



CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA MATPRA

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

Lesley Kistner

Public Affairs Director

The Happy Valley Adventure Bureau

814 769-9490

LesleyK@happyvalley.com



Region prepares to host major gathering of travel writers

Conference provides coveted opportunity to showcase central PA on a broader stage

STATE COLLEGE, PA, Oct. 10, 2022 – The Happy Valley Adventure Bureau (HVAB), Explore Altoona, Huntingdon County Visitors Bureau and Visit Clearfield County are collaborating to host **the 2022 Mid-Atlantic Tourism Public Relations Alliance (MATPRA) Marketplace** this fall, a rare opportunity to engage with travel writers from across the country and highlight the region on a broader stage.

The main event will be held Oct. 18-20 in Happy Valley, PA, and is expected to welcome more than 40 travel writers, along with nearly 60 destination marketing organizations from Pennsylvania and the Mid-Atlantic region.

The gathering will also mark the 20th anniversary of the MATPRA, which will be celebrated at the opening reception.

“The Mid-Atlantic Tourism Public Relations Alliance (MATPRA) is excited to have its marketplace in central Pennsylvania,” said Matthew Scales, Chair of MATPRA. “We have not had a marketplace for a couple of years due to the pandemic, and with this being our 20th anniversary year, we look forward to bringing all the destinations and media back together.”

Explore Altoona Executive Director Mark Ickes said that in collaboration with its three counterpart destination marketing organizations, Explore Altoona is extremely pleased to be showcasing the central Pennsylvania region to an influential group of media professionals.

“Our staff leadership has been actively involved with MATPRA throughout its 20-year existence,” he said. “We recognize the excellent opportunity to host these writers and to immerse them within the authentic experiences that define Altoona and Blair County. This type of promotional exposure is priceless in targeting potential visitors for the entire region!”

-more-

Each destination will offer options to travel writers for pre-Marketplace Welcome Tours, and options for post-Marketplace Farewell Tours. The HVAB will host the actual Media Marketplace event, the opening reception/dinner sponsored by the Pennsylvania Tourism Office, and a day of themed familiarization tours throughout Happy Valley.

“Hosting the MATPRA Marketplace event is a great opportunity to showcase the best of Central Pennsylvania to travel writers and other destination marketers,” said Matt Price, Executive Director of the Huntingdon County Visitors Bureau. “For our mostly rural areas, this is a rare chance to host a large group of travel writers all at one time.”

Price said without hosting Marketplace, his agency would only be able to host 8-10 writers this year.

HVAB President and CEO Fritz Smith said engagement with travel writers and influencers is a valuable way for tourism promotion agencies to reach new audiences of potential visitors. As hosts of the premier gathering, Blair, Centre, Clearfield and Huntingdon counties will now have the full attention of tourism public relations professionals that can tell the region’s story.

“We look forward to putting the region’s best foot forward,” Smith said. “This is an incredible opportunity and a huge undertaking. We appreciate the support from our respective memberships. It’s truly a joint effort to put central Pennsylvania on the map as an enjoyable and affordable destination that offers a variety of experiences for leisure, sports and business travelers.”

Visit Clearfield County Executive Director Susan Swales-Vitullo said hosting MATPRA is an exciting opportunity for all partners.

“Visit Clearfield County is very fortunate to be part of this event because of our closeness to our neighboring destination marketing organizations not only by distance, but more importantly, because of our working relationships with them,” she said. “This is a true collaborative effort to make sure that we showcase the very best that central Pennsylvania has to offer.”

Price said collaborating with neighboring destination marketing organizations to host MATPRA Marketplace has been a great experience.

“Hopefully, it opens the door to more collaboration in the future,” he said. “Visitors to our areas don’t care about the lines on a map; they are looking for the best and most memorable experiences within a short drive of wherever they choose to stay.”

Michael Chapaloney, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Tourism Office, said MATPRA is one of the premiere organizations of its kind in the nation.

“We are thrilled to welcome the Media Marketplace to the Keystone State once again,” Chapaloney said. “The destinations that pulled together to secure Marketplace should be applauded, and will have our full support to make it amazing. We will leave no doubt the ‘Pursuit of Happiness’ passes through Pennsylvania.”

###

About MATPRA: *The Mid-Atlantic Tourism Public Relations Alliance is a cohesive unit of regional tourism partners encompassing Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Washington D.C., and West Virginia. The alliance strives to serve travel journalists by offering resources that ignore geographic boundaries, as do travelers.*