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AUTHENTIC AUGUSTA EXPERIENCE COLLECTION RECEIVES TWO TOURISM AWARDS AT THE STATE LEVEL

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Cartersville, GA—Destination Augusta received statewide recognition for the Authentic Augusta Experience collection of tourism products this week at the 2024 Georgia Association of Convention and Visitors Bureaus (GACVB) Annual Conference, in Cartersville, GA. The Authentic Augusta Experience Collection won awards in two different categories.

Destination Augusta received The Bill Hardman Sr. Tourism Champion Award for Product Development for the concept, funding support, launch, and delivery of the Authentic Augusta Experience collection. The recognition is traditionally given to a tourism partner, agency, or individual for outstanding work in attracting capital investments for tourism projects. SEP

“During the development of the Authentic Augusta Experience Collection, Destination Augusta worked with 10 partners through a year-long development process. Partners were equipped with tools for ideation, creation, scripting, and delivery of these novel experiences. Each experience engages all five senses—taste, touch, sight, hearing, and smell—to etch lasting memories for visitors,” shared Jennifer Bowen, Vice President of Destination Development and Community Engagement. It is particularly exciting to win the Bill Hardman Sr. Tourism Product Development award again.” Bowen said. Destination Augusta received the same honor in 2019 for the development of Augusta & Co., the experience center located at 1010 Broad Street in downtown Augusta.

Destination Augusta was also named one of five 2024 Travelblazers by *Georgia Trend*. This honor recognizes community destination development projects exemplifying multi-partner collaboration and creative product development that demonstrates tourism at the economic development table. The Authentic Augusta Experience collection was awarded this recognition for partnering with 10 organizations to create this new product. Experience partners included eight are non-profit cultural attractions and two are owner/operator entrepreneurs. The *Georgia Trend* Travelblazer award winners will be featured in the July issue of the magazine.

“The goal was to craft immersive experiences to revitalize cultural attractions and embrace two small businesses giving each a new source for revenue. With the combined efforts of the experience teams at each venue, we have developed a way to connect with locals and visitors in a way they can only experience in our city,” revealed Sarah Childers, Experience and Community Development Manager.

“I am proud of the team at Destination Augusta and our Authentic Augusta Experience collection partners,” said Bennish Brown, President & CEO. “This work was challenging but satisfying and gives our destination a new product to draw in visitors and engage locals.”

More About the Authentic Augusta Collection

The [Authentic Augusta Experience Collection](#) (AAE) is an immersive product for visitors and locals which resulted in a tailored marketing campaign. Augusta’s tourism product development plan, strategic plan, and a destination analysis all pointed to Augusta’s need for innovative products to entice visitors. In addition to the product development, Destination Augusta created a brand toolkit, guided each partner in planning a social media campaign, and provided financial support for the projects through tourism grant funds.

Launched in April 2023, the Authentic Augusta Experience Collection garnered \$914,897 in earned media via news and social media coverage. It served as the focal point of a co-op advertising campaign, led to the production of a promotional video of the full collection, and supplied fresh assets for use in tradeshow and recruiting meetings and conventions. It also boosts visitation and revenue numbers for local tourism partners.

ABOUT DESTINATION AUGUSTA

Destination Augusta is a not-for-profit 501(c)(6) corporation responsible for promoting tourism in the Augusta area. This destination marketing and management organization is the exclusive provider of tourism promotion services. Destination Augusta also operates Augusta & Co., Augusta's Experience Center, located at 1010 Broad Street, and the Augusta Film Commission. VisitAugusta.com

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