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VISIT MOUNTAINEER COUNTRY WINS SECOND CONSECUTIVE 'FUTURE OF TOURISM' STARS OF THE INDUSTRY AWARD

(MORGANTOWN, W.VA., SEPT. 13, 2024) – The Visit Mountaineer Country Convention and Visitors Bureau (VMCCVB) is thrilled to announce its success at the 2024 Governor's Conference on Tourism, held Sept. 8-11 in Charleston. For the second consecutive year, VMCCVB has been recognized with the prestigious "Future of Tourism" award, highlighting the organization's unwavering commitment to promoting sustainable tourism and fostering the next generation of tourism professionals in North Central West Virginia.

"This award reflects the collective effort and passion of our team, partners and community in Mountaineer Country," said Susan Riddle, president and CEO of VMCCVB. "We are honored to be recognized once again and will continue our dedication to shaping a vibrant future for tourism in Mountaineer Country. That starts with educating our own to help grow the tourism industry workforce."

VMCCVB was recognized for its outstanding work in several areas that have strengthened the future of tourism in the region, which includes its internship program with West Virginia University (WVU) and its Leave No Trace (LNT) Outdoor Stewardship Program.

Through its internship program, the VMCCVB introduces college students to careers in tourism and hospitality, bridging the gap between academia and industry. Through LNT, the VMCCVB has introduced environmental stewardship principles to more than 1,200 Mountaineer Country 5th-grade students in just the first year. This program teaches children the importance of protecting outdoor spaces and responsible tourism practices. It also introduces area youth to the diverse career opportunities available within the tourism industry. These efforts are aimed at nurturing local talent and securing a promising future workforce for the region.

The VMCCVB also sponsors the Newspapers in Education program with the Dominion Post which provides free newspapers to 20 schools in the Mountaineer Country region. These newspapers include the VMCCVB's biweekly columns on tourism events and opportunities, further driving the connection between the area's youth and the tourism industry.

"The VMCCVB is committed to spreading the message that Mountaineer Country has valuable tourism and quality-of-life assets that need to be protected for future growth and prosperity," said Riddle. "With focused efforts on sustainable tourism practices, community collaboration and continuous education, our goal is to ensure that our natural beauty, cultural heritage and economic opportunities are preserved for generations to come."

VMCCVB remains committed to promoting the Mountaineer Country tourism region and looks forward to continuing its efforts to enhance North Central West Virginia's reputation as a premier travel destination. For more information about VMCCVB and its initiatives, visit www.VisitMountaineerCountry.com.

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About Mountaineer Country

The Mountaineer Country tourism region in North Central West Virginia is made up of Monongalia, Preston, Taylor, Harrison, Marion, Barbour and Doddridge Counties. The tourism industry in Mountaineer Country continues to thrive, ranking first in the state for direct spending in the food and beverage (29.2%) and recreation (26.1%) categories in 2023. The industry employs more than 10,000 people in the region, and its positive impact in North Central West Virginia saves each household approximately \$668 annually.

