



## COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Virginia Department of Housing  
and Community Development

**For Immediate Release**  
October 23, 2009

**Contact:** Hollie S. Cammarasana  
Public Relations Director, DHCD  
(804) 371-7006, (804) 382-2075 cell  
[hollie.cammarasana@dhcd.virginia.gov](mailto:hollie.cammarasana@dhcd.virginia.gov)

### ***Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Commission announces appointment of executive director***

*Executive Director Todd Christensen has 25 years of community development experience and has worked with The Crooked Road, 'Round the Mountain and other heritage tourism projects*

**Richmond, VA** – The Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Commission has announced the appointment of its first executive director. Todd Christensen, who currently serves as the deputy director of community development for the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) has been chosen to serve as the commission's first executive director.

Christensen has worked in the field of community development for more than 25 years. In his current capacity, Christensen oversees federal and state-funded community development construction programs, including the Virginia Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, the Appalachian regional Commission Program, and other programs such as Virginia Main Street, the Virginia Enterprise Zone initiative, and the Virginia Rural Broadband Planning Initiative.

"I am pleased that Todd Christensen will serve as the commission's first executive director," said Senator William Wampler Jr., who serves as Chairman of the commission. "Todd has worked extensively in the communities of Southwest Virginia through his position with DHCD, he has brought big ideas to the table and has demonstrated a unique and innovative approach toward economic development.

I know that he will put those big ideas to use in his new position, promoting the recreational, artistic and cultural assets that are unique to our area and our citizens."

Christensen has focused much of his career addressing the community and economic development needs of Southwest Virginia. He has played a founding role in the development of The Crooked Road: Virginia's Heritage Music Trail, and was an integral part in the development of 'Round the Mountain: Southwest Virginia's Artisan Network.

"We are fortunate to have a person of Todd Christensen's energy and experience directing the commission," said Woody Crenshaw, Chair of 'Round the Mountain and Vice Chair of the commission. "His knowledge of the region will be a great asset in helping us implement our mission to promote the arts, heritage and natural attractions of Southwest Virginia."

The Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Commission was established by the 2008 General

Assembly to be the coordinating body for the mix of cultural heritage, tourism, and economic development efforts throughout Southwest Virginia. The Commission, which is composed of 23 appointed members, is tasked with encouraging economic development through cultural heritage ventures and initiatives related to tourism and other asset-based enterprises.

Christensen has taken a leadership role in the development of what will be the hub of this activity – Heartwood: Southwest Virginia’s Artisan Gateway, a \$16 million, 28,000 square foot facility which broke ground in August.

“I am excited about the opportunity to represent the commission in working and partnering with the many communities and organizations working with the new creative economy that is developing in Southwest Virginia,” said Christensen. “I look forward to meeting with stakeholders from all counties of the region to identify cultural, historical and outdoor recreation assets and to develop a strategy to enhance and market them through the new Heartwood center, which will serve as the gateway to the artisans of Southwest Virginia.”

Christensen is a graduate of the College of William and Mary. He is also the recipient of the 2003 Governor’s Star Award, presented to one state employee each year whose achievements exemplify the mission of the agency, and the 2008 Excellence in Virginia Government award for his work with The Crooked Road and community development efforts in Southwest Virginia.

# # #