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Note: To obtain high-resolution photographs of the Awards ceremony or winning projects, please contact Scenic Virginia Executive Director Leighton Powell at 804.363.9453 or email@scenicvirginia.org.

SCENIC VIRGINIA HONORS 2007 SCENIC AWARD WINNERS
Preservation of viewsheds a recurring theme

Richmond, Va. Scenic Virginia paid tribute last week to the recipients of its 2007 Scenic Awards at a ceremony at the historic Kent-Valentine House in Richmond. Speaking before a capacity crowd of Award winners, State legislators, elected officials, government agency heads, and special guests, President Eugenia Anderson-Ellis of Richmond noted that the organization has recently increased its focus on scenic viewsheds, stating, "Viewsheds are something you'll be hearing a lot about -- today and in the coming year!"

Scenic Virginia presented its 2007 Scenic Awards to the following winners:

Scenic Hero Award: Lady Bird Johnson (awarded posthumously). The former First Lady, widely recognized as the founder of the scenic conservation movement in the U. S., was honored for her lifetime commitment to scenic beauty and her untiring efforts to educate Americans about the importance of beauty in our lives. Although she lived in Texas, she enjoyed a close connection to Virginia through her daughter and son-in-law, Lynda and Charles Robb. A longtime family friend, Beth Gibbens of Middleburg, accepted the Award on behalf of the Robb family. Eugenia Anderson-Ellis announced the creation of the **Lady Bird Johnson Highway Beautification Award** to be given in future years, and noted that Scenic Virginia will introduce a resolution honoring Lady Bird Johnson during the upcoming 2008 General Assembly Session.

Scenic Viewshed Preservation Award (TIE): The **Route 50 Traffic-Calming Project** and the **Scenic 340 Project**, for their efforts to institute Context-Sensitive Design in local road projects. **Context-Sensitive Design** is a process in which the Department of Transportation works with community groups to develop a road plan that respects the scenic, cultural, historic, and natural aspects of a particular road.

The **Route 50 Traffic-Calming Project** is widely acknowledged by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) as the Country's first road project involving Context-Sensitive Design. In 1994, citizens and community organizations along **Route 50 in Loudoun and Fauquier counties** formed a coalition to oppose a proposed VDOT bypass that would destroy the scenic rolling hills and historic assets along this 24-mile-long corridor about 30 miles west of Washington, D.C. in the Virginia Piedmont. Through participation with VDOT in a number of community workshops, the Route 50 Corridor Coalition developed the *Traffic Calming Plan for Virginia's Rural Route 50 Corridor*, whose vision was "a scenic, unique, rural community in an historical, agricultural, quiet and natural setting." The Coalition successfully petitioned VDOT and FHWA to develop a physical plan and road design consistent with their goals. Most recently, the project has moved from the phase of converting the community goals in the Concept Plan into detailed Design Plans that are now leading to construction documents.

Scenic 340 Project proposed the use of Context Sensitive Solutions to preserve the scenic viewshed and to maintain the character of **Route 340 from Front Royal to Luray**, which runs parallel to the Shenandoah National Park's Skyline Drive with some sections in the viewshed of the Park. The road also runs along the Shenandoah River, under historic railway bridges, and through historic battlefields. The group was able to reduce the width of the bridge at Overall from 84 feet wide to 44 feet wide; and the 60-foot high embankments facing the South Fork of the Shenandoah River will be planted with native species rather than left as exposed rock. Bridge projects will feature faux-stone railings, rustic guardrails, four feet of paved shoulders for bicyclists, and six feet of stabilized grass shoulders. Scenic 340 Project has helped protect 1,300+ acres of the Route 340 corridor by facilitating permanent conservation easements. The protected land forms a wildlife corridor connecting the Shenandoah National Park with the George Washington National Forest.

Special Recognition: Historic Polegreen Church Foundation. The Foundation was recognized for its efforts to restore the viewshed from the original site of **Historic Polegreen Church** in **Hanover County**. The site currently features an architectural rendering of the original church structure. Recently, the Foundation has taken steps to begin restoring the original viewshed, including the purchase and re-siting of contemporary houses that can be seen from the site. The Historic Polegreen Church site is a planned stop on the Road to Revolution Trail, currently being developed.

Scenic Water Corridor Preservation Award: The Goose Creek Scenic River Advisory Committee. The **Goose Creek Scenic River Advisory Committee** was recognized for 30+ years of work to preserve and conserve the corridor of Goose Creek -- a designated **State Scenic River** -- from its crossing of the Appalachian Trail in **Fauquier County** to its confluence with the Potomac River in **Loudoun County**. Always wanting to do more, the group recently formed a partnership with the Fauquier Goose Creek Scenic River Task Force to designate 20 additional miles of State Scenic River. In announcing the Award, Scenic Virginia Executive Director Leighton Powell noted the importance of the **Virginia Scenic Rivers Program**, which seeks to identify, designate and help protect rivers and streams that possess outstanding scenic, recreational, historic and natural characteristics of statewide significance for future generations. Scenic Virginia is encouraging citizens to make sure that all eligible water corridors are designated as State Scenic Rivers.

Honorable Mention: The Middle Peninsula Chesapeake Bay Public Access Authority. The **Middle Peninsula Chesapeake Bay Public Access Authority** was honored for its efforts to conserve the habitat corridor and public access connectivity of the beautiful – and mostly privately-owned – 89,000 acres of the **Dragon Run Watershed** in **Essex, King and Queen, Middlesex, and Gloucester counties**.

Creative Scenic Enhancement Award: The Journey Through Hallowed Ground. The **Journey Through Hallowed Ground** is a 175-mile corridor extraordinarily rich in history, culture, and natural beauty that originates in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania; travels south along Route 15 through Frederick County, Maryland and into Virginia; and culminates at Monticello and Route 20 in Charlottesville, Virginia. The Journey Through Hallowed Ground recently announced plans to seek the **National Scenic Byway** designation for the corridor. As the statewide corridor of the effort to introduce the National Scenic Byways to the Commonwealth, which resulted in the designation of four new National Scenic Byways in Virginia in 2004, Scenic Virginia will serve on the JTHG's advisory committee for securing the National Scenic Byway designation.

Scenic Tourism Award: Virginia Indian Heritage Trail (inaugural award). Because Scenic Virginia recognizes the importance of utilizing our natural, historic, cultural, and scenic resources in unique ways that revitalize tourism prospects for Virginia localities, the organization added a Scenic Tourism Award in 2007. The inaugural winner – the **Virginia Indian Heritage Trail** -- is a publication created by members of Virginia's tribes that represents best practices in cultural heritage tourism by encouraging visitation to scenic sites that have culturally-sensitive information on Virginia Indians, while providing an interpretive framework in which to understand the sites. Project partners included the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, Virginia Council on Indians, Virginia Tourism Corporation, Jamestown 2007, Virginia Department of Historic Resources, and the Virginia General Assembly.

Local Anti-Litter Awards:

Organizational: Keep Leesburg Beautiful. In 2004, **Leesburg** Vice-Mayor Susan Horne and Councilmember Kelly Burk worked with Keep Loudoun Beautiful, local residents, and businesses to coordinate a comprehensive community clean-up and environmental campaign. The result was "**Keep Leesburg Beautiful**," a town-wide community clean-up and beautification program, that starts with a kick-off celebration on the Town Green, followed by two weeks of community service projects and year-round educational outreach on recycling, litter prevention, tree planting, and stormwater management. The program's goal is to increase environmental education, reduce litter, encourage civic activism, and preserve and protect Leesburg's unique, historic community.

Individual: Bill Larkins. Since retiring from the U.S. Patent Office, **Bill Larkins** of **Covington** has chosen to dedicate a significant amount of his time to cleaning up the scenic roads bisecting the George Washington National Forest in **Bath, Allegheny and Highland counties**. Mr. Larkins has invested his own money to purchase a winch to pull large items from steep road embankments, and a trailer to haul the trash away. Some of the areas are so steep that he must use rock climbing gear to climb up and down the embankments safely. The U.S. Forest Service estimates that Bill has been personally responsible for cleaning up an estimated 36,000 lbs. of trash from several dozen illegal dump sites.

VDOT Tree-Trimming Award: The Staunton VDOT District. The **Staunton VDOT District** was recognized for its good communication practices, and for continually reaching out to local citizen groups and local government to educate them about roadside work before it occurs, and for following up after the work takes place. The Staunton District closely adhered to the Commonwealth's tree-trimming policy while selectively removing trees in the "clear zone" along Interstates 64, 66, and 81 in **Frederick, Shenandoah, Warren, Rockingham, Augusta, Rockbridge and Alleghany counties**. The "clear zone" is an unobstructed, relatively flat area for an errant vehicle leaving the roadway to be able to recover. The Staunton District is now working with local groups regarding the replanting of new trees, and recently made the responsible decision to delay the replanting until next spring to give new seedlings a better chance of survival during the current drought conditions. All of these efforts result in travel corridors that provide safety to motorists while preserving the beauty of Virginia's viewsheds as seen from the road.

Scenic Virginia's 2007 Scenic Champion event sponsors were Davenport & Company LLC, Mango Salon, The Martin Agency, Katherine T. Mears, Mount Vernon Farm, and Union Bank & Trust.

Established in 1998, Scenic Virginia is a statewide private nonprofit whose mission is to preserve, protect and enhance the scenic beauty and community character of the Commonwealth.