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City of San Antonio wins *Sister Cities International's* Innovation: Arts & Culture Award

WASHINGTON, DC – The City of San Antonio International Relations Office has won *Sister Cities International's* 2011 Innovation: Arts & Culture Award for a city with a population of 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.

San Antonio won the award for the “Diwali: Indian Festival of Lights” event held in the city since 2009, a year after signing a sister city agreement with Chennai, India. Diwali is a widely celebrated festival in India and recognizes the victory of good over evil. Since its inception, Diwali celebrations are held in the city’s historic Hemisfair Park. In 2011, the event drew 15,000 people making it the largest city sanctioned Diwali celebration in the US. The event includes parades, candle lighting and firework displays.

The City of San Antonio’s International Relations Office works with the community including local businesses, colleges and NGOs to organize this event. The Diwali celebrations, while celebrating its sister city relationship and the rich heritage of the city’s Indian community, have also boosted local tourism.

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* 56th 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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