



CVB Annual Meeting & 2016 Economic Impact Figures Released



The Athens Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) held its annual meeting Tuesday, October 17, highlighted by the release of new economic impact figures for Athens-Clarke County and the presentation of the annual Athens Hospitality Awards.

Visitors to Athens-Clarke County spent **\$292.30 million** in direct domestic spending in 2016, a **3.9% increase** over the previous year, according to the 2016 *Travel Economic Impact on Georgia State, Counties and Regions* study prepared for the Georgia Department of Economic Development (GDEcD) by the United States Travel

Association (USTA).

Tourism in Athens-Clarke County generated **2,740 jobs** with a \$61.01 million payroll, as well as \$12.22 million in state tax and \$7.95 million in local tax collections. Total state and local taxes of \$20.17 million were collected from visitor spending. Each household in Clarke County would need to be taxed an additional \$465 per year to replace the state and local taxes generated by direct domestic spending alone. Though final numbers for total tourism impacts for 2016 are not yet available, prior years have demonstrated that when we include domestic and international visitors, with both direct and indirect impacts included, that tax relief figure almost doubles.



*Athens Convention and Visitors Bureau Staff
L-R Top: Venessa Banks, Chuck Jones, Jay Boling, Nick Arnold
Middle: Hannah Smith, Missy Brant Wilson, Christin Walker;
Front: Sonya Dills, Aimee Cheek, Jeremiah Cook*

Hospitality Awards Presented

The CVB also presented the annual Athens Hospitality Awards, which recognize the outstanding work of individuals whose efforts have made a positive impact on the Athens-Clarke County visitor experience.

The **Partner of the Year Award** honors a CVB partner in the local hospitality industry who recognizes the value of working together to achieve greatness. The person not only understands synergy, but also embodies the hospitality aspect of tourism to its fullest degree. This position is a shining example to others about how to partner with the CVB. The 2017 Partner of the Year Award was presented to **Kim Barnett of Benson's Hospitality Group**. Barnett has worked for Benson's Hospitality Group since July of 1998 in a myriad of roles, from reservations to revenue manager. Her ability to be a positive role model for her peers and gain the respect of guests has helped in making Athens a destination of choice for meeting planners. "After years of bringing students to conferences, I stepped into the world of planning conferences in 2012," recalls Steve Price of Georgia Technology Student Association (TSA). "Kim, along with the other Athens partners, made that transition smooth. Kim has always found a quick solution to every hiccup that popped up along the way, like finding hotel rooms for 40 college students at the last minute. Without hesitation, Kim is always a phone call away." CVB Director of Sales Missy Brandt Wilson adds, "Kim makes the entire process easy for meeting planners and is always willing to jump in and help when opportunities arise, which is so crucial for meeting planners in choosing Athens over another destination."



*L-R Chuck Jones, Kathy Hoard,
Kim Barnett, Missy Brandt Wilson*

The **Hospitality HEROES (Hospitality Employees Recognition of Excellent Service) of the Year Award** recognizes a front-line employee who has exceeded normal expectations to provide excellent service to visitors and residents. The 2017 Hospitality HEROES of the Year award



L-R Chuck Jones, Kathy Hoard, Janet Parker Gregory, Aimee Cheek, Missy Brandt Wilson

was given to **Janet Parker Gregory of the Taylor-Grady House**. Gregory welcomed visitors to Athens for years at the Athens Welcome Center from 2011 until 2015. She now serves as the administrative director for the Junior League of Athens and event coordinator for the Taylor-Grady House, where she is the front-line representative for brides, other event planners and their thousands of guests. She routinely is singled out by planners and guests for providing an exceptional experience in Athens. "Mrs. Gregory went above and beyond to ensure that my daughter's wedding was a huge success at the Taylor-Grady House. She is very knowledgeable not only with the

Taylor-Grady House, but also with Athens vendors, which helped us tremendously. With her help, the day went without a hitch," shares one of her happy clients. Another bride shares, "Janet made my whole wedding experience a dream!" Gregory is also active with the Athens Historical Society and is a proud alumna of LEAD Athens.

The **Classic Host Award** recognizes a local individual or individuals committed to bringing to the Athens area a new convention, meeting or event generating a significant economic impact. The 2017 Classic Host Award was given to **Allen Seigler**. As Georgia HOSA executive director and state advisor, Seigler hosted their State Leadership Conference in Athens for nine years, bringing nearly 21,000 students into the city, occupying 18 different hotels and bringing \$9,592,242.49 in direct spending to Athens. Georgia HOSA will be returning to Athens and The Classic Center in fall of 2018. Although Seigler has recently resigned from Georgia HOSA to begin a new adventure with his own company, Exponential Management, his support of Athens will continue as a meeting planner through his new company. "Allen has been a great friend to Athens and has had a profound impact on tourism in our city. His eagerness to recommend Athens to other meeting planners and his loyalty to return year after year is immensely appreciated," says CVB Director Chuck Jones.



L-R Kathy Hoard, Missy Brant Wilson, Allen Seigler, Chuck Jones



L-R Paul Cramer, Didi Dunphy, Michael Lachowski

The **Louis Griffith Hospitality Leadership Award** honors an outstanding individual in the local hospitality industry who displays foresight and exceptional leadership skills to impact the Athens-Clarke County hospitality industry and the community as a whole. The Louis Griffith Hospitality Leadership Award was presented to **Didi Dunphy of the Lyndon House Arts Center**. Dunphy has been a major player in the art scene of Athens for the past 15 years as an artist, educator, mentor, community organizer, curator and visionary. As the program supervisor at the Lyndon House

Arts Center, Dunphy heads programming which brings exciting exhibitions to Athens, works with local artists and supports arts education in our region. A talented artist herself, Didi also curates exhibitions for The Classic Center Galleries and Hotel Indigo, and has curated exhibitions for

Lamar Dodd School of Art and Georgia Museum of Art. Last year, she worked with local artist David Hale on his downtown mural and created a map pinpointing local murals across Athens. Dunphy also acts as an advisor to artists by leading tours and conducting studio visits for UGA students and other local artists, and served as a commissioner of Athens Cultural Affairs Commission, where she launched an annual mini-grant program that funds two to three artists' projects each year. "Didi is a powerful force in Athens. She makes our town better, bolder and a whole lot more fun," gushes Cathy Padgett, public information coordinator for Athens-Clarke County Leisure Services Department.

"The Athens CVB is honored to recognize hard work and excellence in this leading local industry," remarked CVB Director Chuck Jones. "The exemplary performance of our award winners and passionate efforts of the entire city are a main reason Athens is a destination of choice for many travelers. A first-rate tourism product, coupled with an outstanding workforce, gives us a competitive edge."

Don't Miss Out!

****Did we miss you at the Annual Meeting? Want to see the presentation again?***
For the full presentation from the CVB Annual Meeting, click [HERE](#).

****Looking to get more visitors through your doors?***
The CVB's website delivers interested customers straight to you through a variety of ad packages that increase your exposure on VisitAthensGA.com. More details [HERE](#) or contact the CVB's agency, Destination Travel Network. [Email Brittany Montoya](#) or call (520) 284-1090.

Industry Events & Recent Media Coverage

Georgia Governor's Tourism Conference
Oct 30-Nov 2
Jekyll Island
[MORE INFO](#)

GDEcD Resource Team Visit
November 29-30
Athens

Tourism, Hospitality and Arts Day at the Capitol
January 23
Atlanta

- "Southeast Travel: Georgia," [Atlanta Journal Constitution](#), Sept 2017
- "Destination Delicious," [Georgia Magazine](#), Sept 2017
- "Brewing a Destination," [Georgia Trend](#), Sept 2017
- "Traveling Tigers: Have an Unforgettable Trip to Athens, GA," [Columbia Missouri CVB](#), Sept 2017

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