

Jaco Community Awarded with Blue Flag

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The community of Jaco was awarded with the ecological Blue Flag (Bandera Azul Ecológica) on March 25th in an awards ceremony in Puntarenas honoring the recipients of this coveted flag. Following on Saturday, March 29th, the President of the Blue Flag program, Dr. Darner Mora, along with national government officials and representatives from the International Blue Flag program, presented the flag to Jaco's local city council at the entrance of Jaco's main boulevard.

The award of the Blue Flag for the Jaco community represents the labor and volunteer efforts of a multitude of residents, businesses,

hotels, developers, and the Garabito municipality, who have united this past year to literally clean up the growing city of Jaco, its beach, and its image as one of Costa Rica's most popular tourist destinations. Under the direction of Sonia Alvarado Marin, Jaco now has various working projects that have proven themselves successful, such as recycling, cleaning of the community, beach cleaning, environmental education, signage and social health initiatives. After three months of working for the Blue Flag beach committee, President of the Republic, Oscar Arias, recognized the work of Marin and along with an analysis conducted by Dr. Mora, it was decided that Jaco would be inscribed for two categories in the Blue Flag program.

Today, the nicely paved streets of Jaco are washed twice a day, swept every day, the beach is cleaned with a beach cleaning machine donated by DayStar Properties, have recycling stations along the beach and community, contain proper signage and community beach cleaning days.

It is not to say that Marin has not encountered challenges during her year of dedication to cleaning up the community with problems of contamination in certain parts of where the rivers empty out onto the beach. These types of contamination problems are not taken lightly with Marin as she explains, "I submitted a letter to Defensoria de Los Habitantes identifying that the condominium complex Tropical was contaminating into the river." In an article published by La Nación on April 2, 2008 Condominio en Jaco mejora planta de tratamiento de agua (Condominium in Jaco improves its water treatment plant) it was reported that the condominium Tropical has improved their treatment plant and that the regional Minister of Health for the central Pacific, Carlos Venegas, has affirmed that the condominium has met with its sanitary requirements. In response to this article, Marin claims that this is false and that she is preparing a letter to the municipal counsel proposing the closure of this condominium because they did not comply in making the improvements during the 20 day time period they were given to do so.