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A unifying voice for Virginia's forestry community

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 14, 2021

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PRESTON R. WILLSON RECOGNIZED WITH VFA DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

Richmond, VA – The Virginia Forestry Association awarded Preston R. Willson of the Holiday Lake 4-H Center with the 2021 Distinguished Service Award during the 2021 Virginia Forestry Summit in Harrisonburg, Virginia this September. VFA's Distinguished Service Award gives public recognition to individuals, groups, associations, and/or companies and corporations who make a significant, continuing and lasting contribution to the conservation of Virginia's forest resources and/or the enhancement of Virginia's forest-based community.

Mr. Willson's involvement with Holiday Lake 4-H Educational Center began when he was asked to serve on their Board of Directors in 1976, serving as Chairman of the Board, Treasurer, and Vice-President. In 1995, Willson joined the 4-H Center staff, and has served as interim Center Director on 3 occasions, eventually becoming the Center's President & CEO.

During his tenure on staff, Willson has raised more than \$1,500,000 to support the mission of 4-H, which is to provide kids with community, mentors, and learning opportunities to develop the skills they need to create positive change in their lives and communities. His efforts have led to the remodeling of the dining hall and restrooms, upgrading all utilities, new sewer, well, water, and power systems, and 6 new PODs. Willson personally financed a shade pavilion over the archery range that carries his family's name. His work in development continues as Willson is currently raising funds to construct the 4-H Center Multi-Purpose Building, where children, adults, and families can participate and learn in an assortment of life enhancing programs.

Willson has been instrumental launching and developing the Center's Natural Resource Education (NRE) programs. During the 2019 school year, the latest complete in-person programs, over 3,500 students had participated in the NRE curriculum. More than 45,000 have participated in NRE since its inception in 1996. All tolled, through a variety of special events and other programs offered, a total of 227,000 participants have come to the 4-H Center since Willson joined the 4-H staff in 1995.

Away from his work at the 4-H Center, Willson is passionate about being a conservationist and tree farmer. In 2006, he placed his homeplace of 149 acres in a conservation easement with Virginia Outdoors Foundation, and in 2017 received Tree Farm Certification on 103 acres. Preston and his wife, Janie, enjoy spending weekend in the small home they built on the Amelia County property in 1999.

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About Virginia Forestry Association:

Founded in 1943, the Virginia Forestry Association (VFA) is a not-for-profit organization that represents Virginia's diverse forestry community and promotes the sustainable use and conservation of forest resources to ensure their long-term benefits for all Virginians. VFA's diverse membership of more than 1,000 companies and individuals includes forest landowners, foresters, forest products businesses, loggers, forestry consultants, and a variety of stakeholders who value the conservation and sustainable use of forest resources as a driver of ecological, economic, and social prosperity in Virginia.

Learn more at www.vaforestry.org.

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