**Media Contact:**

**George Wacker**

**610-882-9200**

[**george@DiscoverLehighValley.com**](mailto:george@DiscoverLehighValley.com)

**Discover Lehigh Valley Honors Regional Tourism Catalysts During Annual Meeting**

Crayola Experience™, Dorney Park & Wildwater Kingdom among award winners

**LEHIGH VALLEY, Pa.** (November 12, 2013) – Since Discover Lehigh Valley, Lehigh and Northampton county’s designated destination marketing organization, was founded 29 years ago, the economic impact of tourism in the region has grown from $206 million to nearly $1.76 billion.

That increase in tourism is a direct reflection of the organization and individuals working tirelessly to promote the area and provide attractions for those from all over the country to enjoy.

These catalysts for tourism were honored during Discover Lehigh Valley’s Annual Meeting, held Nov. 7 at The State Theatre Center for the Arts in Easton, Pa.

The Crayola Experience™ received the “Tourism Award.” This award is presented to a new or greatly expanded tourism project in Lehigh Valley.

“This year, Crayola took a huge risk,” Discover Lehigh Valley President, Mike Stershic, said. “They shut down the Crayola Experience™ for several months and did a total transformation and renewed better than ever. Visitors are raving and their numbers have increased.”

The “Partnership Award,” presented to an organization whose efforts to partner with Discover Lehigh Valley have gone beyond the norm, was given to Dorney Park & Wildwater Kingdom.

“For more than 17 years, Discover Lehigh Valley has successfully partnered with Dorney Park & Wildwater Kingdom and participating hotels,” Stershic said. “Through that partnership, what we now know as our Stay & Scream packages were born.”

The third and final award of the evening, the “Zenith Award,” was presented to the American Pointer Club 2013 National Specialty event. The award is presented to the meeting with the largest attendance or impact on Lehigh Valley that was derived from a lead by Discover Lehigh Valley. From April 15 - 20, 2013, more than 200 people and 307 dogs made the Best Western Lehigh Valley Hotel & Conference Center their home, creating 567 hotel room nights.

Also honored during the Annual Meeting were those retiring from Discover Lehigh Valley’s Board of Directors.

These included: Juan Martinez of the State Café and Grill and Don Juan’s Mexican Grill, who served since 2011; Jason McClure, former V.P. and General Manager of Dorney Park & Wildwater Kingdom, who served since 2009; Cindy Feinberg, former Director of Community and Economic Development of Lehigh County, who served since 2006; Steve Carletti, who has served as board chairman and chair of the marketing committee and served since 2004; Jeff Focht, Vice President of Academic Affairs at Northampton County Community College, who has served since 2004; and Stu Schooley, owner of Dutch Springs and Northstar Team Development, who has served since 2001.

Special recognition was given to Jim Harper, who has served on Discover Lehigh Valley’s board since 1984. Harper has represented Lehigh University and AAA Central/East Penn Region, among others. Harper has also served as the board’s Governance Committee Chair.

“Some people lead from the front and some lead through their support role,” Stershic said. “Jim did both.”

**About Discover Lehigh Valley**

Discover Lehigh Valley is the designated destination marketing organization (DMO) of Lehigh and Northampton counties. Its mission is to promote and develop Lehigh Valley as a leisure and business travel destination. Created in 1984, Discover Lehigh Valley assists in promoting regional tourism, an industry that generates $1.76 billion in annual revenue and accounts for more than 22,000 jobs in Lehigh Valley. For more information on Discover Lehigh Valley and its activities or to request a *Lehigh Valley Official Visitors Guide*, call (800) MEET-HERE, or visit the official tourism website of Lehigh Valley at [DiscoverLehighValley.com](http://www.discoverlehighvalley.com).