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American Bus Association Names OpSail 2012 Virginia™ One of North America's 100 Best Events for 2012: Event is Critical to Tourism Dollars

(NORFOLK, VA, February 8, 2012) - The American Bus Association (ABA) announced that OpSail 2012 Virginia™ from June 1-12, 2012 has been designated as one of the Top 100 Events in North America for 2012 by an experienced expert tourism industry selection committee. Inclusion in the Top 100 list, published as a supplement to the September/October issue of *Destinations* magazine, indicates that OpSail 2012 Virginia™ offers excellent entertainment value to both tour groups and individual travelers from around the world, according to ABA.

With the release of the American Bus Association's 2012 Top 100 Events in North America, ABA celebrates 30 years of the program. What began as a way for motorcoach operators to incorporate new product into their itineraries has grown to one of the most sought-after lists by travel professionals, motorcoach operators and the general public.

"The attractiveness of OpSail 2012 Virginia™ as a don't-miss entertainment value is only part of why its selection this year is such a distinction for the Hampton Roads and Chesapeake Bay Region" said Peter J. Pantuso, CTIS, ABA's president and CEO. "The real news here is that OpSail 2012 Virginia™ has been recognized as a potential magnet for tourism dollars, at a time when reenergizing domestic tourism is so important to our spirit and our economy. The honor gives Virginia an important boost in visibility among professional tour planners."

According to studies completed by researchers at The George Washington University and Dunham and Associates, one overnight visit by a motorcoach group can leave from US \$5,000 to more than US \$11,000 in a local destination's economy. Those dollars are spent on lodging, meals, admissions, fees, shopping, souvenirs, services and local taxes.

"Motorcoach groups spend more and stay longer," Pantuso said. "That's why OpSail 2012 Virginia™ is truly a local economic asset. There is no better way to jump-start tourism than to attract motorcoach groups to a great event and convince them to extend their stay."

ABA's 2012 Top 100 Events Selection Committee selected OpSail 2012 Virginia™ from hundreds of event nominations submitted by ABA members. Judges considered the event's broad appeal, its accessibility to motorcoaches and skill at handling large groups, and a variety of other relevant criteria.

The Top 100 Events list is available online at <http://www.buses.org/News-Publications/Top-100>.



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About Operation Sail, Inc.

Operation Sail, Inc. is a non-profit organization established in 1961 with the endorsement of President John F. Kennedy. Backed by a Joint Congressional Resolution, its mission is to advance sail training and promote goodwill among nations. To date, it has held five international sailing events—in 1964, 1976, 1986, 1992 and 2000—each tied to a landmark historical event and each culminating in a traditional Parade of Sail in New York Harbor. For more information, please visit www.opsail.org.

About the United States Navy

The U. S. Navy is the sea-service branch of the U. S. Armed Forces. The mission of the Navy is to maintain, train and equip combat-ready naval forces capable of winning wars, deterring aggression and maintaining freedom of the seas. The United States Navy – A Global Force For Good, www.navy.mil, www.history.navy.mil

About Norfolk Festevents, Ltd.

Norfolk Festevents, Ltd. is a private not-for-profit organization dedicated to producing city celebrations including premier concerts, festivals, ship visits, and special events for the residents and guests of Hampton Roads. Celebrating its 28th season, Norfolk Festevents has garnered international acclaim for its outstanding quality of programming. Norfolk Festevents is the official event marketing and production agency for the City of Norfolk.