

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



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***MEDIA ALERT***

**2016 Tourism Champion of the Year, Excellence in Service Awards**

Tri-Cities, Wash. – The Country Mercantile was recognized as the 2016 Tourism Champion of the Year at the Visit TRI-CITIES Annual Meeting held on Nov. 2. The Country Mercantile, a local specialty retailer featuring fresh produce and gourmet food items, was awarded Visit TRI-CITIES’ most prestigious honor because the organization embodies the spirit of tourism by demonstrating leadership and supporting the efforts of Visit TRI-CITIES to elevate the region as a premier tourism destination.

“Culinary tourism is becoming such an important component of the visitor experience. Jay and Janece Woods, along with their outstanding team, have made the Country Mercantile a significant tourism attraction highlighting agriculture and culinary opportunities to visitors,” stated Kris Watkins, President and CEO of Visit TRI-CITIES. “They are truly visionaries and the Country Mercantile contributes to the overall vitality of the Tri-Cities tourism industry.”

Visit TRI-CITIES also recognized Hampton Inn at Southridge for providing outstanding customer service with the Excellence in Service award. Nominees were judged on following criteria: the ability to serve as an example to others, provide exemplary customer service and create a memorable visitor experience.

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*Visit TRI-CITIES is a non-profit destination marketing organization which provides tourism-related marketing and management services for the cities of Kennewick, Pasco and Richland in southeastern Washington State.*