

For Immediate Release

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Chincoteague Chamber of Commerce

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**CHINCOTEAGUE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE ANNOUNCES WINNERS
AT 39TH ANNUAL EASTER DECOY & ART FESTIVAL**

Chincoteague VA—April 4, 2018: The Chincoteague Chamber of Commerce Easter Decoy & Art Festival is one of the largest on the east coast with a loyal following of attendees and exhibitors. It is one of the first festivals on the Eastern Shore of Virginia and is considered a rite of spring on the islands. Fine art, carvings, jewelry, sculpture and other artisan crafts were showcased by close to 80 exhibitors at the two day festival.

People's Choice Award for Best Carver was awarded to Chincoteague native Cork McGee. An island native for 87 years, Cork began carving hunting rigs—he guided hunting trips for ducks and geese for 58 years. He mentored under Cigar Daisey as he “hung out in his shop”. His family lived on Assateague Island for many years and his father was a waterman. Now his decoys are collector’s items.

People’s Choice Award for Best Artist was awarded to island local Nancy Richards West. Nancy has been a professional artist on Chincoteague Island since 1974. Her primary focus is the creation of oil paintings of landscapes, birds and animals, still life and nudes. She works in pastel and the ancient art of sumi-e painting (Chinese brush stroke painting). Many of Nancy’s landscape paintings are done en plein air (outdoors), where she is “drawn to the challenge of painting the fleeting light”.

Best Photograph of Chincoteague or Assateague was presented to Captain Debbie Ritter for her outstanding photo of the early morning Pony Swim in 2017. Debbie has studied and captured images of wildlife on the Eastern Shore for over 30 years and has a large body of work featuring wild Chincoteague ponies. She captains her own cruise boat under the name Chincoteague Nature Encounters.

The Curtis Merritt Award of Excellence is awarded to an exhibitor demonstrating exemplary qualities as an artist or carver as chosen by a jury of their peers. The 2018 recipient is Grover Cantwell Jr. Cantwell is a self-taught artist whose goal is to capture the mood of the marshes, beaches and wildlife through the changing seasons of his native Eastern Shore of Maryland. Watercolor is his most frequently used medium, but he enjoys oils, pen and ink, and pastels as well.

The Chincoteague Combined School Band was the recipient of the Pre-Loved Treasures silent auction proceeds. A wide variety of pre-owned treasures were sold at silent auction to aid in the purchase of much needed band instruments. Music was enjoyed both days by local guitarist and singer Rick Rose from the Chincoteague Cultural Alliance. The Chincoteague Chamber of Commerce thanks the volunteers who helped with the show and all attendees and exhibitors for participating.

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