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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**NOMINATIONS ACCEPTED FOR DUTCHESS TOURISM AWARDS OF DISTINCTION  
Including New Category Highlighting Accessible Tourism Experiences**

POUGHKEEPSIE, NY– Dutchess Tourism, Inc. is requesting nominations from Dutchess County residents and businesses for their 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Dutchess Tourism Awards of Distinction. Awards will be presented to winners who provide exceptional offerings to visitors and contribute to a “Storied Experience” for travelers coming to Dutchess in the following categories: Arts, Culinary, Family Entertainment, History, Outdoors, and Hospitality Service. Joining these categories will be the new Accessible Hospitality Award of Distinction. This could be a hotel, restaurant, attraction or event that goes above and beyond standard ADA compliance to create accessible, welcoming experiences for travelers with disabilities. An eighth award is The Dutchess County Executive’s Award for Overall Distinction.

Dutchess County Executive Marc Molinaro said, “Since we began our ‘ThinkDIFFERENTLY’ initiative just a few years ago, we’ve changed the hearts and minds of countless residents about their friends and neighbors with disabilities – and visitors to Dutchess County have seen the difference. More than ever, local entertainment venues, destinations, hotels and eateries have answered our call to action and made inclusive accommodations to welcome guests of every ability. Dutchess County is proud to honor the example these establishments have set for our community, and we’re confident even more will ‘ThinkDIFFERENTLY’ and follow their lead.”

Nominees should be Dutchess County tourism-related businesses or organizations open to the public. The exception is for the Hospitality Service Award which is given to a single front-line customer service staff member. Applications should detail how nominees consistently innovate, grow and exceed expectations to help travelers to Dutchess have an excellent experience. Nominations are due by March 15 and past winners are not eligible. For submission information and a list of past winners, visit [DutchessTourism.com/nominations](http://DutchessTourism.com/nominations).

Three finalists in each category will be announced daily the week of March 30 through Dutchess Tourism’s social media channels. The winners will be named at The Dutchess Tourism Awards of Distinction Breakfast held at the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library & Museum’s Wallace Center, Tuesday, May 7<sup>th</sup>. For more information, sponsorship details or to purchase tickets, visit [DutchessTourism.com/tourism-business-events](http://DutchessTourism.com/tourism-business-events).

Dutchess Tourism President & CEO Mary Kay Vrba said, “We’re proud to be able to recognize the many outstanding partners who tirelessly work to positively impact our local economy, employ local people and give residents an unmatched quality of life.” Tourism provides significant economic impact to communities throughout Dutchess County and supports the livelihoods of more than 11,000 hard-working residents. In 2018, visitors spent \$642.2 million on lodging, food, shopping, and area attractions and generated \$44 million in local sales tax. Were it not for tourism, the average family in Dutchess would have to pay an additional \$743 annually to cover that tax shortfall.

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845/463-4000 • 800/445-3131 • [www.dutchesstourism.com](http://www.dutchesstourism.com)

The programs provided by this agency are partially funded by monies received from the County of Dutchess.



#### **About Dutchess Tourism**

Dutchess Tourism, Inc. is the officially designated destination marketing organization for Dutchess County and is accredited by the Destination Marketing Accreditation Program (DMAP) of Destinations International. It is an independent 501c6 non-profit organization that works to bring tourism dollars to area businesses by marketing and promoting the assets of Dutchess County to the nation and the world. The office is located at 3 Neptune Road in the Town of Poughkeepsie with 17 Tourist Information Centers located around Dutchess County. The website is [www.DutchessTourism.com](http://www.DutchessTourism.com) and they can be reached at 845-463-4000. Dutchess Tourism, Inc. is partially funded by monies received from the County of Dutchess.

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