Hospitality for All
Sparking DEI Discussions in Henry County, GA

INCLUSIVE MARKETING CAMPAIGNS
From Charlottesville, VA to Ellijay, GA

Explore Brookhaven’s
RENEE ARENG

WHO WILL BE HOSTING THE TU SOUTHEAST SUMMIT IN 2023?
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Welcome to the first issue of the Travel Unity Magazine!

Our inaugural edition focuses on our first Southeast Summit, which took place in Brookhaven, GA, in March 2022.

We're excited to feature an array of individuals from the Southeast U.S. and beyond.

Our friends from Georgia, hailing from Brookhaven, Ellijay, Augusta, Henry County, and Macon, are present in showcasing how they are practicing applied DEI.

Be sure to keep your eyes on these leading voices!

- Roni Weiss - Executive Director, Travel Unity

Since its founding in 2016, Travel Unity has experienced immense growth of its community and impact.

We welcome you to join us as we strive to make the world of travel more inclusive and equitable. We look forward to seeing you at our upcoming events!

- Dr. Kristin Lamoureux
Interim President, Travel Unity
In August 2021, Explore Brookhaven, in conjunction with the Social Justice, Race, and Equity Commission, coordinated civic dinners geared to discussing important social issues. Social Justice, Race, and Equity commissioners facilitated conversations around racial equity, and spent an hour discussing three thought-provoking questions. The commission expects to make recommendations to improve the city’s vision and mission statement, city hiring and retention practices, procurement and contracting, and policing, publicly engaging the Brookhaven community throughout the process.

As a way to support Brookhaven’s Hispanic residents and promote the city via Spanish language content, Explore Brookhaven launched @exploraBrookhaven on Instagram.

Renee Areng, Executive Director of Explore Brookhaven, serves on the Destinations International Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Task Force, and works with Brookhaven’s Social Justice Race and Equity Commission. Renee took part in TU’s inaugural Certified Diversity Travel Professional (CDTP) cohort and has committed to Destinations International’s Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Pledge.
Some of the employers featured include Yelp, AmEx, and other large employers, as well as small tour operators and destination marketing organizations.

The Job Marketplace is for employers in all sectors of the travel industry and all levels of employment from entry-level roles up to C-suite.

Going forward, Travel Unity plans to add webinars and job seeker consulting, as well as more resources for organizations to help ensure that the matches formed through the marketplace are successful in the long term.

travelunity.org/jobs
2022 Southeast Youth Summit Recap

Coming from eight schools and majoring in everything from business to biology, the 20 student participants in the 2022 TU SE Youth Summit immersed themselves in the world of tourism, each participating in one of four tracks: Culinary, Hospitality/Lodging, Government/Public Policy, and Tour Operations.

Each student connected with peers from three other states, getting to know one other’s common values and sharing their dreams and hopes for the future. They met with industry professionals and completed challenges around today's pressing DEI issues in the tourism industry.

Describing the experience, Jade Croslan from Clark Atlanta University said, "I was so excited to hear from the speakers and meet a lot of awesome people. I have a lot of wonderful memories from the Youth Summit."

Thanks to the generous support of SYTA, SYTA Youth Foundation, Explore Brookhaven, and Tourism Cares/Arival, all students were able to attend free of charge to prevent any barriers in participating.

Proclamation

Travel Unity thanks the Georgia State House of Representatives for recognizing our first Southeast Summit via House Resolution 1079.

"Commending Travel Unity and recognizing March 22-25, 2022, as the first regional event in the Southeast; and for other purposes."

Sponsored by

GA Rep. Becky Evans
GA Rep. Mary Margaret Oliver
GA Rep. Matthew Wilson
GA Rep. Park Cannon
GA Rep. Scott Holcomb
GA Rep. Shelly Hutchinson
Miles believes that our clients are in a key position to drive dynamic economic opportunities within their communities.

It is our responsibility at Miles to help our clients be brand stewards on behalf of the diverse communities they serve, and to ultimately reflect the diverse communities we all live in.

Destinations who enact intentional and strategic approaches to DEI will foster innovation and bring together a wide variety of voices and experiences, helping to promote tourism and sustain local economies.

We are committed to the meaningful and complex work of DEI, both within Miles and with our clients, now and into the future.

Integrating DEI into Miles Partnership

Miles Partnership’s commitment to DEI provides a pathway to organizational sustainability, both internally across organizational operations, and externally by remaining innovative and focused on the same societal and consumer shifts that are top-of-mind for our clients.

In 2020, through the commitment of our CEO, we completed several milestones to build a DEI framework, including an internal DEI assessment, facilitated training sessions for staff and, most recently, hiring a Chief Diversity & Inclusion Officer and Vice President of DEI to lead and develop our organization’s vision for DEI.
We want all people to feel welcome in Gilmer County and we want our potential guests to see themselves reflected in our marketing efforts.

Thus far, we have partnered with talent/models/bloggers/influencers who understand our goals in regard to people with disabilities, who are Black, Asian, Hispanic, or Native-American, have tattoos, non-traditional hair (green, blue), are older (60+), young families, teenagers etc.

Difficult conversations had to take place as we set out to build a photo library with DEI as a focus. A lot of this had to do with coming to grips with our failings, which is hard. To truly represent the visitors we want to see in Gilmer County, we accept that hard conversations must happen to do this work.

Our goal as a DMO is to bring visitors to Gilmer County, and the more people who feel not just welcome, but wanted, the better.
Just before the pandemic hit in 2020, one key priority for us was developing a new destination marketing and branding campaign. Our community was ready for a new chapter in its identity, and I’m so proud of the way Destination Augusta stepped into its role of telling the story of our destination through a focus on diversity.

Hospitality for All is an educational series designed to teach hospitality workers the importance of recognizing how the issues of diversity, equity and inclusion impact customer service. The five-part series led by subject matter experts discusses topics such as accessible tourism, the black experience and intersectionality. Visit Henry County, GA, made the Hospitality for All initiative a priority after recognizing how the county’s visitor demographics had shifted and those visitors’ experiences or perceptions did not reflect the welcoming nature that the organization wanted to project.

In its first year of implementation, Hospitality for All sparked discussion not only in the hospitality community but also interest surfaced for the program to be used in the larger business sector as well. The staff of Visit Henry County, GA, was excited to share the considerations and lessons learned from embarking on such a program with the Travel Unity audience.

Generating community pride through a true reflection and celebration of the people who live here is also a launch pad to show our destination as a welcoming place to visit. At least that’s how we see it at Destination Augusta.

“Generation community pride through a true reflection and celebration of the people who live here is also a launch pad to show our destination as a welcoming place to visit. At least that’s how we see it at Destination Augusta.”

Bennish Brown
President/CEO
Augusta Convention & Visitors Bureau

Lauren Luker
Director of Tourism
Henry County Chamber of Commerce/CVB
Highlight on Discover Black Cville

As an organization, the Charlottesville Albemarle Convention and Visitors Bureau recognized the need to represent a holistic history of our destination and emphasize historically underrepresented stories and businesses in the tourism economy. In 2020 we started a series of engaging listening sessions in the Charlottesville and Albemarle County, VA, with black residents who worked in the tourism economy. This group grew in size and enthusiasm, which led to our creation of a sub-brand – Discover Black Cville – to attract Black visitors and support Black-owned and Black-led businesses. This community engagement led to a lot of diverse input and wide community acceptance. Discover Black Cville has led to larger conversations that now include a “Tourism for All” initiative to attain community alignment and a destination-wide inviting experience. By centering our focus on being inclusive and welcoming, we’ve become some of the community experts on this work and a way for people to come together to have these important conversations.

Travel, comfort, and happiness are human rights. If Destination Marketing and Management organizations are not proactively working with our community to be welcoming to any and all visitors, we are not doing our jobs. Tourism should be how people are able to safely encounter and explore other cultures and gain a deeper understanding of themselves. Without making our communities welcoming, that’s impossible to achieve.
Macon, Georgia, is a small city in Middle Georgia on the rise. In 2021, our downtown welcomed 10 new businesses, despite the lingering effects of the pandemic, along with a record number of tourists, reaching all-time highs in hotel-motel tax collection and new night stays. But as we revitalize our historic urban core, outside interest in buying and developing our downtown properties has increased dramatically. We are keenly aware that these trends could lead to the displacement of our local businesses owners; we also know that diverse and locally-owned businesses are what make a tourism district dynamic and appealing.

At NewTown, we understand that there are real hurdles for our local female, BIPOC, and LGBTQ+ entrepreneurs to launch or expand their businesses, including a lack of pre-existing wealth needed to secure loans, little or no social access to financing networks, and limited traditional funding options for hospitality and entertainment-based businesses. To ensure we support and foster a diverse set of business owners and real estate developers, we are committed to more creative measures to determine if a client is investment-ready, such as the coachability of the borrower and their recent history with paying bills on time and a project’s potential social and economic impacts.

We are the people and places of travel, dedicated to the people and places of travel. Tourism Cares unites the travel industry and is a catalyst of positive social, environmental and economic impact, truly believing that we can change the world through travel. We’re furthering that work through a number of programs that engage, inspire and activate travel and tourism companies and professionals.

Our next Meaningful Travel Summit will take place in Victoria, BC, September 28 - 30, 2022. Nature-based experiences are some of the fastest-growing elements in tourism, and one the industry can play a direct role in helping to responsibly manage. Conservation of our natural resources is critical for our travel product, our destination communities, and the travel experience. During Tourism Cares with Victoria, we will meet in a destination dependent on its water and green spaces, and through volunteering, facilitated education sessions, and shared stories, attendees will learn from environmental and Indigenous groups on how we can all be better stewards.
Leaders must have a strategic action plan that anchors DEI to the organization’s business practices.

Plans must have accountability and responsibility, creating space for these efforts to be a high point of conversation and action for leaders and operational managers. It is the first level of establishing an inclusive organizational culture.

A great strategic plan installs the resources and discipline that embeds DEI throughout the organization while narrowing its DEI focus to the priorities that provide the highest impact for improvement.

Tourism Diversity Matters, founded in 2021, is a collaborative leader of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives and concepts in the tourism industry that can address the disparities of diverse communities. We are committed to empowering the tourism and events industry to change and evolve by creating solutions that can be implemented, contributing to organizational success.

At TDM, we focus on four primary pillars of activity to benefit the tourism industry: Apprenticeships, Workforce Development, Diversity Equity and Inclusion, Research and Data.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) is a critical component of the tourism industry; boosting diversity and inclusion is an opportunity for travel brands to truly connect with their customers by creating a workforce, leadership, and culture that reflects and understands the people you serve in all their diversity.
Through its integrated marketing and public relations strategies, Richmond Region Tourism introduces millions of people per year to the region. In our messaging, we focus on consistently sharing diverse voices from underrepresented groups in our community.

Launched in 2019, BLK RVA highlights the Black cultural experience in the Richmond Region. The initiative encourages in-person patronage and online engagement for visitors and residents through marketing campaigns that celebrate the region’s Black community, businesses and culture. The campaign can be found at visitblkrva.com

RRT started the OutRVA campaign in 2014 to promote the region as a welcoming destination for LGBTQ travelers. Businesses can display OutRVA stickers in windows and in buildings to show their commitment to the LGBTQ community as part of the campaign. RRT also engages LGBTQ journalists and influencers, as well as educates local hospitality partners about LGBTQ identities through training. More info at OutRVA.com.

Ever since taking her position as Executive Director of the organization in 2018, Karen Kuhl has been telling the story of Auburn, NY, as Harriet Tubman’s chosen hometown.

In 2019, the Cayuga County Tourism Office identified the need to address its DEI efforts in order to authentically promote the destination.

The organization has been on a path to authentically address DEI issues by:

- Gaining support from the Board of Directors
- Integrating DEI principles from within organizational documents
- Encouraging tourism partners in our county to integrate DEI into their organizations
- Aligning with leading DEI organizations in the industry – Travel Unity
- Seeking DEI professional development that delivers actionable items that will improve the organization, such as Travel Unity’s Certified Diversity Tourism Professional (CDTP) program
- Identifying ways to promote our work, including speaking opportunities

Karen Kuhl
Executive Director
Cayuga County Convention and Visitors Bureau
Where Culture Meets Brand

As the travel and tourism industry looks to 2022 and beyond to regrow what has been lost during the global pandemic, limited resources have complicated how and when brands are attempting to understand and reach diverse consumers based on ethnic identity, ability, and diversity of thought.

All the while, heritage, ability, and ethnicity do not equate to convenient and packaged, homogenous consumer behaviors and preferences that can be targeted to. Nor do resources exist to pursue every segment of the BIPOC community.

To learn more, contact danny@culturistgroup.com and visit culturistgroup.com.

Instead, marketers and brand strategists must understand that no one group is monolithic in identity. Instead, cultural associations and identities are a much more accurate way of building bridges and connections to travelers who are espousing preferences and viewpoints that are more prominent than ever before.

The National Employment Team (NET) is a network of Business Relations Specialists representing each of the 78 public Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agencies across the country, including in every state, the territories, and D.C. The NET provides a range of services to businesses that are working to include people with disabilities in their outreach, recruitment, hiring and retention.

In addition to assisting companies in building the talent pipeline, including candidates from the VR agencies, they also provide a range of no-cost services, including:

- Staff training on disability awareness
- Structuring training programs, including internships and apprenticeships
- Building a talent pipeline and referring qualified candidates
- Developing and supporting diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion models that include people with disabilities
- Retention support for employees who develop disabilities

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