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**Local Chefs Recognized by Visitors and Convention Bureau**

**St. Augustine, Fla. (May 6, 2021) –** During the 2021 annual State of the Tourism Industry (STI) event on Thursday, May 6, the St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra & The Beaches Visitors and Convention (VCB) Bureau Board of Directors Chairman, Virginia Whetstone welcomed the local tourism industry for a virtual update about the current and future state of the local tourism industry, together with the announcement of the 2020 Tourism Impact Award.

Each year the STI event celebrates our local tourism community, and with the annual Tourism Impact Award, recognizes those who have made a positive impact on the economy and growth potential of Florida’s Historic Coast. In a pre-recorded presentation Chair Whetstone announced the award recognizing the collective “chefs of Florida’s Historic Coast who have made our area a sought after and up-and-coming culinary destination”.

Accepting the Award on behalf of the culinary leaders in St. Johns County, live from the STI studio presentation at the Classic Car Museum of St. Augustine, were Chef Michael Lugo, Michael’s Restaurant; Chef Matt Brown, Lēna/Urban Asado; Chef Tyrone Bennet, host of The Hot Plate and founder of We Feed St. Augustine; Chef Joe Natoli, Vernon’s Sawgrass Marriott Golf Resort & Spa; and Chef Genie McNally, The Floridian Restaurant.

Speaking on behalf of the local chefs, Chef Matt Brown, of Lēna/Urban Asado said, “We are all very honored by this recognition. The food and restaurant scene here is very inspiring, providing many of us the opportunity to take the culinary stage, working hard to rise-up through the ranks to follow our dreams. We are truly grateful to the community, and to our visitors for supporting, enjoying and encouraging what we do.”

In addition to the recognition of the local chef community, the VCB also celebrated the importance of tourism in our community, how the destination weathered the Covid storm and prospects for the tourism industry on Florida’s Historic Coast.

**Located midway between Daytona Beach and Jacksonville, Florida's Historic Coast includes historic St. Augustine, the outstanding golf and seaside elegance of Ponte Vedra Beach and 42 miles of pristine, Atlantic beaches.** For more information about Florida's Historic Coast, visit [www.FloridasHistoricCoast.com](http://www.FloridasHistoricCoast.com), become a follower on Facebook @OfficialStAugustine, and Instagram @FloridasHistoricCoast or call 1.800.653.2489.