



## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **UNIVERSAL LEAF TOBACCO COMPANY RECOGNIZED AS AGRIBUSINESS OF THE YEAR**

#### *Company Honored for Long Commitment to Virginia Agricultural Community*

**(Barboursville, VA)** Universal Leaf Tobacco Company of Richmond received the 2018 Agribusiness of the Year Award from the Virginia Agribusiness Council. Council Board Chair Kern Houff (Houff Corporation) presented the award at the 2018 Virginia Agribusiness Council Annual Meeting in Barboursville on September 19, 2018.

Each year, the Council acknowledges one of its members for outstanding contributions to Virginia's agribusiness industry and the Council. Universal Leaf received its charter of incorporation in 1918, making this its 100<sup>th</sup> year in operation! As an industry leader, Universal today conducts business in more than 30 countries on 5 continents and employs over 24,000 permanent and seasonal workers. Headquartered in Richmond, Universal Leaf purchases, processes and sells a variety of tobaccos, including flue-cured, burley, dark air-cured and oriental tobaccos. Universal's producers are the heart of the company, and their importance is evident in their focus on grower sustainability programs which include: education and schools, medical accessibility, reliable community water, and reforestation initiatives. In addition, Universal provides agronomy support, research and financing to tobacco farmers.

Lea Scott, a Virginia Agribusiness Council Board member and also Vice President of Agronomy Services for Universal, had this to say upon receiving the award, "We are very thankful and honored to receive this award and very appreciative of the great work the Council does on behalf of Virginia's agriculture and agribusiness."

The company's history with the Council dates back to the early years when several former members of the Virginia Agricultural Leadership Group formed the Virginia Agribusiness Council in the 1970s. Throughout its long-time membership with the Council, Universal Leaf Tobacco Company has proven to be an outstanding supporter of the agribusiness industry through leadership involvement in the Council's Board of Directors, sponsorships, and active participation at industry events and activities.

The Council's Executive Director Kyle Shreve commented, "We are incredibly proud to have Universal Leaf as a member of the Council and congratulate them on this well-deserved award. Their track record of innovation and adaptation has made them a global leader in the industry and we want to congratulate them on celebrating their 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary."

## **About The Virginia Agribusiness Council**

The Virginia Agribusiness Council is a non-profit organization committed to representing the interests of the agriculture and forestry industries in the Commonwealth through effective governmental relations efforts and initiatives. Its membership includes farmers, foresters, and other agricultural producers; industry suppliers; marketers and processors; and commodity and industry associations. It is headquartered in Richmond. For more information, please visit [www.va-agribusiness.org](http://www.va-agribusiness.org).

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### *Attached Photo*

Left to right: Trevor Simmons (ULT), Mauri Winegardner (ULT), Kyle Shreve (VAC Executive Director), Lea Scott (ULT) and Kern Houff (VAC Board President)