

UC SANTA BARBARA

THE Current

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Anabel Ford

Annual 'Fiesta El Pilar' on Oct. 15 at Sedgwick Reserve to Celebrate UCSB's Maya Research and Conservation Project

The annual celebration of UC Santa Barbara's research and conservation activities at the El Pilar Maya cultural site in Belize and Guatemala will be held Saturday, October 15, from 2 to 7 p.m. at the Sedgwick Reserve in Santa Ynez.

The theme of this year's Fiesta El Pilar will be "Archaeology Under the Canopy."

The program will focus on the project's 21st century approach to conservation, preservation, and collaboration. Docents from the Sedgwick Reserve will provide guided tours of the property, part of the UC Natural Reserve System. The program will also include a potluck reception as well as music and dancing. Community members are invited to participate in this celebration of another year of success for the MesoAmerican Research Center of UCSB's Institute for Social, Behavioral, and Economic Research and ESPMaya (Exploring Solutions Past: The Maya Forest Alliance). Guests are asked to bring food for the potluck and to make a donation in support of the El Pilar project.

A special feature of this year's program will be the commemoration of the El Pilar Management Plan by two dignitaries from Belize: Jaime Awe, Director of the Institute

of Archaeology, and Yasser Musa, President of the National Institute of Culture and History. (The visiting dignitaries will present a copy of the plan to UCSB officials, including Chancellor Henry Yang, at a campus ceremony on October 19.)

Anabel Ford, director of the UCSB-based MesoAmerican Research Center, has been working in the Maya forest area since 1972. In 1978, during a survey of the region, she came across the city site of El Pilar. She has been at work on the site ever since, trying to make it a unique model of binational cooperation, community empowerment, conservation and preservation awareness. Ford convinced the governments of Belize and Guatemala to protect the area from encroachment and named the resulting binational reserve the El Pilar Archaeological Reserve for Maya Flora and Fauna.

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