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**Pocahontas Exhibition Mine Opens for the Season with
Safety Demonstrations from the Virginia Department of
Mines, Minerals and Energy**

Pocahontas, Va.- The Pocahontas Exhibition mine officially opens for the 2016 season today. On hand to provide safe mining demonstrations was the Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy (DMME).

“What better way to get this season started than with learning about safety in today’s coal mines,” said Mayor Ben Gibson. “We’ve been working with DMME for a year now and we are glad to have them a part of our community as they recognize the importance of the Exhibition Mine.”

The opening ceremony included words from Board of Supervisors representative Maggie Asbury and Mayor Benjamin Gibson, DMME Deputy Director Butch Lambert and Virginia Mine Chief Randy Moore.

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Students from the Tazewell County Career and Technical School attended the event. DMME set up different demonstrations on safety in coal mining, the natural gas industry and in the mineral mining industry.

They also received a tour of the Pocahontas Exhibition Mine. The day ended with a simulated mine rescue event in which the DMME Mine Rescue team showed their skills in rescue and recovery underground.

“What better way to learn about the industries in our community than to see it first hand,” said Virginia Mine Chief Randy Moore. “DMME has pledged to do what we can to keep this exhibition mine safe and open to the public so they can learn about coal mining when they come to Pocahontas.”

The Pocahontas Exhibition Mine is the only of its kind in Virginia. Located in the town of Pocahontas in Tazewell County, the mine takes visitors underground to see how coal was produced in the 19th century. The 13 foot coal seam was first mined in 1882 and an operation remained there for 73 years. Pocahontas coal also once fueled the American Navy. In 2015, the Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy (DMME) decided to partner with the mine in an effort to preserve some of the history of coal mining in southwest Virginia.

Mine safety workers within DMME inspect the exhibition mine to make sure it is safe for visitors. DMME also awarded the mine with a community outreach grant to purchase signs with educational and historical information about coal mining in Virginia.

The Pocahontas Exhibition Mine is open April through September on Wednesdays through Sundays. Operating hours are 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday through Saturday and 1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. on Sunday. Adults can tour the mine and nearby museum for \$10.00; children for \$8.00. Groups that include 12 or more people can schedule a tour through December by calling 276-945-9522 or by sending an email to pocahontasva@comcast.net.

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