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Governor Names San Jose Zero Waste Events Program Winner of 2009 Top Environmental Leadership Award

SACRAMENTO – Today, Governor Schwarzenegger announced the City of San Jose has won the 2009 Governor’s Environmental and Economic Leadership Award (GEELA) for its Zero Waste Events Program.

GEELA is California's highest and most prestigious environmental honor. The award program recognizes individuals, organizations and businesses that have demonstrated exceptional leadership for voluntary achievements in conserving California’s resources, protecting and enhancing the environment, and building public-private partnerships.

“I am delighted that Governor Schwarzenegger has selected San Jose for this top environmental award. When it comes to waste reduction, San Jose has a long history of innovation,” said Mayor Chuck Reed. “We were one of the first cities to make it easy for residents to recycle at home, and now we’ve developed creative programs for recycling and composting at major community events. San Jose’s Green Vision is a roadmap to becoming the world center of clean tech innovation with a goal of achieving zero waste by 2022. Programs like this are key to meeting that goal.”

Two years ago, recycling was almost unheard of at community events in San Jose. In 2008, a concerted effort to “green” San Jose’s five largest events brought together the City, event promoters, recycling haulers, and youth workers from the San Jose Conservation Corps. While many cities have instituted recycling programs, San Jose decided to take the program a step further in attempting to make each of the five largest events in the city zero waste. Many of the event organizers and vendors were inspired by the program adopting some or all aspects of the program as well as incorporating additional environmental practices, such using a solar stage. In 2009, several events including the Jazz Festival, set new records, diverting 97% of potential waste from going to a landfill. Overall, the program achieved a diversion of 94%.

San Jose Two Year Waste Diversion

Event	2008 Total Discards	Total Materials Diverted	Diversion Achieved	2009 Total Discards	Total Materials Diverted	Diversion Achieved
Jazz Festival	13.99 tons	12.91 tons	93%	19.51 tons	18.85 tons	97%
Tapestry Art Festival	6.92 tons	5.94 tons	86%	7.18 tons	6.96 tons	97%
Italian Family Festa	4.84 tons	3.74 tons	77%	5.264 tons	5.1 tons	97%
Cinco de Mayo	5.87 tons	2.6 tons	44%	4.78 tons	3.69 tons	77%
Independence Festival	11.99 tons	8.41 tons	70%	n/a*	n/a	n/a
Totals	43.61 tons	33.6 tons	77%	36.52 tons	34.42 tons	94%

*Independence Day Festival did not occur in 2009.

“I like to say that everyone stepped up to the ‘compostable plate’ during the past two years, to achieve this record diversion rate. It was truly a cooperative effort,” said Geoff Roach Executive Director of San Jose Jazz Festival. “Besides the obvious benefits of reducing the environmental impact of the festival, the event represents an incredible opportunity to show 100,000 people that they can continue to reduce their own impact when they return home and long after the festival is over.”

San Jose went from having no services or requirements, to having an aggressive special events recycling program in less than one year. Although many cities require event recycling, San Jose went a step further providing back-end sorting of event garbage, provision and use of compostable food ware, commercial organic waste collection and processing, eco-stations, and developed an extensive array of web resources for event organizers.

An innovative partnership between the City and the San Jose Conservation Corps offers more services and support to event organizers than any other large city program in the nation. “The Conservation Corps is committed to making all of the City’s green initiatives a success,” said Bob Henessy, Executive Director and Founder of the Conservation Corps. “But the great part about this program is that we’re growing a whole cadre of environmental ambassadors in the process. Our youth workers are interested in the environment – and they will be our stewards in the future.”

San Jose’s Zero Waste Event Program is one of only 15 recipients that will be recognized at the GEELA reception. Councilmember Sam Liccardo, chair of the Council Transportation and Environment Committee, accepted the award on behalf of the City the evening of September 30th, at the Governors’ Global Climate Summit in Los Angeles.

Award recipients are chosen in ten different categories based on their strength in eight specific areas including results, transferability, environmental impact, resource conservation, economic progress, innovation and uniqueness, pollution prevention, and environmental justice. San Jose’s Zero Waste Special Events won in the category of Waste Reduction.

Go to www.sjrecycles.org/events-venues for more information about San Jose’s Event Recycling Program. For more information on GEELA and this year’s award recipients, visit the Cal/EPA Web site: <http://www.calepa.ca.gov/Awards/GEELA/>.

About San Jose’s Green Vision

San Jose’s Green Vision is an ambitious and comprehensive 15-year roadmap to solve environmental problems and grow the local economy. Focused around three elements – Clean Tech Innovation, Sustainability, and Green Mobility – the Green Vision sets 10 bold goals through which San Jose will lead the nation in becoming more energy efficient, producing and using electricity from clean renewable sources, creating green buildings, diverting waste from landfills, creating greener street systems, delivering recycled water, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. For more information, please visit, <http://www.sanjoseca.gov/greenvision/>.

About the Governor’s Environmental and Economic Leadership Awards

The Governor's Environmental and Economic Leadership Awards program was established in 1993. The award program is administered by the California Environmental Protection Agency and the Natural Resources Agency in collaboration with the State and Consumer Services Agency, the California Department of Food and Agriculture, and the Business, Transportation and Housing Agency.

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