

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Surry County Selected to Participate in Statewide Tourism Program DRIVE 2.0**

**Surry County, Virginia** – Today, **Surry County** announced that they have been selected to participate in the DRIVE 2.0 Statewide Tourism Plan implementation, which focuses on tourism promotion and product development. The DRIVE 2.0 process, facilitated by Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC), equips communities across the state with the tools they need to succeed in an overly competitive travel and tourism market. **Surry County** is one of 30 communities who will complete the DRIVE 2.0 program.

The DRIVE 2.0 program launched at an important time for the tourism industry, as communities are looking ahead to rebound efforts to mitigate the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. As communities begin these efforts, competition will be fierce as they fight for every traveler dollar. DRIVE 2.0 materials are an important resource and tool for these industries as they look to recovery, with a focus on promotion of outdoor recreation and development, community support, and making the case for tourism as drivers of community and economic wellness.

“Tourism will be key to economic recovery as the pandemic continues to stabilize,” said Rita McClenny, President and CEO of Virginia Tourism Corporation. “As travelers immediately inject cash back into communities, Virginia aims to restore the tourism economy into the vibrant and highly performing economic engine it always has been. By promoting responsible tourism, innovative product development, and community cooperation, the tourism industry will return to its previous economic vitality as an instant revenue generator. DRIVE 2.0 will help our industry do just that.”

DRIVE 2.0 has developed strategies that will help make Virginia's tourism industry more robust and create sustainable opportunities for new development and growth. Direct industry partner and stakeholder feedback resulted in the development of the Statewide Strategic Tourism Plan, 10 Regional Plans, and six How-To-Guides covering telling and selling your story, enhancing tourism product, and making the case for tourism.

Throughout the implementation process, communities' input and expertise from their own local and regional tourism partners will be gathered through a community survey, expanded on through community consensus meetings, and will result in specifically tailored promotion, product development, and advocacy strategies.

“I would like to thank the Virginia Tourism Corporation for yet another supportive tool in furthering Surry County's tourism objectives, says Yoti Jabri, Economic Development

Director. "Surry County has so much to offer visitors and Drive 2.0 will help us identify what to market and strategies to take moving forward."

"The Drive 2.0 process will bring together community leaders, stakeholders, governmental representatives, and tourism staff to assess our tourism assets, challenges, messaging, and opportunities for product development and advocacy," explained Pat Bernshausen, Tourism Coordinator. "As a small, rural community Surry does have many challenges; however, awareness of such, opens the door to more creative thinking as we collectively look for solutions and alternatives to these challenges. We believe that the Drive 2.0 process will result in an increased ability to promote Surry County's rich history, recreational experiences, and increase local support within the community - having been made aware of the economic value of tourism."

DRIVE 2.0 will be implemented within 30 Virginia communities and will help create the foundation for a competitive promotion, product development, and advocacy plan, including specific action steps, success factors, timelines, priorities for implementation. At the end of implementation, communities receive a \$10,000 grant to assist with furthering or developing these plans.

To learn more about DRIVE Tourism, please visit <http://www.vatc.org/drive2>

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