



## MEDIA RELEASE

# Virginia Green Travel Alliance Announces Winners of the **2023 Virginia Green Travel Star Awards** at the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Virginia Green Travel Conference

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – March 23, 2023.

RICHMOND, VA. – The Virginia Green Travel Alliance is pleased to announce the winners of the 2023 *Virginia Green Travel Star & Leader Awards*. These awards are presented annually to Virginia’s greenest tourism operators and partners for their outstanding commitments to sustainability and contributions to green tourism in Virginia. The awards were presented in conjunction with the [Virginia Green Travel Conference & Awards](#) that was held on March 21 & 22, 2023 at the Virginia Beach Convention Center.

This year, ten (10) Virginia tourism operations were chosen to receive the Virginia Green program’s highest award, the *Virginia Green Travel Star Award*. Another ten (10) tourism businesses were recognized with the *Virginia Green Travel Leader Award* for their continued commitments to environmental stewardship; and three (3) individuals received the *Green Team All-Star Award* for their efforts to lead their organizations’ green program efforts. Two (2) additional individuals received awards for their *Lifetime Achievements & Support* of the Virginia Green Travel program. Finally, all of the winners competed in the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Virginia Green Travel *People’s Choice Awards* on social media, and the top 5 are listed below. The awards were presented on March 21st during the conference reception, co-hosted by Virginia Tourism Corporation’s Rita McClenny and Joel Rubin of Joel Rubin Communications and the [WINDSdays](#) project in Virginia Beach.

“Our Virginia Green Travel Partners are conserving natural resources, engaging customers, and working to increase sustainable tourism business in Virginia. The Virginia Green Travel Certification program works to support and promote those businesses that are committed to reducing the environmental impacts of their operations,” says Tom Griffin, the Executive Director of the Virginia Green Travel Alliance. “The Virginia Green Travel Star Awards recognizes the ‘greenest’ businesses and individuals that have demonstrated outstanding commitments to the environment in the past year. We are proud to recognize these businesses as they are true partners in our efforts to promote sustainable tourism in Virginia!”

The conference featured six technical workshops, plenary discussion panels, and a *Green Tourism Business Expo* that was open to the public. The Virginia Green Travel Alliance partnered with Keep Virginia Beautiful for this year’s conference in honor of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of that organization.

Keynote speakers included the President/CEO of Keep America Beautiful Jennifer Lawson and Erik Hansen of the US Travel Association.

The Virginia Green Travel program is run through a partnership between the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, the Virginia Tourism Corporation, Virginia State Parks, the Virginia Restaurant, Lodging & Travel Association, and the Virginia Green Travel Alliance. The program encourages green practices in all sectors of Virginia's tourism industry. More than 1,200 businesses and partner organizations have certified their green commitments through the Virginia Green Travel program.

**The 2023 Virginia Green Travel Star Award winners are:**

- Green Attraction of the Year Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center, VA Beach
- Green Brewery of the Year Elation Brewing, Norfolk
- Green Eco Tour of the Year The Nature Bus, Virginia Beach
- Green Caterer of the Year Centerplate-SodexoLive! at the VA Beach Convention Center
- Green Dining Services of the Year JMU Dining Services, Harrisonburg
- Green Supplier of the Year Eco Maniac Company, Virginia Beach
- Most Innovative Green Projects Virginia Beach Convention Center's Green Event Incentives Initiative
- Most Innovative Green Projects Shored Up LLC's Hampton Oyster Paddles & Shellabration
- Most Innovative Green Projects CCC Cabin Restorations at Douthat State Park
- Most Innovative Green Projects Virginia Living Museum's Lakeside Litter Cleanup

**The 2023 Virginia Green Travel Leader Award winners are:**

- Stable Craft Brewing, Waynesboro
- Greater Richmond Convention Center
- Hilton Richmond Downtown
- Oak Grove B&B, South Boston
- RVA Environmental Film Festival, Richmond
- Capital Region Airport Commission, Richmond
- Storybook Events, Henrico
- full circle catering, Lexington
- Birdsong Pleasure Garden, Luray
- Shadow Mountain Escape, Luray

**The 2023 Green Team All-Star Award winners are:**

- Kimberlee Dobbins, Virginia Beach Convention Center
- Erick Pinzon, Electrified Marina, Norfolk
- Meggan Saul, Holliday Lake State Park

**Life-Time Achievement & Support:**

- Virginia Green Stellar Supporter Award: Katie Register, Clean Virginia Waterway of Longwood University
- Industry Game Changer Award: John Cario, Hilton Richmond Downtown

**People's Choice Award Winners:**

- 1<sup>st</sup> place: Eco Maniac Company
- 2<sup>nd</sup> place: Shadow Mountain Escape

- 3<sup>rd</sup> place: Birdsong Pleasure Garden
- 4<sup>th</sup> place: Storybook Events
- 5<sup>th</sup> place: Shored Up, LLC

If you would like more information about the awards, please contact Tom Griffin of the Virginia Green Travel Alliance at (804) 986-9119 or [Virginiagreenta@gmail.com](mailto:Virginiagreenta@gmail.com).

### Links & Resources

More about the conference can be found at [www.VAGreenTravelConference.com](http://www.VAGreenTravelConference.com). Members of the news media are invited to attend the conference and awards. If you would like to attend or for more information, please contact the Virginia Green Travel Alliance at (804) 986-9119 or [VirginiaGreenTA@gmail.com](mailto:VirginiaGreenTA@gmail.com).

- The Virginia Tourism Corporation promotes the certified Virginia Green program partners at [www.virginia.org/green-travel](http://www.virginia.org/green-travel) and encourages visitors to plan their green vacations in Virginia.
- The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality provides technical resources and oversight of the certification process -- [www.deq.virginia.gov/get-involved/pollution-prevention/virginia-green](http://www.deq.virginia.gov/get-involved/pollution-prevention/virginia-green)
- The Virginia Green Travel Alliance is the non-profit organization that administers the Virginia Green certification program and supports partner outreach and educational opportunities – [www.VirginiaGreen.net](http://www.VirginiaGreen.net).
- All 41 [Virginia State Parks](#) are certified in the Virginia Green Travel program, and VSP and Virginia Green Travel are working to “co-brand” and promote sustainable tourism opportunities in all regions of the Commonwealth.
- [Virginia Restaurant, Lodging & Travel Association](#) assists in promotion and development of educational opportunities for the tourism industry.
- The [Virginia Green Travel Alliance](#) is the 501c3 non-profit organization created to administer the Virginia Green Travel Certification program and promote certified partner businesses.
- [10th Annual Virginia Green Travel Conference & Travel Star Awards](#).