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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Wicomico County Tourism on the Rise

Wicomico County Tourism Initiatives Result in \$43.1 Million Economic Impact

Wicomico County Executive Rick Pollitt and the Department of Recreation, Parks & Tourism announce that Tourism initiatives brought a total of 34 events to Wicomico County and infused \$43.1 million into the local and state economy in FY14, an 11% increase over the previous fiscal year. Of this amount, the direct impact was \$27 million.

County Executive Pollitt stated, "More and more people are coming to realize what we've known for years. We live in a very special place. Tourism is an essential component of our economic development strategy and continuing to grow it remains one of my top priorities."

Wicomico County Tourism is working to drive continued and future tourism by promoting the area as a destination for youth sports, meetings, conventions, events and all other tourism-related activities.

Sports' marketing is the largest segment of the County's book of tourism business. Twenty-five sports events were held last year generating just over \$32 million in economic activity. Wicomico hosted nine major regional/national events including a 399-team girls' softball World Series. The event covered a three week period and featured teams from 14 states and Canada. It also brought the USSSA Pride National Pro Fastpitch series to Arthur W. Perdue Stadium featuring the best women's softball players in the world.

Gary Mackes, Director of the Department of Recreation, Parks & Tourism said, "We're really pleased with the County's trajectory and the generous support received from our elected officials and the efforts of the Department of Recreation, Parks & Tourism staff, the Tourism Board, and stakeholders."

Wicomico continues to build its group-business market by leveraging the assets of the Wicomico Youth & Civic Center (WY&CC). In FY14, a new religious conference was held at the WY&CC which drew over 2,000 attendees. Additional highlights included the return of the Cheer &



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Dance events, the Poodle Club of America's international dog show and the Salisbury Kennel Club dog show. These events generated an estimated economic impact of \$7.8 million.

Bak Patel a local hotelier commented, "The sincere efforts that the County has undertaken have had a deep and palpable impact on both the hotel industry and the local economy at large this year. These efforts have attracted a large number of tourists to the area, effectively fulfilling the hotel industry's need for higher occupancy rates and contributing to greater revenues."

The County's Visitors' Center remains busy. Over 26,000 people frequented the facility in FY 14.

The County recognizes that investment in the expansion of the Henry S. Parker Athletic Complex and modernization of the Wicomico Youth & Civic Center are key components in an effort to attract and retain new and existing events. Both projects are expected to commence within the next few months.

Delegate Norman Conway said, "The economic and tax benefits derived from Wicomico's tourism initiatives are impressive. These benefits merit State investment in the Youth and Civic Center and Henry Parker Athletic Complex to allow the County to grow its market share."

In May 2014, Wicomico County and the Town of Ocean City formed the Mid-Atlantic Amateur Sports Alliance (MAASA) to expand sports marketing efforts. The partnership leverages the region's facilities and accommodations to attract additional large-scale amateur sporting events.

Senator Jim Mathias said, "Our sports facilities, accommodations and attractions are second to none. Ocean City and Wicomico are to be commended for forming the first partnership like this in the nation."

MAASA will be marketed in concert with Maryland Sports.

Terry Hasseltine, Executive Director of Maryland Sports stated, "Wicomico has established a regional and a growing national reputation for being a great place to hold amateur sports tournaments. It is emerging as an industry leader, and its partnership with Ocean City provides an opportunity to grow its market share."

"Our commitment to upgrading and expanding our Youth & Civic Center and Henry S. Parker Athletic Complex will secure our place as the Eastern Shore's leader in the athletic and entertainment industries for years to come," said County Executive Pollitt. "We appreciate the City of Salisbury's land donation and the State for their support for these important projects."

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