2021 Newport News Tourism Professional of the Year Named
~ Winner Announced at Tourism Appreciation Breakfast on May 3 ~

Newport News, VA, May 9, 2022 – Juanita Conway, Historic Site Assistant with Newport News Historic Services, was recently named the 2021 “Gregory Cherry Tourism Professional of the Year.” Newport News Mayor McKinley Price presented Conway with the award May 3 at a Tourism Appreciation Breakfast at Kiln Creek Golf Club & Resort. The breakfast was held jointly by Newport News Tourism and the Newport News Hospitality Association in celebration of National Travel & Tourism Week.

Conway has worked with the City of Newport News for 25 years, logging hundreds of hours as a volunteer starting in 1997 while she worked full-time as a teacher. After retiring from her 30-year teaching career, Conway was hired to work at Lee Hall Mansion, where she leads school programs, bus tours, and summer camps.

It was at Lee Hall Mansion that Conway’s supervisor, Laura Willoughby, overheard a guest asking Conway about the role of women in Lee Hall’s history. Conway gave such a detailed answer that it not only described the women of the mansion but it also related their lives to the major women’s issues of the time. That response was the inspiration behind the themed tours created this year for Women’s History Month.

In her nomination letter, Laura Willoughby wrote that Conway “possesses the knowledge and flexibility to personalize her tours according to the interests of each guest.” In living-history programs, Conway has portrayed Mrs. Lee of Lee Hall Mansion, along with other characters, prompting Willoughby to say that Conway’s “charm and wit educate and entertain our visitors by transporting our guests back in time!”

Beyond her regular duties, Conway “works tirelessly decorating Lee Hall Mansion at Christmastime” and has “donated craft supplies, cut greenery, arranged decorations, and hung ornaments with care.” Willoughby concluded her nomination by saying, “Christmas at Lee Hall simply would not be the same without her hard work and diligence.”

The Gregory Cherry Tourism Professional of the Year Award is given annually in May to a Newport News hospitality industry employee who demonstrates superior customer service while also promoting travel and tourism in the city. It was named in memory of Gregory Cherry, a former travel counselor at the Newport News Visitor Center and owner of the James A. Fields House, who died in 2007.

For additional information about the award, contact Janie Tross, Newport News Visitor Center Manager, at 757-886-7777 or by e-mail at trossjm@nnva.gov.

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Photo: Conway (middle) poses with Newport News Mayor McKinley Price (left) and Vice Mayor Saundra Cherry (right).