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Virginia Celebrates 410th Anniversary of the Birth of American Cuisine with Launch of New Culinary Destination Experiences in the State's Coast Region

Gold Key | PHR Receives Virginia Tourism Corporation Grant for Tourism Marketing

(April 26, 2017) Virginia Beach, VA - The earliest record of dining by early American colonists occurred on April 27, 1607, in Cape Henry in Virginia Beach. On that day Captain Christopher Newport and 104 Virginia Company colonists, feasted upon an oyster roast abandoned by a local tribe of Native Americans. The history of that uniquely American culinary moment—proudly owned by Virginia—will be included in a new tourism initiative.

The **Coastal Virginia: The Birthplace of American Cuisine** program was established as part of the Virginia Tourism Corporation Marketing Leverage Program.

“The Marketing Leverage Grant program is designed to spur job creation, economic development, and visitor spending through new or enhanced tourism product,” said Governor McAuliffe. “These grants are proven to increase visitation by creating marketing partnerships and effective marketing programs.”

Gold Key | PHR is partnering with Taste Virginia and Patrick Evans-Hylton, chef, food writer and Culinary Ambassador for the State of Virginia, to supply matching funds for the project. Coastal Virginia: The Birthplace of American Cuisine will offer overnight visitors to Coastal Virginia world-class culinary destination experiences.

“Virginia has a rich history in the development of American cuisine. From its seafood rich waters to the early introduction of bourbon, the Old Dominion should always be known as the place for food lovers,” said Evans-Hylton.

Coastal Virginia: The Birthplace of American Cuisine is designed to further develop culinary tourism in the region and establish Coastal Virginia as a premiere, world-class culinary destination, with the primary goal to attract greater numbers of culinary travelers and their increased travel spending.

The cornerstones of this program are four culinary tours that will each be lead by Evans-Hylton:

- **Bivalves and More Eats + Drinks on the Virginia Oyster Trail:** Take a delicious tour along the official Virginia Oyster Trail, with stops in scenic Virginia Beach and along the stunning Eastern Shore to get a taste of oysters, other seafood and more of Coastal Virginia's Culinary Calling Cards. *Dates: June 25, August 22, and October 22*
- **Virginia Beach is for Eats + Drinks Lovers:** Come explore the beautiful resort city of Virginia Beach, and all the delicious offerings here. We'll enjoy a welcoming cocktail high above the ocean to view the site of the First Landing - and first taste of roasted oysters in what would become English speaking America, and make stops along the way to enjoy other seafood and more delicious dishes

that epitomize Coastal Virginia Cuisines. *Dates: May 21, June 21, July 19, 23, August 16, September 13, 17, October 18, November 8, 12, and December 13*

- **Out on the Town: Eats + Drinks in Norfolk:** One of the region's first eating places, Redwood Ordinary, opened in Norfolk in 1693, and amazing dishes highlighting Coastal Virginia's culinary calling cards have been enjoyed since. Take a tour through the city, including getting a view (and a locally crafted beer) high above the Norfolk skyline. We'll sample oysters and other seafood, barbecue, ham biscuits and more. *Dates: May 25, June 25, 29, July 27, 30, August 24, 27, September 21, 24, October 26, 29, November 16, 19, and December 14*
- **Capital Assets: 300 Years of Eats + Drinks in Williamsburg:** For centuries, Williamsburg has been an influential city in American history; that translates not just to culture and politics, but to food, too. Come explore this historic town, from rolling vineyards to brick-lined streets, and get a taste of our region's Culinary Calling Cards. *Dates: May 23, June 27, July 25, August 22, September 19, October 24, November 14, and December 12*

Additional information about the tours is available at www.tastecoastalva.com.

ABOUT GOLD KEY | PHR HOTELS AND RESORTS

Gold Key | PHR was founded in 1986 by current CEO Bruce L. Thompson in Virginia Beach, Virginia as a modest hospitality management company. Today with \$500 Million in asset value and \$170 Million in annual revenue. Gold Key | PHR boasts over 1,300 keys under the Ramada, Hilton and Marriott flags, multiple award-winning restaurants and is the state's largest hospitality employer. Adding to Gold Key | PHR's list of noteworthy hospitality brands is the newly opened hotel, conference center, and dining destination, Hilton Norfolk THE MAIN, as well as the highly anticipated project, The Cavalier Hotel, Virginia's first Marriott Autograph Collection Hotel slated for completion in 2017. Gold Key | PHR is also active in the development of commercial and luxury residential projects in the mid-Atlantic region.

ABOUT PATRICK EVANS-HYLTON & VIRGINIA EATS + DRINKS MAGAZINE

Patrick Evans-Hylton is a Johnson & Wales-trained chef, and an award-winning food journalist, covering tasty trends since 1995 in print, broadcast and electronic media. He is publisher of Virginia Eats + Drinks Magazine.

Virginia Eats + Drinks Magazine, a statewide publication, is dedicated to showcasing the commonwealth, all the wonderful things to eat and drink, and all the incredible people that make it happen.

Evans-Hylton is a cookbook author (*Popcorn, Dishing Up Virginia, Nuts*), food historian, culinary advisor for the state of Virginia and member the prestigious James Beard Awards and the International Association of Culinary Professionals. He runs a cooking and wine school in Coastal Virginia, and teaches a number of food media-related classes nationwide.

Evans-Hylton cooks and writes in his Chesapeake Bay kitchen in Virginia Beach.

ABOUT TASTE VIRGINIA

Founders of Taste Virginia, Rex and Lisa Hamaker have lived in Virginia their entire lives, both tracing their ancestors to some of the first English Colonists in Virginia. As life-long locals, they wanted to create an experience for locals and tourists alike to show people the best food, brews and vines Virginia has to offer.

Rex and Lisa are heavily involved in the local food movement through their own nonprofit, [Hunger for Health](#), as well as serving on the boards of local nonprofits, [Buy Fresh Buy Local](#) Hampton Roads and the

[Virginia Oyster Trail](#). They are also members of the Beekeeper's Guild of Southeastern Virginia, Rex is a Virginia Beach Volunteer Master Gardener, and Lisa often writes about and presents their knowledge base through local publications, meetings and conferences.