



Virginia's Only Certified Tourism Ambassador™ program debuts in Loudoun

Contact: Jennifer Sigal
Visit Loudoun Director of Communications
sigal@visitloudoun.org 989-430-9003

LEESBURG(March 4, 2021)-Visit Loudoun has launched the internationally recognized Certified Tourism Ambassador™ program- a move that will extend the tourism organization's reach and ultimately enhance the visitor experience.

The Loudoun County Tourism Ambassador Program is a multi-faceted program that serves to increase tourism by inspiring front-line employees and volunteers to turn every visitor encounter into a positive experience. When visitors have a positive experience, they are not only more likely to return, but also share their experience with others.

"By community members sharing what they love about Loudoun, the role of tourism in our economy is elevated," Visit Loudoun President and CEO Beth Erickson said. "As a Loudoun CTA, I can share that the virtual class focuses on what makes Loudoun a welcoming destination and how to ensure that visitors have a great experience. Part customer service training and part Loudoun tourism product knowledge, it's fun and helps answer the question, 'What's there to do in Loudoun?'"

Developed by the Tourism Ambassador Institute®, the CTA program launched in 2006. Since then, more than 50,000 individuals have been certified in 18 states and Bermuda. Loudoun will be the only CTA destination in Virginia.

Visit Loudoun had a soft roll out of the program in late 2020, certifying its staff and board members, and is now opening it up to all members of the tourism industry as well as volunteers from the community. The \$45 virtual classes are held the second Wednesday of the month and cover the value of tourism, the history of Loudoun and the numerous local tourism assets. The goal is to provide the tools hospitality professionals need to answer questions, recommend Loudoun attractions and provide a seamless and welcoming experience to every visitor.

"As program facilitator, I love seeing members of our industry learn from each other as well as get inspired when they discover something new about their community," Visit Loudoun Industry & Project Coordinator Jennifer Bodamer said. "This program also creates a sense of camaraderie among participants as they become part of this unique group that is the face of Loudoun County to visitors."

Once the one-time class is complete, participants receive the official CTA designation and are encouraged to visit Loudoun attractions yearly to stay up to date on places to direct visitors. For more information or to sign up, <https://www.visitloudoun.org/cta/>

About Visit Loudoun

Visit Loudoun is the destination management organization for Loudoun, Va., known as DC's Wine Country®, located 25 miles from Washington, DC. This not-for-profit organization develops and implements programs that promote tourism and travel to Loudoun and its towns, to increase visitation and generate visitor spending. The organization showcases Virginia's culinary and heritage assets, including award-winning vineyards, horse country, scenic byways, and towns and villages steeped in history. Visit www.VisitLoudoun.org for more information.

ABOUT TAI AND CTA

The Tourism Ambassador Institute® (TAI) is the oversight entity for the Certified Tourism Ambassador™ industry-recognized certification program. Since the program's inception in 2006, over 50,000 individuals have been certified as CTAs in 18 U.S. states and Bermuda, involving over 100 CVBs.

The institute, founded by industry veteran Mickey Schaefer, FASAE, CAE, CTA, customizes the CTA program for each destination through research and collaboration with the local CVB Accredited Provider and key stakeholders. Community engagement and alignment focuses businesses on enhancing the experience for visitors and residents; with the hospitality sector, local government, economic development, and more working together. Programs range in size from Anaheim, CA to Casper, WY.

To continue moving the industry forward, Schaefer also founded The EXPERIENCE Institute® (TEI) to help destinations measure and shape the total visitor experience against the industry's first-ever consumer-driven standards developed by TEI. The Experience Dedicated® Destination (EDD) program brings the standards to life through ongoing mobile surveys and community alignment to the power of tourism.