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City of Riverside Forging Bonds With Ensenada on Local Jobs, Deaf Education

Potential seafood export business, greater cooperation between deaf communities being developed

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – Riverside, which for years has worked with its Sister City of Ensenada, Mexico, on trade, economic development and art exchanges, is exploring ways to implement Mayor Rusty Bailey’s initiative to connect the deaf communities in both cities and the institutions that serve them.

Mayor Bailey and members of the City Council recently met with a delegation from Ensenada to share ideas of how the two cities can work together on everything from the education of deaf students to possibly exporting Mexican seafood to the rest of the world through the civilian portion of nearby March Air Reserve Base.

“Our relationship with Ensenada has been long and fruitful for both our cities,” Mayor Bailey said. “I look forward to working together on projects that can bring jobs to the Riverside area, and I am equally excited about the potential for our respective educators to strengthen the bonds between our deaf communities.”

The exchange was highlighted by the donation to Ensenada of 10 laptop computers to organizations that serve deaf people in Ensenada to facilitate distance learning by Ensenada residents, especially young people, with the California School for the Deaf, Riverside. Riverside also donated 10 soccer balls for use by deaf youth in Ensenada.

Riverside and Ensenada have been Sister Cities since 1976, and the two cities have a long history of educational and cultural exchanges. In addition, the City of Riverside has donated to Ensenada fire trucks, trash trucks and police cars after they reached their recommended lifespan, as well as playground equipment and library equipment.

The recent effort to establish a seafood export business between Ensenada and the Riverside area is a joint effort of Mayor Bailey, Ensenada Mayor Marco Novelo, Riverside businessman Ramon Alvarez, the Riverside County Economic Development Agency and the March Joint Powers Authority.

Re-routing the export of seafood from Ensenada to China so it passes through March is a potential \$100 million annual economic development opportunity for the city and county of Riverside, Ensenada and Baja, Mexico. The arrangement has the potential to allow Mexican seafood producers to get their products to markets in Asia faster, increasing profitability and reducing the possibility of spoilage.

“The Sister Cities program continues to show benefits for the City of Riverside,” Mayor Pro Tem Mike Gardner said. “It’s also very rewarding to see our City, including CSDR and SmartRiverside, coming together to offer a helping hand to our neighbors in Ensenada.”

Attending the event held at Riverside City Hall were International Relations Council President Diane Elton and CSDR Superintendent Dr. Nancy Amann. Representing the deaf community in Ensenada were Mercedes Fernandez of Asociacion Regional de Sordos Ensenadenses A.C. (ARSE, pronounced R-SAY); and Magdalena Buenrostro representing Manos Que Hablan (MQH).

“We are very excited about this event because it involves the right combination -- technology, computers and sports -- for our kids and our families,” said Head Consul Enrique Salomon Rosas Ramirez, who attended the gathering. “This day is the beginning of a new era in our relationship.”

Mayor Bailey and the City of Riverside arranged a meeting last year between Amann, Fernandez and Buenrostro to explore ways they could work together. Possibilities include distance learning between the two campuses involving CSDR faculty, visits to CSDR by deaf youth from Ensenada and other cooperative ventures.

Mayor Bailey’s office worked with Riverside’s Chief Innovation Officer Lea Deesing and Information Technology Officer Bill Bunger, who manages the SmartRiverside digital inclusion project, to find and refurbish laptops to be donated to Ensenada for use in distance learning. CSDR contributed 10 webcams to the City’s donation to facilitate distance learning.

The SmartRiverside program has brought computers to hundreds of Riverside residents across the City, said City Councilman Jim Perry, who helped welcome the delegation.

“I just hope the success that has taken place in my neighborhood will be the same success that takes place in your neighborhood,” said Perry, who also donated several pairs of running shoes to the Ensenada delegation for use in establishing a running program like one he started in the La Sierra/Arlanza area. “We look forward to continuing the partnership we have built here today.”

Ensenada is one Riverside’s nine Sister Cities—Sendai (Japan), Gangnam (Korea), Jiangmen (China), Can Tho (Vietnam), Hyderabad (India), Obuasi (Ghana), Erlangen (Germany), and Cuautla (Mexico).