The Club is a volunteer organization operated totally without personal gain and has been granted Registered Charitable Status by the Mexican Government. The club is operated on a Committee-Structure basis.

The International Friendship Club has 3 mandates: to solicit and distribute funds and materials in response to the humanitarian needs of our community; to promote friendship through social and cultural activities; and to help organize and unite our community.

General meetings are held the second Tuesday of every month at the IFC clubhouse. Everyone is welcome!

OFFICERS OF THE CLUB

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Communications

Hola! My name is Janie Blank and I am a member and volunteer for the IFC. In recent years I have taken on the Volunteer Publicity role with a mission of trying to get as much press for the Club as possible. I submit an article most weeks to the PV Mirror under my byline of Janie Albright Blank. The Mirror is, in my opinion and of most I talk to, by far the most well-written, professionally laid out, and heavily circulated paper in town. Getting frequent exposure in the PV Mirror is important for the IFC.

In addition I send my articles to other outlets as well. There are two main websites we post to: PVGuide.org and Visitpuertovallarta.com will normally print what we send. Banderas Bay news and Vallarta Today, both also online only, will sometimes pick up my articles and on a few occasions the Vallarta Tribune will print my submissions. This season the Trib did give us a full page and photos of our Cleft Palate Surgeries article. The V.I.P. (Vallarta Important People) Magazine sent a photographer to our Valentine's Day dinner at El Set and there is a nice article and three photos from that evening in the new March issue.

We also have a Facebook page and try to post there as frequently as possible. We encourage all of you to visit our Facebook pages. We have a business page at: International Friendship Club (IFC) where you can "like" us. We also have an ordinary page: IFC Vallarta where you can become our "friend". You can post to our page or upload photos etc. We try to post there for all events, last minute changes to events and times, etc., so it's always good to be our friend. Daniella Badke volunteers with us to help with our Facebook postings. Daniella has taken a course on social media and is a welcome member of our team. We would appreciate it if you follow us on Facebook.

Something new we are trying this year is to get people who go on our tours to write reviews for TripAdvisor.com. A large number of visitors to PV visit Trip Advisor before coming so the more reviews we have the closer to the top our name will appear for Things To Do in Puerto Vallarta. This year we added a second website: PVhometours.com where we record our visitors and send a letter now to all who take a tour thanking them, giving them a discount on a future tour, and ask if they might like to write a review.

Through our website, ifcvallarta.com, we can send out the many emails with our logo that you receive from us during the season. This is another great way we have of reaching our members and keeping you up-to-date with all of our activities.

Each week I try to write an article about an upcoming social event, classes being held at the IFC, our twice-weekly Home Tours and Bo-Zo Tours, our Cleft Palate Surgery Program, or other mission work we do in the community. It is important to vary this so it does not become repetitious and therefore the paper will consider it newsworthy.

My husband, Dennis, and I spend January through April in PV, however, I am able to write articles and submit to the media from our home in Columbus, Ohio at any time during the year so this role has worked well for me. I work closely with Linda Mellor, Events VP, who plans all of the IFC social events, Mandy MacLeay, our outgoing President and soon to be VP of Operations, and TJ Hartung, our webmaster and new VP of Administration. Incoming president Dan Grippo and I will work closely on publicity going forward. I have also worked with Mike McGee, our outgoing Home Tour Director, to make sure we get as much PR as possible for the Home Tours, our main source of funding for our Cleft Palate Program and will do the same with Mike's replacement.

If you have an interest in helping with Publicity for the IFC, there is much more we could do with more hands on board. You can email me at: janeablank@aol.com or communications@ifcvallarta.com.

Have a great summer and see you back here in paradise next season!



International Altruism Festival

A great time and a great cause!

Sunday May 5, 6 p.m.

Hotel Marriott Casa Magna, La Marina, Puerto Vallarta

Tickets: In advance, \$300 pesos; at the door, \$400 pesos

Please mark your calendars and buy your tickets for this important fundraising event for the IFC and for many other local charitable organizations. If you've attended before, you know that it is a great event with entertainment, beverages, and delicious, free food offered by the city's finest restaurants to all who attend. The event is held on the lovely grounds of the Marriott Resort in the Marina.

In order to benefit from the proceeds, all participating charities need to sell a minimum of 50 tickets, so please support the IFC and treat yourself to a great time by purchasing your tickets as soon as possible at the IFC during office hours (Mon-Fri, 9 a.m. – 2 p.m.). Exact change greatly appreciated.

We also need a group of approximately 8 volunteers who are willing to help out with various functions before and during the event. If you are willing to help out, please contact Trace Elkind, telkind@hotmail.com. (Everyone attending, including all volunteers, needs to purchase a ticket to enter.)