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'Round the Mountain: Southwest Virginia's Artisan Network receives 2013 Dominion ArtStars Rising Star Award at 2013 Creative Economy Conference

ABINGDON – 'Round the Mountain: Southwest Virginia's Artisan Network received the 2013 Dominion ArtStars Statewide Rising Star Award at the 2013 Creative Economy Conference at Heartwood. The Rising Star Award is presented to arts organizations that are less than 10 years old.

'Round the Mountain promotes the sustainable economic development of a 19-county region by assisting local artisans with marketing, educational and entrepreneurial opportunities. 'Round the Mountain serves as the hub for a network of 573 Southwest Virginia artisans, craft venues and agritourism businesses. Established in 2004, 'Round the Mountain has mobilized a network of support consisting of 15 artisan trails, promotional materials, educational programming to foster professional development and a physical and virtual showcase.

"The tools we provide through our organization further the ability of artisans, craft venues and agritourism businesses to market and sell their products in a way that supports the region's economy through the arts," said Diana Blackburn, executive director of 'Round the Mountain.

The awards were presented by the Virginia for the Arts (VFTA), a nonprofit founded in 1992 that works to advance the arts in Virginia by increasing public awareness of the important contributions the arts make to the life, culture and economy of the state. The awards recognize arts organizations throughout Virginia that best demonstrate the ability to enhance communities and build a better quality of life. The awards are made possible by a \$50,000 contribution from Dominion Resources through its charitable arm, the Dominion Foundation. This year, a total of 78 nominations were submitted from across the commonwealth.

"The competition was extremely close this year, as each organization brings a unique program to their community," said Lu Ellsworth, VFTA board member.

In addition to 'Round the Mountain, The Barter Theatre was also awarded the Statewide Shining Star award.

The 2013 Southwest Virginia Creative Economy Conference is continuing tomorrow at 8 a.m. at the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center with many special guests including U.S. Sen. Mark Warner, luncheon keynote speaker Dr. Stuart Rosenfeld, principal and founder of Regional Technology Services Inc, Earl F. Gohl, federal co-chair of the Appalachian Regional Commission, State Sen. William Carrico and U.S. Rep. Morgan Griffith. The conference is showcasing Southwest Virginia's craft and traditional music's successful impact on tourism and the region's economy. Presentations and sessions will also illustrate how the region's outdoor recreation and natural assets will serve as the next stepping stone for Southwest Virginia's growing creative economy.

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