

## SANTA MONICA CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU (SMCVB) SQA AWARDS SUBMISSION

### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

1. Mission Statement: Santa Monica Convention & Visitors Bureau works to increase visitor expenditures, tourism revenues and local employment through the promotion of Santa Monica as a travel destination.

Tourism is a key component to a sustainable economy in Santa Monica, supporting more than 11,400 local hospitality industry jobs that cannot be exported. Hotels are projected to generate \$40 million to the City of Santa Monica's general fund through Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) in 2012. Total visitor spending generates over \$1 billion to our local economy annually. These funds support essential city programs for our residents and visitors-including schools, public transportation and city services, parks, police and fire.

*Note: A visitor is defined as someone who resides outside of Los Angeles County, in Santa Monica for the day or overnight, for leisure, business, a meeting or special event, but not for regular work or to attend school.*

2. SMCVB's economic development strategy is comprised of four main components: Progressive Marketing and Sales & Services, Innovative Destination Development, Advocacy Communications and Finance & Administration. These four main components are flushed out in SMCVB's 2-year Operational Plan. The plan includes the organization's mission, vision, goals, objectives and measurements of success for the next two years. SMCVB develops its goals and objectives in conjunction with the administrative staff by facilitating offsite operational plan brainstorming sessions and presents a draft plan to the SMCVB Board of Directors in April. SMCVB implements the plan starting in July. **See attachment A1: 2-year Operational Plan**

#### **Marketing and Sales & Services**

SMCVB's integrated Sales & Marketing plan is built on progressive strategies and programs designed to lengthen the stay of our overnight hotel visitors who provide the highest spending levels with minimal negative impact to the destination. Half of Santa Monica's visitor population comes from outside the U.S. and SMCVB remains focused on the growth of our international visitors who tend to stay in the destination longer, spend more money and use public transportation and spend more money while in Santa Monica and Los Angeles. In order to maintain the important balance of international visitation, SMCVB has identified geographical and business markets, public relations strategies, marketing objectives and organizational efficiencies to expand the awareness of Santa Monica as a world-class travel destination in emerging international markets. This year, Australia/New Zealand and the United Kingdom/Ireland were

the top two represented markets in Santa Monica visitation, markets that SMCVB has proactively developed business in for several years.

SMCVB is extremely proactive in learning about the domestic and international travel marketplace to remain competitive as a destination. SMCVB staff regularly participates in webinars, training sessions and conferences to learn about emerging markets, travel trends and what the competition is doing. For example, SMCVB staff attended a “China Ready” seminar produced by Visit California to better understand the Chinese traveler and Santa Monica’s potential for serving this audience. SMCVB’s CEO was a panelist at the Southern California Visitor Industry Outlook Conference. This conference brings together travel industry leaders and economists to share their best assessment of the economic situation and how it may affect tourism businesses. We also monitor monthly reports on hotel room rates and occupancy rates from other Southern California destinations from industry experts PKF Consulting and Smith Travel Research.

### **Services**

- SMCVB provides accessibility of information to visitors via **four Visitor Information Center locations** throughout the city of Santa Monica. All of our Visitor Information Centers provide friendly, trained and knowledgeable counselors; Visitor Guides and Maps; foreign language line; and information on attractions, hotels, dining, museums, galleries and entertainment. Rather than just stopping to take a photo at the pier, SMCVB wants to ensure that every visitor is encouraged to stay, explore and support our local economy. That begins by first educating visitors on our offerings and helping them to create their perfect Santa Monica itinerary
- Every year SMCVB produces the **Official Santa Monica Visitors Guide**, a free publication containing valuable information on what to see and do in our beautiful beach city. Within our Visitors Guide, there is a section that specifically focuses on our city’s sustainable efforts and welcomes visitors to join in on the city’s socially responsible Californian lifestyle **See [attachment A2: 2012-2013 Official Santa Monica Visitors Guide](#)**
- **Mobile Visitors Center**-Designed to help spread the beachside vibe and promote Santa Monica on the road SMCVB created the “I Love Santa Monica” mobile visitors center, powered by Santa Monica Ford. The “I Love Santa Monica” mobile is a hit at special events and because it is a Ford Escape Hybrid it strengthens Santa Monica’s sustainable message.
- Our website, **[www.santamonica.com](http://www.santamonica.com)** serves as a great resource for leisure travelers in their effort to create a rich and full itinerary. Under the Visitors/About Santa Monica tab, we have a section dedicated to Green and Sustainable Santa Monica. We also refer all callers to our website first before sending them a Visitors Guide to preserve paper
- **Alternative Transportation Guidance**-70% of Santa Monica hotel visitors never use a car while they are here. In an effort to encourage **bike tourism** and promote alternative modes of transportation, SMCVB

- partnered with the City of Santa Monica and Buy Local to create Santa Monica self-guided biketineraries, according to different themes including arts, wellness, vintage shopping and sustainability. Our travel counselors are also trained to provide alternative transportation suggestions (i.e. bike rentals, Big Blue Bus, Tour Buses) to further encourage tourists to go car-free in Santa Monica. **See attachment A3: Biketinerary**
- SMCVB works with local businesses to help them increase their tourism business through a number of Marketing, Public Relations and Sales opportunities. **See attachment A4: Letters that are included in SMCVB's New Business Packet**

### **Destination Development**

With these diverse target markets in mind, SMCVB is always looking to enhance the visitor experience and has policies in place to ensure that the quality and integrity of our destination are sustained through involvement and dialogue with city staff and leaders on long-term planning. A few specific examples of these goal objectives include:

- Support of cultural offerings for visitors to further engage and extend the length of stay
- Working with city departments, boards, commissions and other non-profit organizations to improve the pedestrian and bicyclist experience/safety
- Support of hotel facilities, visitor-serving businesses and to overnight visitors who drive less than day visitors and provide fiscal benefits but do not significantly contribute to traffic congestion

Value is still in demand by the consumer and we must continually improve access to our destination and its attractions and improve our service levels in order to exceed our visitors' experience while they are in the destination. To strengthen our visitor experience, SMCVB created the **I Am Santa Monica Program**, a free 3-hour interactive learning workshop and tour specifically designed to inform and educate local employees and community members about the Santa Monica brand including our city's sustainable reputation. Since its inception in 2008, over 2,500 local employees, servers, hotel concierges, front desk staff, Downtown Santa Monica Ambassadors, taxi drivers, hotel General Managers, police officers, lifeguards, local residents, city leaders, business owners and more have completed the "I Am Santa Monica" program. **See attachment A5: I Am Santa Monica Program invite**

SMCVB facilitated 3 "Beach Summits", which are a gathering of local stakeholders, City staff, beachfront businesses, lifeguards, police, fire and environmental groups to brainstorm ideas for how to improve the beach experience in Santa Monica for visitors and residents alike. A few of the ideas that have been implemented as a result of the Beach Summit include the installation of security cameras at the Santa Monica Pier and the establishment of a "Beach Beat" from the police department, a change in the beach events

policy and the addition of a “trash valet” during busy Summer months. See attachment for photos and press coverage of the Beach Summit. **See attachment A6: for photos and press coverage**

After Santa Monica was named one of the “Top Ten Beach Cities in the World” by National Geographic, SMCVB asked local businesses and organizations if they had received any awards and accolades throughout the past year. SMCVB collected over 60 different accolades achieved by businesses and groups in the community – clearly proving that becoming one of the top ten beach cities in the world is achieved by the award-winning work of our local businesses and organizations. SMCVB produced a celebration on the morning after the Academy Awards to celebrate all of Santa Monica’s achievements and unveil the new graphic identity of Santa Monica as “California’s Most Celebrated Beach City”. SMCVB provided businesses with the graphic identity for their own use along with rights free destination photography. The event and new graphic identity received local, domestic and international press coverage. **See attachment A7: event photos**

SMCVB conducts visitor intercept surveys each quarter to learn more about our visitors and their experiences in Santa Monica while measuring the return on investment of our work.

### **Advocacy Communications**

SMCVB works alongside many key partners to champion the importance and economic value of tourism on a local, statewide and national level. From a local standpoint, CEO Misti Kerns serves on the Santa Monica Pier Corporation Board, is a Santa Monica Chamber of Commerce board liaison and works closely with the City of Santa Monica’s Department of Economic Development providing insight on strategic planning. She was recognized as one of the “women who helped shape Santa Monica” by the Santa Monica League of Women Voters in 2010 and an “individual who keeps Santa Monica’s history alive” by the Santa Monica History Museum in 2012. Statewide, SMCVB collaborates frequently with Visit California, on which Kerns is an active Task Force member and the California Travel Association, where Kerns is the incoming chair and serves on the Government Relations Committee. Nationally, Kerns is a U.S. Travel Association Destination Council board member and is an advocate for the efforts of Brand USA.

Every year, SMCVB hosts the Annual Travel and Tourism Summit, welcoming hundreds of hospitality industry partners from Santa Monica and neighboring communities. During the summit, the results of that year’s Santa Monica Tourism Economic Impact Study are presented in addition to key achievements and industry trends from a local, state and national level. Past keynote speakers have included Caroline Beteta, president and CEO of Visit California and Vice Chair of the Corporation for Travel Promotion, California Restaurant Association President and CEO Jot Condie, California Travel Association President and CEO

John Severini and Santa Monica Mayor Richard Bloom. ***See attachment A8: Economic Impact Community Piece. This is updated annually and is distributed at a variety of community events year round. Includes the economic impact results that are shared at the Annual Travel and Tourism Summit.***

Through all of these efforts, SMCVB is continually working to maintain strong relationships with local and regional press outlets, in an effort to promote the positive impacts of tourism through secured media placements. ***See attachment A9: press coverage***

### **Finance and Administration**

SMCVB's goal is to effectively manage business operations that deliver the highest possible return on investment to our stakeholders and further enhance the professionalism of our organization to become one of the most valued organizations in our community. In 2011, SMCVB earned DMAP Accreditation from DMAI (Destination Marketing Association International) to demonstrate compliance of performance evaluation and measurement, organizational practices and standardization of procedures. SMCVB is one of only 130 DMOs worldwide to receive this esteemed recognition. In 2011, SMCVB also received California Meetings + Events Magazine Readers Choice Award for "Best Destination Marketing Organization in Southern California (Town/Area less than 100,000 in population).

In 2011/2012, SMCVB identified the need for additional funding to increase tourism revenues and hotel room night consumption. SMCVB facilitated a partnership among local hotels and the City of Santa Monica in establishing a Santa Monica Tourism Marketing District (SMTMD), which Santa Monica City Council passed on December 11, 2012. The SMTMD is an assessment on Santa Monica hotels that have an average daily rate over \$100, providing an anticipated \$3.1 million in additional funding for SMCVB without any without any new taxes or additional government spending. ***See attachment A10: Tourism Marketing District Fact Sheet***

3. To improve the productivity of individual employees, groups of employees and operations, SMCVB implements the following procedures/policies:

- **Staff outings**: SMCVB organizes staff outings geared towards team building multiple times throughout the year. Often, the outing is also designed to educate the team on new product offerings within the destination or region. For example, recent staff outings included a team workout at Santa Monica's new Soul Cycle, an electric bicycle tour and a holiday cooking class at the Gourmandise School of Sweets and Savories which was recorded and then used as our holiday greeting in place of a card to our clients and stakeholders
- **Bureau Project Calendar**: SMCVB's project calendar is a quarterly checklist devised from our operations plan to ensure that we are making

progress throughout the year to meet annual goals on our projects and programs.

- Training and Educational Assistance: SMCVB offers a tuition reimbursement opportunity for staff to travel to educational events, language classes and other costs/expenses associated with attending an approved training or educational course that applies to his/her position at the Bureau
- Weekly staff meetings: Held every Tuesday morning at 9:30 am, these meetings are important to successfully manage the Bureau and its programs. Communication among managers, support staff, and President/CEO are documented and put on the Shared Folder within 24 hours for follow up and access to assignments. Training sessions are provided on a regular basis to educate staff on new technologies, Santa Monica history and new destination offerings
- Monthly Travel Counselor Meetings: Every month we hold a meeting between our Sales & Services team and the Travel Counselors (TCs) who are stationed at our Visitor Information Centers. During each meeting, we typically invite guest speakers attend to educate counselors on their business and what it offers visitors and/or hotel site visits so TCs have on-hand experience in the properties
- Sales & Marketing Meetings: Every Friday, SMCVB holds a Sales & Marketing Meeting that primarily serves as a brainstorming session to encourage creativity and innovation in our planning efforts.
- Monthly Board of Directors Meetings and Annual Retreat implemented this year: Santa Monica Convention & Visitors Bureau is governed by an 11 member Board of Directors who plays an important role in our organization. Their responsibilities include the following:
  - Hiring and lending support to SMCVB President/CEO and participate in the formulation of policies and set goals that serve the mission of the organization. The Board of Directors ensures that the organization has adequate resources and that they are managed effectively; approve the annual operating budget and operational plan
  - Attending board meetings and CVB sponsored functions and being aware of current issues impacting tourism and the community.
  - Supporting all decisions made by the board; be willing to accept assignments that result from actions taken by the board.
  - Understanding and educating others about the role of tourism in the community and its economic impacts
- Bi-monthly GM/Hotel Owner Meetings: To ensure that our destination remains competitive and to keep partner communications open, SMCVB hosts bi-monthly meetings with hotel General Managers and owners providing an update on partnership opportunities, industry trends to help develop effective rate management plans that keep hotels full year round
- Quarterly DOS Meetings: SMCVB's Sales & Marketing Team hosts quarterly meetings with hotel Director of Sales providing an update on

partnership opportunities, industry trends to help develop effective rate management plans that keep hotels full year round

- Hospitality Mixers: Every quarter, SMCVB hosts a mixer to encourage networking and relationship building within the Santa Monica hospitality community

4. SMCVB wants our employees to take pride in their jobs and one of the strategies SMCVB uses to grow productivity is through promotion from within. Hard work does not go unnoticed and all current SMCVB employees at management level have previously served other roles within the organization before being promoted to their current role. SMCVB encourages employees to enroll in individual training courses geared towards the development of their specific area of expertise (i.e. social media classes, time management skills, public speaking courses) and frequently offers opportunity to explore other career fields in our industry and within the community. SMCVB is also involved in Destination Marketing Association International's Certified Destination Management Executive Program (CDME), which is connected to the hospitality and tourism program at Purdue University and is the highest level that someone in the destination marketing industry can achieve. SMCVB has two staff members who have already graduated from the program and two more senior staff members are currently enrolled and will graduate in July 2013. **See attachment A11: CDME program description**

In terms of promoting job growth in the community, tourism supports nearly 11,400 jobs in the Santa Monica community, jobs that cannot be exported. To honor those individuals who provide exceptional service in the hospitality and tourism industry, SMCVB created a community recognition program called the "Thelma Parks Tourism Spirit Awards", named after an exceptional 23-year SMCVB employee who was truly dedicated to providing unforgettable experiences to visitors. These awards are meant to congratulate and celebrate these individuals and acknowledge their contribution to the Santa Monica visitor experience. Award winners are nominated by the public and then selected and honored quarterly in partnership with Santa Monica Chamber of Commerce, with one outstanding employee receiving the Thelma Parks Tourism Scholarship awarded each May during the annual SMCVB Travel & Tourism Summit. **See attachments A12: Thelma Parks Award materials and press coverage**

## **SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

1. SMCVB provides many benefits to eligible employees including paid holidays, paid vacation, a floating holiday, paid sick leave, medical/dental/vision insurance, life insurance, state disability insurance, family temporary disability insurance, long-term disability, social security, workers' compensation insurance, 401 (k) retirement savings plan with investment training by an expert offered, IRS Section 125—Cafeteria Plan, leave for civic duties, leave for victims of felony crimes, leave for victims of domestic violence & sexual assault, unpaid family

school partnership leave, leave for organ and bone marrow donors, pregnancy disability leave of absence, medical leave of absence, personal leave of absence, bereavement leave and military leave of absence. Medical appointments (time paid), are permitted for all full time employees and management is supportive and flexible of family and or personal needs of employees.

2. SMCVB is dedicated to providing an excellent employee relations program by maintaining good working conditions, competitive wages, and benefits, open communications and employee involvement. Over the years, SMCVB has earned a fine reputation in our industry and we know our reputation is a direct result of the loyalty, commitment and continued efforts of our employees. We continue to look to our employees for ideas about how to improve all areas of our business and have an “open door” policy about any questions, concerns or problems.

SMCVB has a Suggestion Program to encourage employees to share ideas on how to more efficiently and profitably run the Bureau. If employees have any suggestions that they think will add to our effectiveness or reduce expenses, they simply have to present the idea in writing to their Manager. A cash bonus may be available to the person whose idea is used, in the sole discretion of the Bureau’s President/CEO.

SMCVB has a “Finder’s Fee” policy that if a current employee refers a new employee and the new employee completes the 90-day probation, the referring employee will receive \$100.

To ensure employee satisfaction, each full-time employee receives an annual performance review allowing them the opportunity for a self-review in addition to the review process provided via their direct manager and SMCVB’s President/CEO. This is a great opportunity on an individual level for self-reflection and the opportunity to receive personal accolades and become aware of the improvements that may be needed and the paid training SMCVB may provide to further their productivity and knowledge.

3. SMCVB usually hires at least two summer interns each year. Interns are trained as any other member of our team with the intention that eventually they can be brought onboard as a full time employee. SMCVB recognizes the importance of diversity, and has hired interns via our sister city program from Germany and Italy in the past. Two current SMCVB staff members were originally hired as summer interns.

Many SMCVB Travel Counselors happen to be Senior Citizens from the local community who work on a part-time basis. Many of these TCs bring their own love and affections for Santa Monica to the job, which they are able to share with visitors. SMCVB recently recognized Fred Basten for 10 dedicated years of service as a Travel Counselor. SMCVB’s PR team secured a few articles in the



local papers recognizing Fred's unique story and contributions. **See attachment B1: media coverage**

SMCVB created the I AM Santa Monica Program, a free 3-hour interactive learning workshop and guided tour specifically designed to inform and educate local employees and community members about the Santa Monica destination brand. This free program is entirely open to the public and has served as a stepping-stone for those looking to build their resume. Since its inception in 2008, over 2,500 local employees, servers, hotel concierges, front desk staff, Downtown Santa Monica Ambassadors, taxi drivers, hotel General Managers, police officers, lifeguards, local residents, city leaders and uniformed personnel, business owners and more have completed the "I Am Santa Monica" program. The program is also offered in Spanish.

4. SMCVB is fully invested in the Santa Monica community and supports many local charities and community programs through the following efforts.

- Monetary donations or providing items for silent auctions for local non-profit associations **See attachment B2: donation thank you letters**
- In 2010, The Westside Shelter and Hunger Coalition honored Santa Monica Convention & Visitors Bureau and the local tourism industry with the Partnership Award for exemplary hospitality to those in need and generosity to WSHC member agencies including financial and in-kind support for providing employment for the homeless and low-income clients **See attachment B3:award announcement**
- Sponsor and serve on planning committee for Westside and Hunger Coalition Bowl-a-thon
- SMCVB's VP of Marketing, Kim Baker, is a Board Member the Santa Monica Police Activities League (PAL)
- Sponsor and planning team member of GLOW
- Support and attend National Night Out
- Participation in Buy Local and co-sponsorship of events (i.e. Santa Monica Eat Well Week)
- SMCVB staff member represented on each Business Improvement District
- Two SMCVB staff members participate in the Chamber's Professionals Emerging as Business Leaders (PeBL) organization.
- Sponsorship partner for multiple Santa Monica Chamber of Commerce events including the State of the City, Annual Installation Dinner, Sustainable Quality Awards and New Heroes Celebration.

- SMCVB is actively involved in supporting Santa Monica's Sister Cities with the following activities:
  - Providing gifts to Santa Monica students traveling abroad for cultural exchange
  - Facilitating tours of Santa Monica for visitors from our sister cities
  - Greeting visiting soccer group from sister city in Japan
  - Hiring interns from sister cities in Italy and Germany

SMCVB makes it a priority to promote the Santa Monica hospitality industry's philanthropic efforts and share with media/industry and city leaders. Last year, SMCVB distributed a press release recognizing the hospitality industry's large-scale efforts in the Bowl-a-thon, which raised more than \$25,000 for the Westside Shelter & Hunger Coalition.

### **Stewardship of the Natural Environment**

1. SMCVB was the first charter businesses in Santa Monica to receive Green Business Certification and is a founding partner of the program. Below are some of the sustainable practices that SMCVB implemented in order to become green certified. **See attachment C1: Green Certification press release**

Energy conservation measures:

- T-8 or T-5 lamps with electronic ballasts
- LED and dimmable lighting
- Energy efficient HVAC
- Energy Saver on photocopier
- Use mostly natural lighting in our office through skylights
- Ceiling fans and open doors = no air conditioning needed on most days
- "Turn off light" labels installed

Water saving measures:

- Installed water conserving toilets and faucet aerators
- Water conservation signage posted
- No landscaping at our office

Waste reduction measures:

- Recycle bins
- We use 100% Recycled Paper **See attachment C2-recycled paper order**
- Visitor Guide and maps printed on recycled materials
- Compostable kitchenware in office and also used at most CVB events
- Recycle batteries
- Xerox ColorCube uses crayon ink which means we don't have to throw a plastic cartridge each time we are out of ink
- Refurbished equipment purchased
- Encourage email correspondence rather than printed letters
- Recycle office equipment and materials (i.e. auction off old computers to

- employees)
- Double sided copies used whenever possible is our policy

Pollution Prevention Measures:

- Use non-toxic paint
  - Battery disposing box
  - Bikes available for staff to run errands during work shift
  - Environmentally friendly mobile car for visitor services
2. SMCVB's cleaning crew uses only green, eco-conscious products. **See [attachment C3: Environmentally Friendly Cleaning Proposal](#)**
  3. More and more travelers today are making conscious efforts to decrease their carbon footprint while trotting around the globe. When many hear "green travel" they think of camping in the wilderness, but Santa Monica provides many eco-friendly restaurants, hotels, attractions and transportation alternatives so you don't have to sacrifice the indulgences of luxury travel in order to "go green". At SMCVB, we feel that it is our responsibility to educate the various groups that we work with about sustainable Santa Monica so they too can spread the word. Here are a few ways that SMCVB promotes car-free tourism to Santa Monica:
    - Our Communications Team is continually weaving green themed message points and story and story ideas into their pitches to promote Santa Monica as an eco-friendly destination where you can experience Los Angeles car-free.
    - 2012-2013 Santa Monica Official Visitors Guide is a free publication containing valuable information on what to see and do in our beautiful beach city. Within our Visitors Guide, there is a section that specifically focuses on our city's sustainable efforts and welcomes visitors to join in on the city's socially responsible Californian lifestyle. We also always encourage the use of our web based guide rather than sending the printed piece.
    - Our website, [www.santamonica.com](http://www.santamonica.com) serves a great resource for leisure travelers in their effort to create a rich and full itinerary. Under the Visitors/About Santa Monica tab, we have a whole site dedicated to Green and Sustainable Santa Monica.
    - We have a green Sustainability Center at our Main Street Visitor Center location to specifically educate visitors on Santa Monica's sustainable offerings. **See [attachment C4: Sustainability Center](#)**
    - Our messaging is working; research shows that 70% of Santa Monica hotel visitors never use a car while they are here. In an effort to encourage bike tourism and promote alternative modes of transportation, SMCVB partnered with the City of Santa Monica and Buy Local Santa Monica campaign to create Santa Monica self-guided biketineraries, according to different themes including arts, wellness, vintage shopping and sustainability. These too are available on our website.

- Designed to help spread the beachside vibe and promote Santa Monica, California on the road, SMCVB hit the streets with the “I Love Santa Monica” mobile visitors center, a Ford Escape Hybrid.
  - Driving our meetings business, our Corporate Travel and Meeting Planner includes a whole section solely dedicated to sustainable meeting and events and how our team can help you plan a sustainable environmentally responsible event. We provide suggestions on how to “green your meeting” including online registration, providing bikes/segways for transportation, providing reusable bottles for attendees and using local and sustainable food products. We also promote Santa Monica’s certified green Santa Monica businesses so meeting planners can select socially responsible stores, hotels, and restaurants in their decision making process. **See attachment C5-Corporate Travel and Meeting Planner Green Section**
  - We not only promote a car-free Santa Monica, we embrace it ourselves! We have two SMCVB bikes reserved for staff commuting to meetings around town.
4. Every new employee at SMCVB goes through an orientation process, which includes an overview of the employee handbook and Bureau Basics including the SMCVB’s Green Business Practices Addendum. We also share green ideas and themes at our weekly staff meetings to percolate sustainable programs. **See attachment C6-SMCVB Green Business Practices**
  5. Sustainability is part of the Santa Monica destination brand and SMCVB works hard to represent our brand wherever we go. When SMCVB and six hospitality partners traveled to Vancouver for the Meetings Professional International World Education Congress conference, we chose to make a statement. To reduce carbon emissions, we decided not to transport booths, displays and other materials to this event and used the \$6,000 we saved in shipping costs to buy shoes for local children in need. We partnered with a Santa Monica-based company, TOMS Shoes, and they agreed to match our donation, sending \$12,000 directly to improve the lives of children locally through the Virginia Ave Project and in third world countries via TOMS Shoes’ One for One Program. **See attachment C7-photos and press coverage**

In 2011, SMCVB hosted a press conference to help launch The California Coastal Commission and the Department of Motor Vehicles' new Whale Tail® Specialty License Plate. Purchased plate proceeds helped generate funds for groups dedicated to coastal restoration projects, beach cleanups and marine education programs including Santa Monica based Heal the Bay. Misti Kerns, president and CEO of Santa Monica Convention & Visitors Bureau said, "Our beaches and the experience they offer are among our most important assets in Santa Monica. These projects help

provide residents and visitors with enhanced amenities and services to provide them a cleaner and safer beach." To help celebrate the "A" water rating for the Pier, SMCVB brought in local green car dealer Santa Monica Ford to provide a hybrid car to display the new license plate. **See [attachment C8-photos from event](#)**

SMCVB also believes in the work of those who protect our beaches and waterways, as it is crucial to the success of our industry. In 2012, SMCVB nominated Heal the Bay, a Santa Monica based environmental advocacy non-profit, for the California Travel Association's Tourism Stewardship of the Year Award. Heal the Bay was the award winner and was recognized for its significant contributions to advance the state of California's travel industry at the California Travel Association's (Cal Travel) 30th Annual California Travel Summit. SMCVB's PR team secured press coverage featuring Heal the Bay's recognition and Misti Kerns, SMCVB CEO was quoted saying, "Heal the Bay has forged the path of beach preservation in the state of California and its projects have helped provide residents and visitors with enhanced amenities and services for cleaner and safer beaches. We value Heal the Bay's partnership and their contributions to Santa Monica's reputation as a world-class beach destination." **See [attachment C9: media coverage](#)**