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Champions Are Made in Charleston

Charleston, W.Va. - Officials at the Charleston Convention & Visitors Bureau are celebrating a hugely successful year. The CVB's mission, to positively impact the city's economic and social prosperity by attracting visitors and events, was exceeded in 2024 with events like the USA Cycling Pro Road Championships and West Virginia Secondary Schools Activities Commission High School Championships.

USA Cycling Pro Road made its inaugural run in Charleston in May. This five-day event drew 435 athletes from 46 states and created a \$4.6 million economic impact. Kristen Faulkner, the winner of Charleston's Elite Women's Race, went on to earn two gold medals for Team USA at the Paris Olympic Games.

Charleston has long been the home of multiple state high school sports championships, and, in 2024 the WVSSAC chose the Capital City to host the State High School Football Championships. Charleston's revamped Laidley Field welcomed teams and fans from across the state during the two-day event. In addition to football, Charleston hosts WVSSAC Boys and Girls Basketball, Baseball, Track & Field, Cheerleading, Tennis, and Volleyball championships.

Along with bringing new events to Charleston, the CVB works to support the city's signature events, including the Charleston Sternwheel Regatta. An estimated 235,000 people attended the event, a record for the festival, and the Regatta generated nearly \$39 million in economic impact. Other signature events for which the CVB provided support include MultiFest, WV Pride Parade and Festival, Holly Jolly Brawley, Light the Night, and the Holiday Village at Capitol Market.

The CVB hosted Roberto Clemente Jr in August in support of African American Heritage Night. Clemente Jr, son of Pittsburgh Pirates legend Roberto Clemente Sr, threw out the first pitch at the Dirty Birds game at GoMart Ballpark.

The Charleston CVB, as a member of the Metro Sports Region, works closely with regional partner CVBs to bring events to the area like the U.S. Youth Soccer Eastern President's Cup. The collaboration of this group makes it possible for partners to share this event at two different venues and encourages visitors to explore the entire region, not just one location.

Charleston Ambassador Chef Paul Smith became the first chef from West Virginia to win the James Beard Foundation Award Best Chef: Southeast. While Chef Paul's award is for his work at 1010 Bridge Restaurant, he's also part owner of local hotspots Ellen's Homemade Ice Cream and The Pitch at Shawnee Sports Complex. Smith is a Chef Partner at Barkadas in Charleston and The Humble Tomato in Lewisburg, and he conducts cooking exhibitions at Capitol Market May through October during the free "Let's Get Cooking" series. Chef Paul also is set to open a new Italian restaurant, Paulie's, in early 2025.

In September, Charleston hosted the Governor's Conference on Tourism where attendees from across West Virginia met to share, learn and network. Special events allowed the participants to explore the Capital City and its unique venues.

The Charleston Coliseum & Convention Center brought in big-name artists like Tim McGraw in 2024 and sold out the Coliseum for performances by Jelly Roll, Lil Wayne, Lainey Wilson, Journey, and Rick Springfield. Hot Wheels sold out on Saturday and Sunday of its performance run. The Theater also hosted sold-out performances by comedians Nurse Blake (two shows) and Dusty Slay. Country musician Warren Zeiders also sold out a performance in the Theater.

For more information about events in Charleston, visit the CVB's website, www.charlestonwv.com.

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