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**CHAT Partners with the Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention & Visitors Bureau to Present
the Synergy Summit for Cultural and Heritage Tourism May 16-18, 2018**

EARLY BIRD REGISTRATION NOW OPEN THROUGH APRIL 15

***The Cultural and Heritage Tourism Summit Will Gather Tourism "Power Players" to Connect, Collaborate
and Create Broader Inclusion and Engagement for Small Businesses in Florida's Tourism Industry***

FORT LAUDERDALE, FL | March 8, 2018: The Cultural Heritage Alliance for Tourism, Inc. (CHAT) in partnership with the Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention & Visitors Bureau (GFLCVB) will present the 1st Annual Synergy Summit for Cultural and Heritage Tourism (Cultural & Heritage Tourism Summit) scheduled for May 16-18, 2018. The Cultural & Heritage Tourism Summit will be held in several locations throughout Broward County. The Renaissance Plantation Hotel will serve as the host hotel. Early Bird Registration is \$99; General is \$199. Register at www.culturalheritagesummit.com.

The two-day Cultural & Heritage Tourism Summit is the place where more than 200 tourism "Power Players" will gather to communicate and explore synergy for collaboration as well as form strategic partnerships that strengthen and protect Florida's tourism ecosystem. The Summit will showcase cultural and heritage tourism assets expanding the tourism footprint and economic impact in Florida's heritage neighborhoods and multicultural communities.

"This is an ideal time to present The Cultural & Heritage Tourism Summit as a way to help small businesses understand what tourism is all about and the tremendous financial benefits that tourism can drive into their businesses as well as creating jobs for locals. The GFLCVB is excited about partnering with CHAT to present this first-of-its-kind, unique platform that will bring together tourism professionals with small businesses and attractions for exploring collaboration and business development opportunities in the tourism industry," says Albert Tucker, Vice President, Multicultural Business Development, Greater Fort Lauderdale CVB.

A **Pre-Summit Symposium** will take place on **Wednesday, May 16, 2018** that will feature several historians from Florida discussing the historical and economic impact of tourism for heritage communities and historic sites. A book signing featuring the historians will follow the Symposium which will be live streamed on Sunny.TV and in several middle & high schools throughout South Florida. Following the Symposium, tourism professionals will participate in **Cultural & Heritage Familiarization Tours** showcasing the community assets of the City of Oakland Park, City of Miramar and the City of Pompano Beach.

Some of the distinguished confirmed Summit speakers include **Rosemary Rice McCormick**, who will deliver the keynote address during the **Opening Session** on **May 17, 2018**. She will discuss the national and global impact of cultural & heritage tourism, the fastest growing segment of the travel industry. Rosemary is the publisher and editor of *SHOP AMERICA* magazine, oversees development and international marketing of Shop America Tours and produces the annual ONE Travel Conference for Shopping, Dining and Cultural Tourism. In addition, Rosemary is the co-founder and President of the US Cultural & Heritage Tourism Marketing Council and publisher of *The Cultural Traveler* guide. She is the author of the award-winning book *Marketing Cultural & Heritage Tourism*.

Eugene Franklin, Director of the National Cultural Heritage Tourism Center, will address the importance of cultural heritage tourism in supporting economic development for small businesses in multicultural communities during the Opening Session.

Summit participants will attend **The “World of Culture” Welcome Reception** the evening of **May 17, 2018** which will be hosted off-site in the FATVillage Arts District in downtown Fort Lauderdale. Several cultures will be showcased through food, music, dance, film and art at this festive city block party.

Joining the Summit as featured guests on the **Let’s CHAT Talk Show** discussing **“Building Vibrant Cultural & Heritage Tourism Districts”** during the General Session on **Friday, May 18, 2018** will be Greg Deshields, Executive Director, Philadelphia Convention & Visitors Bureau PHLDiversity and Andrew Witt, Executive Director, St. Johns Tourist Development Council, Neal Shoemaker, Owner, Harlem Heritage Tours and invited guests from New Orleans.

During both days of the Summit, the **Cultural & Heritage Marketplace & Exhibition**, sponsored by Broward Cultural Division, will showcase the works of some of South Florida’s top artists as well as local attractions, tour operators and tourism-related businesses who will be exhibitors.

Several exciting hot topics will be addressed during the **Synergy Sessions** taking place on **May 17, 2018**. The session on **“Gentrification, Community Development & Tourism”** will present a panel of real estate developers and community developers who are implementing creative community development strategies in heritage neighborhoods & urban communities and the role tourism plays in fueling these local economies.

On **May 17, 2018** during the **Best of the Best Tourism Power Players Awards Luncheon** sponsored by Visit Florida, **Kenneth Lawson, President & CEO of Visit Florida** will address attendees about the State of Tourism in Florida as well as acknowledge and honor the Best of the Best in tourism including CVBs, hotel concierges, DMCs, meeting planners, tour operators, artists, tour guides, travel agents, city/county Cultural Affairs agencies and tourism-related businesses.

The Cultural & Heritage Tourism Summit is all about making connections that extend beyond the causeway, city and county lines. The Summit’s goal is to connect tourism-related small businesses, attractions, tour operators, artists and tour guides with Convention & Visitors Bureaus (CVBs), hotel concierges, destination management companies (DMCs), travel agents, online travel agents and meeting & event planners through one-on-one matchmaking meetings and the Summit Expo showcasing their attractions, products and services. In addition, the Summit will provide professional development for travel & tourism professionals who will gain more knowledge and exposure about little known cultural & heritage assets throughout South Florida and the rich culture & history of heritage neighborhoods and multicultural communities.

“Florida does tourism quite well, as a matter of fact, to the tune of **\$108.8 billion** from **112.8 million tourists** who visited our State in 2016. Yet, these tourism dollars and tourists’ foot traffic have not made an economic impact in many of our heritage neighborhoods and multicultural communities. Many of our tour operators, tour guides, artists, attractions and tourism-related small businesses are not active participants in Florida’s tourism ecosystem and now is the time for more inclusion, diversity and engagement,” says Stephanie M. Jones, President & Summit Producer, Cultural Heritage Alliance for Tourism, Inc.

The Summit will convene “Tourism Power Players” for the purpose of broadening the conversation around inclusion and collaboration that can strengthen cultural & heritage tourism and help sustain Florida’s positioning as a top tourism destination.

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