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Oakland Community Benefit Districts Celebrate One-Year Anniversary

Districts honor outstanding ambassadors at first Annual Breakfast, reviews first year accomplishments and sets out agenda for next 12 months

OAKLAND – May 19, 2010 – The Downtown Oakland and Lake Merritt-Uptown District Associations today held their first annual joint breakfast during which officers of the two community benefit districts reported on accomplishments for the past year and laid out goals for the next 12 months. The Districts, which were formed in 2009 by property owners and businesses in the area to provide enhanced safety and maintenance services, also jointly presented awards to the following safety and maintenance ambassadors in recognition of their outstanding contributions to the success of the Districts in 2009.

- Amnat Ngin was named Safety Ambassador of the Year in the Lake Merritt-Uptown District;
- Kirk Humbles was named Safety Ambassador of the Year by the Downtown Oakland Association;
- William Adames was named Maintenance Ambassador of the Year by the Downtown Oakland Association;
- Juan Florian-Garcia was named Maintenance Ambassador of the Year in the Lake Merritt-Uptown District;

Also honored at the awards breakfast were:

Officers DeSean Spencer and Anthony Banks of the Oakland Police Department for their contributions to the success of the Lake Merritt-Uptown and Downtown Oakland districts. Joint awards were also handed out to Ameal McLaurin of the Oakland Public Works Agency, and Eric Chelini received the 2009 Volunteer of the Year award.

“It’s been a fantastic first full year of operation and we have accomplished everything we set out to do,” said Marco Li Mandri, executive director of the Lake Merritt Uptown and Downtown Oakland associations. “Thanks to people like Amnat, Kirk, William and Juan, the ambassador program has become a part of the fabric of the districts and allows us to help our residents, our businesses and the many visitors to our district every day,” he added.

The Districts’ Ambassador program, headed by Ted Tarver, provides additional clean up and on-the-ground safety services within the District boundaries. (The Lake Merritt-Uptown district runs from 24th to 17th Streets and is bounded by Telegraph to the west and Harrison to the east. The Downtown district runs from 17th to 8th Street and is bounded by Clay to the west and Franklin to the east.)

Thirty five year old Amnat Ngin, a survivor of Cambodia’s Killing Fields, moved with his family to Oakland in 1981, attending Miramonte High School and Heald College before graduating with degrees in Business Accounting and Administration from Merritt College. The best part about being a Safety Ambassador, says Amnat, is the satisfaction he gets from being to help people. “Oakland helped me and now I’m helping Oakland,” he says.

Kirk Humbles, 27, was born and raised in Oakland, graduated from Emery High in 2001 and is now raising his own family in the city. “My hope is that the Districts change people’s perception of Oakland,” says Kirk. “I have a strong connection to this city and I’m glad I can play a small role in providing a positive experience for my fellow Oaklanders and visitors,” he says.

Thirty one year old William Adames also gets great satisfaction from being part of a team that helps to keep the Oakland districts clean and safe. A native of Rhode Island, William relocated to Oakland in 2007 to escape a life he himself admits was on a downward path. Since becoming a maintenance Ambassador in the downtown district he’s kept the streets clean, helped citizens find lost wallets and frequently finds himself offering directions to people headed to meetings, looking for restaurants or just navigating downtown. “This job is more than a paycheck. It’s very satisfying to hear someone say: Thank you.”

Juan Florian-Garcia sees part of his job as a maintenance Ambassador in the Uptown district as helping improve Oakland’s reputation as a safe and clean city. “People who come to the district are often amazed at how clean the streets here are. It’s important to take pride in your city, your district and your work,” says Florian-Garcia.

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The Downtown Oakland Association is a Community Benefit District (CBD) covering a 19-block area of Oakland and committed to revitalizing the heart of downtown by fostering an

environment where businesses thrive, art flourishes, and residents and visitors alike can enjoy all that downtown Oakland has to offer. The Lake Merritt/Uptown District Association is a 501(c) 3 non-profit Community Benefit District (CBD) covering a 37-block area and committed to similar goals.