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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **DISCOVER ALBANY TO RECOGNIZE DUTCH APPLE CRUISES WITH PRESTIGIOUS HOSPITALITY EXCELLENCE AWARD**

*Award recognition and 2019 grant recipients to be announced at Discover Albany's Annual Celebration of Hospitality Excellence on Feb. 27*

ALBANY, N.Y. (Feb 25, 2020) – Discover Albany, Albany County's convention and visitors bureau, will host its Annual Celebration of Hospitality Excellence at the Desmond Hotel Albany in Colonie on Thursday, Feb. 27. The event will also serve as the bureau's annual meeting.

Dutch Apple Cruises & Tours will be recognized as this year's recipient of the Professor Anthony J. Strianese Hospitality Excellence Award. Additionally, Discover Albany will announce the recipients of the 2019 Michele L. Vennard Hospitality Grant, with a combined total of \$57,400 distributed among 20 different organizations.

"Discover Albany is thrilled to be able to honor Dutch Apple Cruises & Tours with the "Toby" Award. There have been many hospitality-related businesses that have come and gone in the Capital Region, but Dutch Apple Cruises has continued to be a pillar in our community for nearly 35 years," said Jill Delaney, President and CEO of Discover Albany. "The team at Dutch Apple Cruises have gone above and beyond to grow with the demand for their tour and to teach each of its passengers about the Hudson River, Albany and our region's History."

The Professor Anthony J. Strianese Hospitality Excellence Award, also referred to as "The Toby," is named after the late Professor Strianese, an instructor and chair of SUNY Schenectady's School of Hotel, Culinary Arts, and Tourism and co-author of several hospitality textbooks. The award gives special recognition to travel business as an integral part of this region's economy. While there are many regional awards, The Toby is devoted solely to highlighting those who represent the peak of planning, execution, and professionalism within the travel industry. This award will continue to honor travel and hospitality entities for their leaders who display the core ideals of the industry and the role they play in our regional economy.

For over 30 years, Dutch Apple Cruises & Tours have offered sightseeing cruises on the Hudson River and serve as a business or leisure private event venue in Albany. Owners Melissa and Anthony Renna have over a decade of experience as event planners. They often go beyond their roles to help guests explore and experience Albany after their time on the Dutch Apple with suggestions on hotels, dining options, attractions, team-building opportunities, and more.



Scheduled speakers include Carm Basile, CEO of Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA), Mark Dorr, president of New York State Hospitality & Tourism Association (NYSH&TA) and Tony Iadicicco, executive director of Albany Center Gallery.

The Michele L. Vennard Hospitality grants are given in partnership with the Community Foundation for the Greater Capital Region to organizations creating programs combining art & tourism. Named after the former longtime president and CEO of Discover Albany, recipients are chosen by the Discover Albany board of directors. The grant fund, managed by the Community Foundation for the Greater Capital Region, supports programs that aid in building and sustaining Albany County tourism destinations, attractions, events and tourism-related activities. The grants encourage collaboration between nonprofit organizations, community groups and hospitality businesses to further extend the economic impact of tourism and business.

"We are delighted to present \$57,400 in grants to 20 organizations throughout Albany County to help fund programs and initiatives to grow visitation and extend the economic impact of tourism and business in our region," said Leola Edelin, chair of the Discover Albany board of directors. "The Michele L. Vennard Hospitality Grant Program has awarded more than \$360,000 in the last five years, which has gone toward creating programs and tourist-attracting events in our community."

Grant recipients include the following:

- Albany Institute of History and Art for the marketing and promotion of the "Recycled & Refashioned: The Art of Ruby Silvius" exhibition
- University at Albany Foundation on behalf of the New York State Writers Institute for the Albany Film Festival
- Albany Center Gallery for Creative Placemaking in Albany, NY: Murals, Pop-up Exhibits and other Public Art

For more information about the Annual Celebration of Hospitality Excellence or for tickets, please visit [albany.org/partners/hospitality-excellence-celebration](http://albany.org/partners/hospitality-excellence-celebration).

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**About Discover Albany.** *The Albany County Convention & Visitors Bureau, Inc. was established in 1976 to promote the civic and commercial progress of the community through increased development of conventions and tourism. Today, the organization is known as Discover Albany. Discover Albany currently represents more than 300 member businesses and assists each year in hundreds of regional meetings. Discover Albany also operates the Discover Albany Visitors Center, Henry Hudson Planetarium, and the Albany International Airport Information Center. The Albany County Convention and Visitors Bureau Foundation was established in 1993 to provide educational opportunities and work with other organizations to secure grants and funding to advance regional travel and tourism projects. For more information, call 518-434-1217 or 800-258-3582 or visit [www.albany.org](http://www.albany.org).*

