

News Release
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WVDA ACCEPTING NOMINATIONS FOR 2014 AGRITOURISM MEDIA AWARDS

The West Virginia Department of Agriculture (WVDA) is seeking entries for the 2014 Agritourism Media Awards. These annual awards celebrate and recognize excellence in advertising and promotion of West Virginia Agritourism destinations and attractions. Deadline for submissions is February 14, 2014. There is no entry fee.

The winners will be honored at the West Virginia Small Farms Conference at The Waterfront Hotel in Morgantown, February 27-March 1, 2014.

West Virginia Agriculture Commissioner Walt Helmick thinks development and recognition of agritourism as a niche farm market is critical. “The economic impact of tourism in West Virginia was \$5.1 billion in 2012. Interest in attractions, events and activities associated with our farms and rural communities is high. We have seen investment, growth, and development in the agritourism sector and celebrate marketing excellence throughout West Virginia.”

Media categories include brochures, rack cards, photos, websites, and social media campaigns. Ribbons will be presented during the Conference luncheon on Friday, February 27. Examples of qualified West Virginia agribusiness awards include pick-your-own and orchard operations, wineries/breweries/distilleries, agricultural fairs or festivals, hay mazes and bed & breakfast operations.

New competition categories this year include “West Virginia Bed & Breakfasts” and “Excellence in Agritourism Social Media Campaigns.” Commissioner Helmick explains, “The addition of bed and breakfast operations acknowledges their contribution to the agritourism economy and the social media campaign category highlights the importance of this marketing tool to enterprise success. More than 38% of travel planning now takes place online. Our agritourism operators need to consider this a critical component of their overall marketing plan and we will celebrate those who have embraced and excelled in attracting visitors.”

Entry materials should be mailed to: WVDA Parkersburg Field Office, 1412 Blizzard Drive, Parkersburg, WV 26101, and be postmarked no later than February 14. Entries will be displayed for the duration of the Small Farms Conference and submissions and ribbons will be mailed back afterward.

For entry forms or additional information, contact WVDA Marketing Specialist-Promotions Debra Gard at 304-483-4027 or dgard@wvda.us.

For more information about the Small Farms Conference, visit <http://smallfarmcenter.ext.wvu.edu/conference>