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**Long Beach – Manta Sister Cities wins *Sister Cities International's*  
Innovation: Sustainable Development Award**

WASHINGTON, DC – The Long Beach – Manta Sister Cities has won *Sister Cities International's* 2011 Innovation: Sustainable Development Award for a city with population more than 500,001. The Innovation awards recognize the accomplishments of outstanding community and individual sister city programs that promote peace through mutual respect, understanding, and cooperation.

Long Beach – Manta Sister Cities won the award for its program “Project Ecuador”. Project Ecuador is an international lifeguard mission that started in 2006 and partnered with Long Beach – Manta Sister Cities in 2010. The primary goal is to have qualified ocean lifeguards on the most popular beaches in Ecuador to reduce accidental death by drowning and to have the lifeguards paid a living wage.

The Project's efforts have borne fruit. Ecuador now has a national lifesaving organization and becomes the seventh nation in South America with organized lifeguards. The project also donated rescue buoys, fins, uniforms, binoculars, radios and whistles to foster sustainability. Additionally, fundraising efforts yielded \$20,000 in cash and \$13,000 in free products.

The *Sister Cities International* Annual Awards are awarded in several categories. Award winners will be honored at a special luncheon ceremony on July 14 during the *Sister Cities International* 56<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference in Jacksonville, Florida.

**About *Sister Cities International***

*Sister Cities International* facilitates nearly 2,000 partnerships in 136 countries on six continents between 600 communities in the United States with similar municipalities abroad. *Sister Cities International* represents citizen diplomats who work tirelessly to promote the organizations' mission of creating world peace and cultural understanding through economic and sustainable development programs, youth and education projects, arts and culture, and humanitarian assistance.

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