



For Immediate Release

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FairField Center's International Festival Awarded Virginia Tourism Grant

Funding designated for Harrisonburg International Festival & Community Project.

HARRISONBURG (August 20, 2018) Governor Ralph Northam announced today that the Community Mediation Center DBA FairField Center has received \$10,000 from the Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) Marketing Leverage Program grant fund for its Harrisonburg International Festival & Community program. In total VTC awarded more than \$890,000 for 57 tourism marketing projects across the state to help increase visitation and revenue for Virginia's localities through tourism.

The grants are designed to help local and regional tourism entities attract more visitors by leveraging local marketing dollars and will ultimately impact at least 232 other statewide tourism entities. The local organizations match the state grant funds by a minimum of 2:1 in order to support marketing projects. This funding cycle, the local partners will match the VTC grant dollars with more than \$4 million, providing more than \$4.9 million in new marketing to increase visitation to Virginia.

The Harrisonburg International Festival & Community program's goal is to enhance the popular event's infrastructure to help build relationships and communication skills between Harrisonburg's international entrepreneurs and the various channels that promote Harrisonburg as a destination. By highlighting the wide variety of international food and arts and cultural activities Harrisonburg has to offer, the program seeks to expand awareness and support for the international products and

services that are an integral part of the Harrisonburg ethos, as well as spur economic growth in that business sector. The FairField Center partnered with Harrisonburg Tourism and Visitor Services and Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance to supply \$16,000 in matching funds for the program.

“This grant award is not only a great boost for the Harrisonburg International Festival but will allow the entire community to benefit from more information about the rich multicultural activities that Harrisonburg has to offer. By highlighting the many international entrepreneurs, businesses, and organizations that call Harrisonburg home, more visitors and residents will be able to discover and enjoy the variety of experiences available,” said Brenda Black, Harrisonburg Tourism and Visitor Services Manager.

This year’s Harrisonburg International Festival is scheduled for Saturday, September 29th, 2018 from 12 – 6 pm, and features international music, dance, food, artists, storytelling, and family-friendly activities for all ages. Now in its 21st year, the festival started as a grassroots effort to showcase and unite the city’s various international populations, celebrate the cultural and linguistic richness they bring to the region, and provide greater understanding within the overall community. Now one of Harrisonburg’s most recognizable and well-loved community events, the festival attracted more than 9,000 attendees in 2017 and was voted “Best Festival/Event” in the Daily News-Record's *Best of the Valley 2018* readers’ poll, and took 3rd place in the Best Food Festival category in [Virginia Living Magazine's](#) Best of Virginia, Shenandoah Valley Region 2018.

The Festival is a program of the Civic Engagement branch of Harrisonburg’s [FairField Center](#). Founded in 1982 and originally known as the Community Mediation Center, the FairField Center was the first mediation program established in Virginia. Since its inception, FairField Center has served a cross-section of Virginia’s population, providing not only interpersonal mediation services, but also restorative justice programs and facilitation and training to resolve conflicts and enhance communication and joint decision-making for schools, businesses, organizations, and communities-at-large.

The VTC Marketing Leverage Program is designed to stimulate new tourism marketing through partnerships by leveraging limited marketing dollars, resulting in increased visitor spending. A minimum of three entities must partner financially to apply and may consist of Virginia towns, cities, counties, convention and visitors’ bureaus, chambers of commerce, other local or regional destination marketing organizations, private businesses, museums, attractions, cultural events, and other tourism-related entities.

Research shows that every VTC dollar invested in grants resulted in \$16 of direct visitor spending. Marketing campaigns that received Marketing Leverage Grants increased visitation by 15%.

“The tourism industry continues to be one of the fastest-growing and most innovative industries in Virginia, proving to be an instant revenue generator year after year,” **said Governor Northam**. “Our tourism businesses from across the Commonwealth recognize the importance of new product. They have created inventive, strategic marketing initiatives to showcase the many lures that Virginia has to offer. These grants will support those initiatives, and will help draw thousands of visitors to the Commonwealth to experience all of the things that make Virginia so special: our scenic beauty, exciting restaurants, historic sites, music venues and festivals, charming small towns, oysters, wine, craft beer and more.”

“The Marketing Leverage Program grants continue to inject critical funds into communities across the Commonwealth, helping to make Virginia the best place to live, work, and raise a family,” **said Brian Ball, Secretary of Commerce and Trade.** “The tourism industry is an economic engine for Virginia. Last year, visitors spent \$25 billion, which supported 232,000 jobs and contributed \$1.73 billion in state and local taxes. By leveraging these marketing funds and public-private partnerships, the Marketing Leverage Program grants will help to spur even more economic activity, funneling dollars back into our cities and towns across Virginia.”

Tourism is an instant revenue generator for Virginia. In 2017, tourism generated \$25 billion in revenue, supported nearly 232,000 jobs and provided \$1.73 billion in state and local taxes. Dollars invested in tourism are proven to provide a 7:1 return in tax revenue for Virginia, and the grant awards and matching funds provide a stimulus to localities seeking to increase tourism visitation and revenue.

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