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(Left to right: State Senator Iris Martinez, Milka Duno, Brigadier General Angela Salinas, Belle Ortiz and Alma Morales Riojas)

MANA's 17th Annual Las Primeras® Awards Recognized Latinas Achieving "Firsts"

Last week on October 5, 2006, MANA, A National Latina Organization, hosted its 17th Annual Las Primeras® Awards Gala where it honored five new "Primeras". The Las Primeras® honors Latinas who have achieved "firsts" in their career or field. The 2006 Las Primeras® Award recipients were: the Honorable Iris Y. Martinez, for Public Service, the first Latina in Illinois to be elected to the State Senate; Brigadier General Angela Salinas, for Military Service, the first Latina to hold the rank of brigadier general in the U.S. Marine Corps; Milka Duno, for Sports, the first Latina ever to be classified "expert" as an auto racer; Belle Ortiz, for Education, the first Latina to bring mariachi music into the educational curriculum at the high school and college level; and Alma Morales Riojas, for Leadership, the first Latina to serve as Board Director, National Women's History Museum and Chair, Hispanic Association on Corporate Responsibility.

"Each award recipient was different and their chosen careers ran a gambit of choices," said MANA Board Chair, Sandra Rodriguez, Ph.D. "Yet they all also shared some common traits—those of determination, courage and vision. All in all they are excellent role models for other Latinas." she added.

MANA also recognized First Lady Laura Bush with the HERMANITAS® Award for her continued efforts in reading programs for at-risk youth and women's health issues programs. In addition, Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi and Senator John McCain received the HerMANA® and HerMANO® Awards, respectively, for their work on immigration issues.

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This year the Las Primeras® 2006 Corporation of the Year Award was awarded jointly to America's automobile manufacturers: DaimlerChrysler Corporation, Ford Motor Company, and General Motors, for their continued support of the Hispanic community, in spite of their own trying financial times.

This year's corporate sponsors for the Las Primeras® Awards included: General Motors, Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., and Coors Brewing Company as Gold Sponsors, and Ford Motor Company, Freddie Mac, and State Farm Insurance Companies as Bronze Sponsors. Southwest Airlines was the event airline sponsor.

If you are interested in learning more about Las Primeras® or MANA please visit our website at www.hermana.org

Founded in 1974, MANA, A National Latina Organization® (MANA) is a national grassroots membership organization with chapters, individual members and affiliates across the country. MANA's mission is to empower Latinas through leadership development, community service, and advocacy. Its four national goals are to: strengthen Latinas as community leaders; create vital Hispanic communities; advance public policy for an equal and just society; and grow and sustain a healthy organization. MANA achieves its mission and goals through its two premiere programs, the Avanzamos® Program, an adult Latina leadership training program and the HERMANITAS® Program for young Latinas.

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