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More than 150 Travel Professionals Convene in Puerto Rico to Volunteer and Connect with Local Tourism Businesses

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – May 6, 2019 – Tourism Cares unites 150 travel professionals for their Tourism Cares for Puerto Rico program beginning this Wednesday in San Juan, and then moves south to Yauco and Ponce. This three-day Meaningful Travel Summit joins forces with the formal travel industry, community-based tourism initiatives, governmental officials, the small shareholder agriculture community, and social enterprises to support the development of local economies for a resilient future on the island.

“With a growing sustainable tourism portfolio, the Island is seizing opportunities to continue to develop and promote these experiences. The Government of Puerto Rico, through the Puerto Rico Tourism Company, is thrilled to host the Tourism Cares for Puerto Rico Summit, and the more than 150 tourism leaders expected to attend. Aligned with Governor Ricardo Rosselló’s vision to place tourism at the forefront of the Island’s economic development agenda, this event will promote the exchange of best practices, foster entrepreneurship and empower small business owners”, said Puerto Rico Tourism Company’s executive director, Carla Campos.

Program participants will volunteer at Centro de Microempresas y Tecnologías Agrícolas Sustentables Yauco (CMTAS), a community sustainable farm. After the 2017 storms, CMTAS became a support center for the community, providing food and access to clean water. Today, they are building a tourism experience at the farm, where they also provide educational and training programs for several disadvantaged Puerto Rican communities.

“We’re thrilled that Tourism Cares’ participants will work alongside a WCK Plow to Plate grant recipient—a model community farm still in recovery after Hurricane Maria that is building up its capacity for food production, distribution and sales over the long-term,” says Alexandra Garcia, Chief Program Officer at World Central Kitchen.

“Investing time and labor at this farm is an example of how to support authentic tourism development and help build resiliency. Industry professionals will learn about why issues like food sovereignty are crucial for local communities, and experience how this kind of
tourism can also benefit travel businesses,” says Tourism Cares Chief Impact Officer Paula Vlamings. “Understanding and experiencing how we can empower communities through our businesses will help create a more sustainable future in Puerto Rico—and beyond.”

In addition to volunteering, travel professionals will connect with community-based tourism leaders and social enterprises to support knowledge exchange and greater integration into the market. The program includes educational sessions with exhibits and pitches by local entrepreneurs. Sessions will also address how agritourism businesses are emerging across Puerto Rico and identify the challenges and opportunities to include more local suppliers in the tourism value chain.

Among the examples of the Island’s dedication to sustainability, is the Puerto Rico Energy Public Policy Act, passed in March, which sets a 100% renewable energy mandate for 2050. Puerto Rico also created the Caribbean’s first Green Certification Program which currently includes 10 lodging options, while a variety of eco and agritourism opportunities remain available, and growing, for visitors and locals alike.

“Known for our world class beaches, natural wonders and unique culture, Puerto Rico is committed to the growth and enhancement of sustainable practices within our tourism offerings—not because it’s a nice to have,” says Discover Puerto Rico CEO Brad Dean, “but because it’s a necessity for our industry to sustain the precious wonders found on our Island, for future travelers and generations to come.”

Tourism Cares for Puerto Rico is an official Commitment to Action of the Clinton Global Initiative (CGI) Action Network on Post Disaster Recovery. This commitment will help connect a multitude of stakeholders together, to learn about sustainability in tourism, and share best practices through this Meaningful Travel Summit. Ongoing monitoring will be conducted throughout the year and reported out through the Commitment. The Tourism Cares’ CGI Action Commitment is in partnership with the Foundation for Puerto Rico, World Central Kitchen, Discover Puerto Rico, Hilton San Juan and Hilton Ponce.

It is anticipated that the three-day Tourism Cares for Puerto Rico program will contribute more than $62,000 through investments in the local businesses, grant funding, and volunteer labor value.

The organization’s next program will be Tourism Cares Inspiration Exchange (TCiX) on October 18 in New York City. Visit tourismcares.org/tcix for more information.

Tourism Cares for Puerto Rico is made possible by lead sponsor The Puerto Rico Tourism Company, and event sponsors AAA, Brand USA, Expedia Group, Rovia, Trip Mate, Discover

**About Tourism Cares**

Tourism Cares, Inc., a US 501(c)(3) nonprofit that advances the travel industry’s positive impact to help people and places thrive. We believe it’s in all our best interest to support the destinations our industry depends on so that communities, travelers and businesses can prosper. We mobilize the entire industry to use its business as a force for good by convening, educating and motivating all sectors to make a positive impact through travel. Learn more TourismCares.org and @TourismCares.

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