



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE NOVEMBER 15, 2012:

Albemarle and Nelson Counties join the Artisans Center of Virginia in celebrating the successful first year of the Monticello Artisans Trail (MAT), a regional pathway that connects over 100 destinations including craft artisan studios, galleries, agri-artisan farms, markets, local restaurants, lodging, and area points of interest in the two Counties and the City of Charlottesville. The Trail was developed as a major tourism and economic development initiative for the area and to provide a significant boost to the small businesses that comprise the path.



The Trail, which was launched in October, 2011, has already generated significant visibility and exposure for the trail sites, translating into opportunities for increased visitation and economic activity for these rural area businesses. 60,000 map brochures and rack cards have been distributed at Virginia's Welcome Centers and through the 68 tourism marketing organizations located across Virginia, and the MAT website receive almost 10,000 visits per month. During its first year, 33 stories appeared in print or online in outlets across the country for a total readership/viewership of over 70,459,178.

The MAT received the Charlottesville Albemarle Convention and Visitors Bureau's 2012 Tourism Achievement Award and the trail management team hosted four hospitality familiarization day trips throughout the year taking a total of 150 travel writers and tourism/hospitality industry representative on experiential visits to trail sites.

"We are very pleased with the energy and interest that the program generated during its first year, including significant publicity that has really put the Trail front and center for visitors looking for unique, locally-focused creative travel opportunities," said Sherri Smith, Executive Director of the Artisan Center of Virginia. "Together with our partners in Albemarle and Nelson we look forward to continuing the Trail's momentum as we reach new levels of visibility and engagement with our local artisan community."

In addition to this significant exposure, the MAT program focuses on building the business skills of trail site participants. Regular Workshops in hospitality training, business management and website development have been offered to boost entrepreneurial skills and ensure quality experiences for trail visitors.

“As we focus on enhancing economic opportunities for our rural area businesses, the MAT is a shining example of promoting business activity that is consistent with our values and goals for the County,” said Lee Catlin, assistant to the County Executive for Community and Business Partnerships for Albemarle. “Bringing local artisans and their products to the attention of a larger purchasing group through the visibility of the trail is a huge win for our tourism efforts as well as for the trail sites themselves.”

“The Monticello Artisan Trail has fostered a strong partnership that has offered significant return on the investment from the County for these artisans.” said Tommy Bruguiera, Nelson County Board of Supervisor member and MAT agri-artisan. “As the first statewide trail, we are proud of the impact the Monticello Artisan Trail has had on this important industry. “



“Once Upon a Time in Artisan Virginia,” is the focus of the Artisans Center of Virginia’s (ACV) “Take Home a Piece of Virginia” call-to-action, this winter and is your invitation to experience the culture of Artisanal Virginia in a hands-on ways. The culture of Virginia artisans inspires appreciative audiences all over the world while expressing a distinctive way of life....a way of life that invokes a natural order, firmly woven into the daily fabric of an artisan’s life, embracing the familiar relationship between the acts of creating and living. Explore an Artisan Trail this season and capture a moment with Virginia artisans as they hand-craft unique works and share their stories of how they link the past, present & future, infusing “meaning” with the “making.”

**The Artisans Center of Virginia is officially registered with the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, P. O. Box 1163, Richmond, VA 23209. You can write to this Department for all relevant financial statements and procedures regarding the solicitation of contributions.**

**For more information on ACV visit [ArtisansCenterofVirginia.org](http://ArtisansCenterofVirginia.org)**

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