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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contact: Anna Weltz

aweltz@laurelhighlands.org

724-238-5661, ext. 108 (Office)

**Changes to 2016 Fayette County Tourism Grant Program Announced
by the Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau**

*Coffee Chat offered to explain changes in criteria and application process for tourism grant funds.*

**LAUREL HIGHLANDS, PA.,** (January 11, 2016) – The Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau (LHVB) will host a Coffee Chat to review changes to the 2016 Fayette County Tourism Grant Program on Wednesday, January 20. The Question and Answer session will be held 9-10:30 a.m., at the Park Inn by Radisson in Uniontown, with registration beginning at 8:30 a.m., in the Appalachian Ridge Room. The new criteria and 2016 applications will be available.

“I encourage any tourism business or organization who is considering applying to attend. We have streamlined the process and will review the new application, changes in guidelines, and the new forms that will be required,” said LHVB President and CEO, Reneé Seifert.

The annual tourism grant program is administered by the Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau – the county’s official destination marketing organization and the Fayette County Commissioners. Since the program’s inception, $3.5 million has been awarded to tourism-related entities throughout the county. In December, the Fayette County Commissioners voted unanimously to expand grant eligibility to for-profit tourism-related businesses.

Tourism is big business for Fayette County. According to the Pennsylvania Tourism Office’s most recent Annual Economic Impact Travel Report (visitpa.com), travelers spent more than $1.8 billion in the Laurel Highlands region in 2013. The region had the second highest share of travelers’ dollars going towards lodging and food and beverage costs among the state’s 11 tourism regions. Fayette County generated more than $660 million in visitor spending along with 5,818 jobs in the tourism sector.

The Coffee Chat is FREE. Kindly RSVP to Katie Showalter at 724-238-5661, extension 101 or kshowalter@laurelhighlands.org by January 18.

For more information about the 2016 Fayette County Tourism Grant Program, contact Reneé Seifert at 724-238-5661, extension 105 or rseifert@laurelhighlands.org. Criteria and applications will also be available online after January 22 at [www.laurelhighlands.org/grant](http://www.laurelhighlands.org/grant).

**About the Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau:**

The Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau is a destination marketing organization dedicated to promoting Fayette, Somerset and Westmoreland counties in Pennsylvania. Established in 1958, the LHVB implements year-round seasonal marketing campaigns throughout the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic to enhance awareness of the Laurel Highlands as a travel destination, which increases overnight stays, generates jobs and contributes to the economic growth and quality of life for the region.

The visitors bureau and its partners influence thousands of decision-makers and millions of visitors to choose the Laurel Highlands through direct sales, marketing, public relations, branding and visitor services. Destinations within the area include three architectural masterpieces by Frank Lloyd Wright – Fallingwater ®, Kentuck Knob and Duncan House; Seven Springs Mountain Resort, Nemacolin Woodlands Resort, the Flight 93 National Memorial, Idlewild and Soak Zone, whitewater rafting at Ohiopyle State Park and so much more.

Located within 200 miles of the major metropolitan areas of Pittsburgh, Baltimore, Cleveland and Washington D.C., the Laurel Highlands can be easily accessed from exits 67, 75, 91 and 110 of the Pennsylvania Turnpike.

To discover all that the Laurel Highlands has to offer, please call (724) 238-5661 or visit [www.laurelhighlands.org](http://www.laurelhighlands.org), [www.facebook.com/laurelhighlandsPA](http://www.facebook.com/laurelhighlandsPA) and [www.twitter.com/laurelhighlands](http://www.twitter.com/laurelhighlands).

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