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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**CHARLOTTESVILLE AND ALBEMARLE COUNTY:  
A FESTIVE & FUN WONDERLAND TO VISIT DURING THE HOLIDAYS**

The holiday season is a wonderful time to visit the Charlottesville area with a plethora of activities including special evening tours at Monticello and Highland, illumination events, and First Night Virginia

**CHARLOTTESVILLE**, Va. (November 16, 2017) – The [Charlottesville Albemarle Convention & Visitors Bureau](#) (CACVB) invites everyone to consider the Charlottesville, Virginia area for a festive and entertaining holiday season.

The holiday fun starts off with several terrific Thanksgiving dinner options at various hotels and inns located throughout the region. The Charlottesville area has received numerous accolades for its culinary scene and has even been proclaimed as the “**locavore capital of the world**” by *Forbes Magazine*. Experience fine holiday dining, cozy ambiance, and luxurious accommodations at properties such as [The Clifton Inn](#), [Keswick Hall](#), and the [Boar's Head Inn](#), all of which offer up Thanksgiving feasts to hungry visitors and locals alike. Keeping in line with the destination's rich culinary history and farm-to-table practices dating back to the days of Thomas Jefferson, ingredients for these meals are sourced locally whenever possible, which will help to make these holiday dining experiences truly unforgettable.

Lovers of holiday lights will not want to miss two popular annual events taking place in the Charlottesville area. On **November 30<sup>th</sup>** from 7:00 – 10:00 p.m., the University of Virginia will host its 17<sup>th</sup> annual **Lighting of the Lawn** event. This enchanting evening draws thousands every year to Thomas Jefferson's historic university, all in anticipation of the magical moment when the switch is flipped and The Lawn, Rotunda and all of the historic buildings making up the Academical Village begin to glow from the light of thousands of LED bulbs. The event wraps up with an orchestrated light show coordinated to music.

Taking place the very next day on **December 1<sup>st</sup>** on Charlottesville's historic pedestrian Downtown Mall is the 20<sup>th</sup> annual **Grand Illumination** event. The Grand Illumination is a holiday tradition among visitors and locals and draws hundreds of people each year to Central Place on the Downtown Mall to watch as the beautiful decorated tree begins to sparkle with more than 20,000 LED bulbs. The festivities begin at 5:30 p.m., with the tree lighting set to take place at 8:00 p.m. This family-friendly event is free and will also feature special musical performances, kids' crafts, a visit from Santa Claus, and much more. The fun will continue with a free showing of *A Christmas Story* at 8:30 p.m. at the historic **Paramount Theater**. More information about the Grand Illumination event can be found at <http://www.charlottesville.org/community/charlottesville-s-grand-illumination>.

The Charlottesville area will once again be host to two festive holiday parades this season. The [Barracks Road Annual Holiday Parade](#) will take place on **Saturday, December 2<sup>nd</sup>** beginning at 9:30 a.m. at the Barracks Road Shopping Center. This parade route, which runs the length of the shopping center, features Santa Claus, colorful floats, costumed characters, impressive marching bands, horse-drawn carriages, and various community members. The following week, the **Wells Fargo Holiday Heritage Parade** will take place on the historic pedestrian Downtown Mall on **Saturday, December 9<sup>th</sup>** starting at 10:00 a.m. This parade is comprised of a series of decorated golf carts, all proceeding down one of the longest pedestrian malls in the country. In addition to colorful floats, there will be holiday music, marching bands, animals, Santa Claus, and even the Grinch!

The holidays are an amazing time to rediscover history in an interesting and unique way at several of the presidential homes located in the Charlottesville area. [Thomas Jefferson's Monticello](#) will be offering an array of special events during the holiday season, including wreath-making workshops, a free holiday open house, the 6<sup>th</sup> annual Monticello Holiday Classic 5K and Deck the Halls Kids Dash, holiday evening tours of the home which include the iconic Dome Room, and a children's woodland ornament workshop. For more details about holiday events at Monticello, visit [www.monticello.org](http://www.monticello.org).

[James Monroe's Highland](#) will be opening its doors to special evening tours on four dates in December, giving guests a unique glimpse into this presidential home. Visitors will be able to take part in cooking demonstrations on open hearths to create several different Monroe-era desserts, all enjoyed by candlelight. Guests will then receive a guided visit of the presidential guest house and museum spaces, which will be decorated for the holidays. For more information about holiday events at Highland, visit [www.highland.org](http://www.highland.org).

Located a short and scenic half-hour drive northeast of Charlottesville is James Madison's former home of Montpelier, which will also be offering a special holiday-themed event. A free holiday open house will take place on **December 2<sup>nd</sup>** from 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., giving guests the opportunity to tour the Madisons' home, decorated according to 19<sup>th</sup>-century customs, and visit with James and Dolley Madison. At the David M. Rubenstein Visitor Center, guests can enjoy visits with Santa, hands-on history activities, and delicious food offerings. For more details about holiday events at Montpelier, visit [www.montpelier.org](http://www.montpelier.org).

Located at the heart of Charlottesville's historic Downtown Mall, the historic [Paramount Theater](#) has several exciting and festive performances lined up for the holidays! The hilarious holiday comedy *Elf* will be shown on **December 10<sup>th</sup>**, followed by performances of Moscow Ballet's *Great Russian Nutcracker* on **December 11<sup>th</sup>** and **December 12<sup>th</sup>**. The holiday fun continues as the Oratorio Society of Virginia Presents: *Christmas at the Paramount* on **December 16<sup>th</sup>** and then country musicians Phil Vassar and Kellie Pickler take the stage on **December 23<sup>rd</sup>** during a live event featuring their new original holiday single "*The Naughty List*!" For more information on all of the shows and performances taking place at the Paramount Theater this holiday season, visit [www.theparamount.net](http://www.theparamount.net).

The year 2018 will start with a bang on the Downtown Mall as [First Night Virginia](#) celebrations take center stage for the 36<sup>th</sup> year in a row. First Night Virginia is one of the oldest First Night events in the nation and is a terrific and family-friendly way to usher in the New Year. Families and visitors will be treated to a plethora of entertainment acts, live music, magicians, face painting and more, plus a laser light show and ball drop at the stroke of midnight! For more information on this iconic New Year's Eve celebration, visit [www.firstnightva.org](http://www.firstnightva.org).

The holiday shopping season has arrived and there are plenty of options for picking the perfect holiday gift in Charlottesville & Albemarle County. The Downtown Mall offers dozens of boutique shops and

stores, selling a wide variety of locally-made products. [The Holiday Market](#), an extension of the weekly City market, continues from **November 25<sup>th</sup> until December 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2017** on Saturdays from 8:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. offering a variety of unique gifts, decorations, food, and crafts made by local farmers, artists and bakers. Plus, parking will be free in the Market Street Parking Garage on weekends from **November 17<sup>th</sup> – January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018**. Finally, a trip to the Crozet Artisan Depot in Crozet will give shoppers a wide selection of arts and crafts made by local artisans from Central Virginia. To learn more about the Crozet Artisan Depot, visit [www.crozetartisandepot.com](http://www.crozetartisandepot.com). The destination is also home to a variety of shopping centers, including [Barracks Road Shopping Center](#), [The Shops at Stonefield](#), and [Fashion Square Mall](#).

Even though the days are shorter and the weather is cooler in the winter months, it is still business as usual in Charlottesville & Albemarle County. Numerous area hotels and attractions offer discounted rates during this time of year as an incentive for tourists to visit the destination without all of the crowds often found during busier times of year. The Charlottesville area also features more than 30 wineries, breweries, and cideries, many of which have large roaring fireplaces, making for a perfect way to warm up on a cold winter day. For more information about special packages and offerings, go to [www.visitcharlottesville.org/packages](http://www.visitcharlottesville.org/packages).

#### **About the Charlottesville Albemarle Convention & Visitors Bureau (CACVB):**

In addition to serving as the global resource for marketing the tourism assets of [Charlottesville](#) and [Albemarle County](#), Virginia, through [www.visitcharlottesville.org](http://www.visitcharlottesville.org), the CACVB assists tour operators, meeting planners, reunions and other groups in planning visits to the destination. CACVB's mission is "to enhance the economic prosperity of City and County by promoting, selling and marketing the City of Charlottesville and County of Albemarle, as a destination, in pursuit of the meetings and tourism markets." CACVB operates the [Downtown Visitor Center \(610 E Main St\)](#) which is open daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and a second visitor center, the [Albemarle Tourism and Adventure Center](#) in downtown Crozet ([5791 Three Notch'd Rd](#)) at the historic train depot; it is open Wednesday - Saturday 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. and Sunday Noon - 5:00 p.m. The CACVB also provides a touch-screen kiosk at Monticello's Thomas Jefferson Visitor Center. The official website of the CACVB is [www.visitcharlottesville.org](http://www.visitcharlottesville.org). In addition, the organization manages powerful social media channels; ExperienceCharlottesville on Facebook, @VisitCVille on Twitter, CVilleVA on Pinterest, and @CharlottesvilleVA on Instagram and Vimeo.

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