

For Immediate Release

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Founders Illumination and Local Singing Groups Harmonize Holiday Spirits

Virginia Beach, VA (**November 13, 2009**) – As the darkness of lingering ghosts of the recession past - and present - threaten to dampen holiday spirits this year, there is a hopeful light of celebration. As in years past, the Founders Illumination at The Founders Inn and Spa will preface the holiday season with a spirit-brightening illumination event, free to the public, as thanks to the Hampton Roads community for their years of support. Local choirs, thousands of brilliant lights, horse-drawn carriage rides, a thirty five-foot, gloriously decorated Christmas tree and more will cheer hearts Sunday, November 29, 2009, starting at noon. The culminating lighting ceremony starts at 6:00 p.m. Admission is free. Call 757-366-5700 or visit wwwFOUNDERSINN.com.

“It will be a breath-taking and merry time for children and adults alike. We especially look forward to welcoming our local singers this year,” says Ellen Ruane, general manager. “Our staff is ready to delight our guests with a grand start to a cheerful holiday season!” she adds.

Performance ensembles traditionally sing holiday music by the Christmas tree from 12:00 – 5:00 p.m. in the atrium. These groups are so delightful, even the foot-high, golden angel ornaments adorning the nearby Christmas tree might be inspired to sing along. This year’s featured performers, along with other local musical entertainment, will charm all listeners. The Providence Presbyterian Church handbell choir, comprised of experienced ringers, will jingle and tinkle five octaves of handbells. Saint Gregory the Great School Children’s Choir, a talented combination

of singers in grades 3-8 led by music director Cecelia Mezza, will dazzle everyone with their youthful voices.

Later in the evening, the switch is flipped and The Founders Inn and Spa transforms into a Christmas wonderland as Princess Anne High School Chamber Orchestra performs from the Presidential Balcony. Mary Ann Hughes, the Orchestra Director and IB music teacher at Princess Anne High School in Virginia Beach, will lead the Princess Anne High School Choir. She is founder and director of *Strings on Fire!*, a select city-wide group, performing traditional and alternative string music.

Holiday decorations adorning The Founders Inn and Spa property and grounds promise to delight everyone. Strolling entertainment will create a whimsical atmosphere for passersby throughout the day. Children are invited to visit the big guy himself, Santa, from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Pictures are available for a nominal fee.

At reduced pricing, The Founders Illumination Buffet serves holiday favorites all day, from 2:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

MORE

STROLLING ENTERTAINMENT

12-6pm | Enjoy magicians, Mandy Panda, Spectrum Puppets, the Doorway Singers and more...

THE TOY FACTORY AND FACE PAINTING

12-8pm | Fireplace lobby - Be sure to visit to get a glimpse of Santa's workshop; the children will enjoy having their face painted too!

HOLIDAY MUSIC BY THE TREE

12-5pm | Atrium

Enjoy featured performers - Providence Presbyterian Church Handbell Choir & Saint Gregory the Great School Children's Choir - along with other local musical entertainment. All by our majestic, 35-foot Christmas tree!

HAPPY HOLIDAYS MARIONETTE SHOW

12:15pm & 2:00pm | Ballroom 2 thru 4

Featuring Singing Santa Claus and puppets

PHILIPPINE CULTURAL DANCERS

12:45pm & 2:30pm | Ballroom 2 thru 4

VISIT WITH SANTA

4-7pm | Ballroom 1

Children are invited to visit the big guy himself. Pictures are available for a nominal fee.

RHYTHM OF IRELAND DANCERS

1:15pm & 2:45pm | Ballroom 2 thru 4

A traditional favorite!

FOUNDERS ILLUMINATION BUFFET

2-8pm | Swan Terrace

Enjoy all of your holiday favorites in the award winning Swan Terrace. \$15.95 adults, \$8.95 children 5 to 12, 4 & under free, seniors, active duty & retired military 10% discount.

CARRIAGE RIDES

4-8pm | Courtyard

What could be more thrilling than an authentic antique carriage with horses and sleigh bells? Enjoy them with the entire family. First come first served. Sorry, no private rides.

READING OF THE CHRISTMAS STORY

5:30-6pm | Atrium

Listen as the traditional Christmas favorite is read just before the lighting ceremony.

LIGHTING CEREMONY

6pm | Formal Gardens

With the flip of a switch 10,000 twinkling lights transform The Founders Inn and Spa into a Christmas wonderland. Features a performance by Princess Anne High School Chamber Orchestra.

MORE

About The Founders Inn and Spa

Boasting old-world charm and the finest southern hospitality, The Founders Inn and Spa provides the appeal and warmth of a country inn, accented by beautiful antiques and historic artifacts, with a new \$5 million full-service resort spa, grand scale pool featuring a circular slide and interactive fountains, luxurious amenities and award-winning cuisine. The Inn's 240 guestrooms and suites include High Speed Internet access, generous workspace and views of 26 landscaped acres. Select rooms include gas fireplaces, and views of the lake and formal gardens. The Founders Inn and Spa is located at 5641 Indian River Road in Virginia Beach near exit 286B off Interstate 64 East. For reservations and additional information, please call 800-926-4466 or visit www.FoundersInn.com.

Benchmark Hospitality International is a leader in the management and marketing of resorts, conference centers, hotels, and Personal Luxury Hotels™. The privately held company, launched in 1980, is a founding member of the International Association of Conference Centers. Benchmark is a worldwide organization operating over 30 properties representing major metropolitan and resort destinations. Benchmark's international headquarters is located in The Woodlands, Texas, near Houston, with regional offices in New Jersey and Connecticut. International offices are located in Tokyo and Santiago, Chile. For locations of properties and additional information, visit www.BenchmarkHospitality.com.

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