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News

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**Virginia Beach Convention Center Receives First Virginia Green
Convention Center Certification**

(Virginia Beach, Va.) - The Virginia Beach Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) announces that the Virginia Beach Convention Center (VBCC) is now a participant in *Virginia Green*, the Commonwealth's new campaign to promote environmentally-friendly practices in all aspects of the Virginia tourism and hospitality industry. This certification marks the VBCC as the first convention center in Virginia to meet the program's "Core Activities" for Convention Centers, which include recycling, minimized use of styrofoam/disposables, water efficiency, energy efficiency and supporting green conferences and events.

"We are excited about the multitude of opportunities before us which will make us more environmentally responsible. By conserving energy, reducing waste, and utilizing renewable resources, we are better able to serve our community and meeting planners," stated James B. Ricketts, Director of the Virginia Beach CVB. "The Convention Center's commitment to the environment is a well sought after amenity by meeting planners looking to book their conventions. Recent trends in the tourism and hospitality industry indicate that clients are more interested in doing business with environmentally conscious organizations."

The VBCC's sustainability initiatives began during the planning and design stages. Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, LLP (SOM), the building's architects, in conjunction with their local partner, Norfolk-based Clark Nexsen, had the foresight to incorporate renewable resources into the building including elements such as the Cumaru wood

for floors, meeting suite veneers and outdoor decks. The building design also integrates an energy efficient glass system that limits ultra violet (UV) light penetration and solar energy in the large pre-function spaces.

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"SOM's approach to sustainability and green design has been honed over 50 years and the Virginia Beach Convention Center typifies our holistic design approach for all building systems and materials," commented George Efstathiou, Managing Partner with SOM.

Chris Stone, President, Clark Nexsen added, "As engineers, our goal is to provide an energy efficient building envelope and to provide high efficiency, low power usage equipment that will enable the Convention Center owners to save on utility costs which translate into lower carbon emissions into the atmosphere."

The VBCC, which hosted nearly 400 community events, conventions and consumer shows last fiscal year, is hosting the North American Association for Environmental Education's (NAAEE) annual meeting in November, which is estimated to bring in nearly 2,000 delegates to the area. "NAAEE also played a substantial part in encouraging the VBCC to look at things from a different perspective and pursue additional sustainability initiatives," stated Courtney Dyer, VBCC general manager. "Our organization looks to work with leaders in the conference field that support the green agenda we bring to the table. It has been a pleasure working with Mr. Dyer and the VBCC staff," said Brian A. Day, NAAEE Executive Director.

The VBCC's commitment to being environmentally responsible is conveyed throughout several departments including operations, housekeeping, food and beverage, landscaping, maintenance and administration. The building has an active recycling program through Tidewater Fibre Corporation (TFC) for paper, plastic, aluminum and cardboard. Items are collected in pre-function spaces, offices, meeting rooms and all back of house spaces. Co-mingled materials are compacted and transported to TFC's off-site sorting facility. The building has begun the process of using recycled paper for select promotional materials.

State-of-the art lighting and HVAC systems are programmed based on the event schedules to minimize usage during non-peak times and to conserve energy and permit facility staff to turn heating, air conditioning and lighting on and off at the touch of a keyboard. Many

lights have been switched from incandescent lamps to more energy efficient compact fluorescent lighting. Further energy conservation is derived from motion sensors that turn off lighting when no motion is detected after a specified period of time. The 50-acre site is landscaped with over 2,000 trees and shrubs and the automated irrigation system measures rain accumulation and regulates irrigation demand. Further, storm water is retained on site and mitigates solid surfaces of building and pavement.

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The housekeeping staff uses environmentally-friendly housekeeping products and hand towels, "Green Seal Certified" cleaners, vacuums and floor scrubbers. Bathrooms are equipped with sensors for sinks and hand towels to conserve water and paper, and foam soap that requires less water to remove. Microfiber cloths and floor cleaning pads are washed on site for reuse.

The building's food and beverage operator donates food overages to local homeless shelters and has begun using bio-degradable and recyclable material in their concession stands.

The *Virginia Green* program has also certified other Virginia Beach operations including The Founders Inn and Spa, Croc's 19th Street Bistro and the Oceanfront Inn. The Virginia Beach Hotel/Motel Association (VBHMA) is receiving the designation as a *Virginia Green* Association. Other local hospitality businesses are currently in the process of becoming certified. The Virginia Beach Convention and Visitors Bureau itself has officially joined as a *Virginia Green* "partner" and is encouraging other area restaurants and hotels to follow suit and implement the *Virginia Green* program into their establishment to further enhance Virginia Beach's standing as a top destination city. Once a sufficient number of facilities have "gone green," the CVB hopes to also brand Virginia Beach as a "green destination."

Virginia Green is a voluntary program sponsored by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, the Virginia Tourism Corporation, and the Virginia Hospitality & Travel Association. *Virginia Green* encourages all aspects of Virginia tourism -- hotels, resorts, bed and breakfasts, restaurants, attractions, parks, welcome centers, even golf courses and wineries - to be aware of their impact on the environment and to take steps to reduce these impacts. For more

information on *Virginia Green*, please visit
www.deq.virginia.gov/p2/virginiagreen.

For a complete list of the VBCC's sustainability initiatives, please contact Katie Glaser, Marketing Coordinator, Virginia Beach Convention Center at kglaser@vbgov.com or (757) 385-2000.

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