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Pocahontas Exhibition Mine Celebrates a New Era for Tourism

POCAHONTAS, VA- It's a new era for the Pocahontas Exhibition Mine and visitor numbers are proving that upgrades completed over the last two years are drawing in a record number of tourists.

Today, the mine celebrated the accomplishments achieved due to Abandoned Mine Land Economic Revitalization (AMLER) grants from the Virginia Department of Energy totaling \$1.9 million dollars. Accomplishments resulted in creating 16 new jobs and welcoming a record number of over 3,500 people to the mine in 2021.

"The Pocahontas Exhibition Mine and Museum is a tremendous attraction for our region. It gives locals and tourists alike the chance to learn more about Southwest Virginia's coal mining heritage," **said Congressman Morgan Griffith**. "Through the Abandoned Mine Land Economic Revitalization Program, we have been able to make improvements at the site, better preparing it to welcome visitors and increasing economic opportunities in the Town of Pocahontas."

"Being the only one of its kind in Virginia, the Pocahontas Exhibition Mine is very special place. Virginia Energy has a long history here and the work completed with our AMLER grants meets the goals of boosting our coal-impacted communities," **said Virginia Energy Director of Coal Programs Randy Moore**. "We know the improvements have had an impact on the tourism dollars here and we hope it will continue its positive trickle down effect to the entire town's economy."

Safety improvements were the first priority for tourists. Additional roof supports and electrical upgrades were added. The guest experience was also enhanced by adding informational Kiosks at different stops throughout the mine. The entire site received a facelift and additions to make the museum and mine more accessible to a variety of visitors. And, in an effort to attract even more people to the Pocahontas Exhibition Mine, a restaurant space was created and equipped where the Ole #3 is now serving food and drinks to visitors and locals alike. Today marked the last improvement under these upgrades with the unveiling of five golf carts.

“We are so excited of how far the visitor experience has come over the last two years here at the Pocahontas Exhibition Mine,” **said Mayor Benjamin Gibson**. “The addition of golf carts brings back the nostalgia of when it first opened in 1938. Visitors drove their cars through for several years. We have many people that want to relive that experience and now we can make that happen for them.”

“We are glad to see one of Tazewell County’s gems properly on display thanks to the grant dollars, strategic planning and beautiful execution of all the improvements we dreamed about just a few years ago,” **said Tazewell County Board Northern District Supervisor Maggie Asbury**. “I have visited the Pocahontas Exhibition Mine since childhood when we could ride a vehicle through it, and I believe it is at its very best today. I can’t wait to share it with new visitors, tourists and those returning to see what we’ve done. I could not be prouder!”

Pocahontas is an access location for ATV riders looking to hit the Spearhead or Hatfield-McCoy off-road trail systems. These improvements hope to draw more riders to town, as well.

Before it was a tourist destination, the Pocahontas mine was the first in southwest Virginia. Coal mined at this site served the U.S. Navy through two World Wars. Hundreds of citizens and immigrants were employed to mine coal, first with their hands and later with equipment as it was active through numerous technology advancements.

In addition to today’s celebration. Virginia Energy hosted “Safety Days” at the Pocahontas Exhibition Mine earlier in the day. Nearly 200 students from Abb’s Valley-Boissevain Elementary School visited various coal mine safety hands-on education stations. Students got to learn about electrical safety, test out mine rescue equipment, see a model surface mine and experience the multi-faceted role Virginia Energy serves to industries in southwest Virginia. They also toured the mine.

The Pocahontas Exhibition Mine is open April through September, Thursday through Saturday 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. and Sundays 12 p.m. - 4 p.m. Groups that include 12 or more people can schedule a tour through December by calling 276-945-9522 or email pocahontasva@comcast.net.