

DURHAM, N.C. (March 21, 2022) — Gov. Roy Cooper presented Visit North Carolina's Esse Quam Videri Award to the High Point Market Authority today for its contribution to the state's economy through tourism, manufacturing and other industries. Deborah Holt Noel, host of "North Carolina Weekend" on PBS North Carolina, and Vince Chelena, executive director of the N.C. Travel Industry Association, were welcomed to the Winners Circle in recognition of achievements advancing the successes of North Carolina tourism.

The awards were presented at the annual Visit NC 365 Conference at the Durham Convention Center. Nearly 500 people from North Carolina's tourism industry are attending the conference, the state's premier travel industry event, which concludes today.

The Esse Quam Videri award, which takes its name from the state motto, celebrates the High Point Market Authority's dedication to bettering its community and the state by dedicating time, energy and resources for a greater good. The Authority's leadership embodies what it means "to be, rather than to seem."

Founded in 1909, the High Point Market is the world's largest home furnishings trade show. A powerful economic engine, it supports 42,000 jobs and generates \$202 million in state and local tax revenue. The Market's April and October editions attract tens of thousands of attendees, who fly in and out of the state's three major airports, fill 50,000 hotel rooms in the Greater High Point area, dine at local restaurants and otherwise fuel the economy.

The Market Authority underscored the power of its vision and leadership with the onset of COVID-19. After the pandemic forced the cancellation of the spring 2020 event, the Authority implemented health and safety measures that allowed the gathering to resume in the fall.

Tammy Covington Nagem, the Authority's chief operating officer, accepted the award, which was initiated in 2019. Previous winners are Kinston business leaders Stephen Hill of Mother Earth Brewing and Vivian Howard of Chef & the Farmer along with Bill Carson, co-founder of the Orchard at Altapass in Spruce Pine.

As the newest inductees into Visit NC's Winners Circle, Deborah Holt Noel and Vince Chelena join more than 55 members honored since it debuted in 2004. The award recognizes significant and continuing contributions to the growth and success of North Carolina's tourism industry.

Noel is host and producer of "North Carolina Weekend," the popular Visit NC-sponsored series that connects viewers to destinations, activities and culture across the state. A graduate of St. Augustine's College, Noel earned her master's degree from the University of Maryland at College Park. While working on her master's in the early 1990s, she produced "[Exhausted Remedies: The Joe Holt Story](#)," a 37-minute documentary about her family's effort to integrate Raleigh public schools. A Durham resident who joined PBS North Carolina in 1999, Holt also hosts the network's "Black Issues Forum." "North Carolina Weekend" is set to launch its 20th season in September.

For 20 years, Chelena has served as executive director of the N.C. Tourism Industry Association (NCTIA), a member-based organization that advocates for the state tourism industry. With origins dating to 1955, NCTIA comprises local businesses, statewide organizations and others with a stake in the tourism economy. Chelena, who began his career as a hotel bellman, and his team have spearheaded grassroots efforts to advocate for sound policy on occupancy taxes, school date starts and other issues. After the pandemic's onset, Chelena worked with the General Assembly on legislation to allow tourism development authorities to qualify for PPP loans. He also worked with legislative leaders to secure funding for a pilot program for recruiting high school students to the dynamic and upwardly mobile tourism and hospitality industry.

Other members of the Winners Circle include Bill Cecil Jr. of Biltmore, Mary Jaeger-Gale of Chimney Rock Park, NASCAR legend Richard Petty, Jean Beasley of the Karen Beasley Sea Turtle Rescue & Rehabilitation Center, the late Hugh Morton of Grandfather Mountain and the late Peggy Kirk Bell of the Pine Needles and Mid Pines golf resorts.

Note: Photos of the award recipients will be available for download [here](#).

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