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WITH ART

AMLA's Melea Hames Honored with Tourism Promoter of the Year Award by the Alabama Restaurant and Hospitality Association

Decatur, Ala. (November 1, 2023) – Social Media Manager for the Alabama Mountain Lakes Tourist Association (AMLA) Melea Hames was awarded Tourism Promoter of the Year by the Alabama Restaurant and Hospitality Association (ARHA). The award was presented during the annual Stars of the Industry Awards Dinner held Monday, October 30, 2023, at Renaissance Birmingham Ross Bridge Golf Resort and Spa.

The Stars of the Industry is the ARHA annual awards dinner honoring the “best of the best” in the restaurant, lodging and tourism industry. The Stars awards are peer-nominated and winners were voted on by the Stars committee and ARHA's board of directors.

As the social media manager, Melea is the voice of AMLA on its social platforms. She has been instrumental in developing programs that produce dynamic results for tourism in North Alabama including the North Alabama Ambassadors program and the Unexpected Adventures in North Alabama podcast.

Melea launched the Ambassadors program in 2018 and it continues to garner incredible free publicity for the region and AMLA's members. In the current fiscal year, fifteen influencers published 641 posts. Total reach to date is 838.9K with 5.6M impressions and 1.12% engagement rate. The average for each post is 97.1 engagement, 1.3K reach and \$407.7 EMV. The campaign has generated \$261.3K EMV for the current fiscal year.

Launched in August 2021, the Unexpected Adventures in North Alabama podcast takes listeners through what there is to see and experience in the 16 northernmost counties of Alabama. Produced twice each month, the podcasts are not centered around interviews but are real conversations with our locals and experts in the industry. The podcast was recently named #3 on the 25 Best Alabama Podcasts to listen to list and last year, it was recognized on the international level when it was named a Silver winner in the Audio category of the 2022 MUSE Creative Awards. The MUSE Creative Awards and the MUSE Design Awards received over 6,000 submissions from around the world.

Melea has been employed with AMLA for approximately 13 years and has become an expert on how to engage, the importance of visuals, analytics and what they mean and current trends on social media. She is a sought after speaker for various events and meetings on the topic of social media as her presentations are informative and entertaining.

“It is an honor to see Melea presented the Tourism Promoter of the Year award and to be recognized on the state level for her work with the North Alabama Ambassadors program and the Unexpected Adventures in North Alabama podcast,” said Tami Reist, AMLA President and CEO. “AMLA's social media presence and the ambassador program have experienced tremendous growth and success because of Melea's inventiveness and creativity. The podcasts are not centered around interviews but are real conversations with our locals and

experts in the industry. It is a credit to the hard work by Melea to create something that is entertaining, engaging and informative that inspires others to want to come and explore the North Alabama region.”

For more information on the North Alabama Ambassadors program, visit <https://www.northalabama.org/plan-your-visit/about/ambassadors-program/>.

To listen to the Unexpected Adventures in North Alabama podcast, visit <https://www.northalabama.org/podcast/> or subscribe on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, Amazon Music, CastBox, Deezer, iHeart Radio, Listen Notes, Podcast Addict, Podchaser or Radio Public.

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Photo caption:

Melea Hames, social media manager for the Alabama Mountain Lakes Tourist Association, was honored by the Alabama Restaurant and Hospitality Association with the 2023 Tourism Promoter of the Year award at the annual Stars of the Industry awards dinner, Oct. 30, 2023, at the Renaissance Birmingham Ross Bridge Golf Resort & Spa.

About Alabama Mountain Lakes Tourist Association (AMLA)

AMLA is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the promotion and development of the \$4.3 billion North Alabama travel industry within the 16 northernmost counties of the state. It is supported by 500-plus members consisting of chambers of commerce, Convention & Visitors Bureaus, attractions, campgrounds, festivals, communities, golf courses, restaurants, accommodations and vendors. Counties included within the AMLA region are Blount, Cherokee, Colbert, Cullman, DeKalb, Etowah, Franklin, Jackson, Lauderdale, Lawrence, Limestone, Madison, Marion, Marshall, Morgan and Winston. Additional information on North Alabama destinations, accommodations and special events is available by calling 800.648.5381, by visiting www.NorthAlabama.org and by following us on social media @VisitNorthAL.