



**For Immediate Release
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MANA Recognizes Latinas Achieving “Firsts” At Las Primeras® Awards Gala

MANA, A National Latina Organization, hosts its 17th Annual Las Primeras® Awards Gala on Thursday, October 5, 2006, at the National Museum of Women in the Arts. Las Primeras® honors Latinas who have achieved “firsts” in their career or field. Also being recognized with the HERMANITA® Award this year is First Lady Laura Bush. Mrs. Bush is being honored for her continued efforts in reading programs for youth, at-risk youth and women’s health issues programs. In addition, Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi and Senator John McCain are receiving the HerMANA® and HerMANO® Awards, respectively, for their work on immigration issues.

“As is true every year, this year’s Las Primeras® recipients are all extraordinary and accomplished Latinas that serve as inspirations and role models for Latinas young and old,” said Alma Morales Riojas, MANA President and CEO.

The 2006 Las Primeras® Award recipients are: 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; and Belle Ortiz, for Education, the first Latina to bring mariachi music into the educational system curriculum at the high school and college level.

The Las Primeras ® 2006 Corporation Year of the Year Award will be awarded jointly to America’s automobile manufacturers: DaimlerChrysler Corporation, Ford Motor Company, and General Motors. “MANA is recognizing these corporations who in spite of their own tough economic times, continue to support and generously give back to the Hispanic community,” said Alma Morales Riojas, MANA President & CEO.

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

If you are interested in learning more about Las Primeras® or MANA, please call 202-833-0060 or 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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