

Newport News, Smithfield, and Hampton Receive a \$5,000 Tourism Marketing Grant from the Virginia Tourism Corporation

Newport News, VA, March 22, 2019 – Newport News, Smithfield and Hampton recently received \$5,000 from the Marketing Leverage Program, a grant funded by the Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC). The money will be used to promote the *Toast the Coast: Beer, Wine, & Shine Trail* and a new sub-trail called *3 Barrels 3 Cities*.

The sub-trail, which is currently in development, will be launched this summer. Similar in concept to the hugely popular *4 Taps 4 Cities* trail, participants in *3 Barrels 3 Cities* will be asked to visit one distillery in Newport News, Hampton, and Smithfield. After getting their *Toast the Coast* pocket guides stamped in each city, participants can then bring their stamped pocket guides to one of the three cities' visitor centers to receive free *Toast the Coast* merchandise.

Newport News Tourism took the lead in this partnership with Smithfield & Isle of Wight Tourism and the Hampton Convention & Visitor Bureau. A minimum of three entities must partner financially to apply. The partnership ultimately received half of the \$10,000 in leverage funds initially requested; therefore, the partners will supply matching funds in the amount of \$5,000 to have a total budget of \$10,000 for the program.

The *Toast the Coast: Beer, Wine, and Shine Trail* encompasses a vast region of Coastal Virginia, an area that stretches from New Kent County to the Virginia Beach Oceanfront – a distance of about 92 miles that includes more than three dozen breweries, wineries and distilleries.

3 Barrels 3 Cities is being developed as a way to introduce craft beverage enthusiasts to a section of the trail, highlighting the new distilleries in Newport News, Hampton, and Smithfield. By serving as a convenient and manageable resource for visitors, it is hoped that *3 Barrels 3 Cities* will increase visitation to the area, not to mention contribute to additional spending in our localities.

VTC Marketing grants are designed to help local tourism offices stimulate new initiatives through partnerships by leveraging limited marketing dollars, resulting in increased visitor spending. Research has shown that every VTC dollar invested in grants resulted in \$16 of direct visitor spending and that campaigns receiving grants increased visitation by 15 percent. In total VTC awarded more than \$625,000 for 33 tourism marketing projects across the state.

Lucky for us that *3 Barrels 3 Cities* is an activity that is not only appealing to tourists, but it offers a nice experience for locals, too. This regional collaboration increases spending in our localities, which helps increase tax revenue and keeps people employed in the craft-beverage industry. No matter what form it comes in, locally produced spirits give an area a sense of regional identity and give residents a sense of pride.

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