



NEWS RELEASE

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Georgia’s Visionary City Award Goes to Tybee Island for Third Year in a Row

TYBEE ISLAND, GA – The City of Tybee Island has won Georgia’s *Visionary City Award* for the third year in a row – this time in recognition of its community partnerships that help keep Tybee’s beaches clean and safe.



Tybee Island was one of nine cities statewide honored January 22 at the Georgia Municipal Association’s Cities United Conference in Atlanta, Georgia. It was one of three cities to win in the Small Cities Category.

Tybee Island Mayor Shirley Sessions said the fact that Tybee has won this award three years in a row is a testament to the hard work of both the city and its residents to find innovative solutions to community challenges.

“Our strong community partnerships with local groups like Tybee Clean Beach Volunteers are why Tybee Island has become endeared in the hearts of so many people. Not only is everyone welcome here. Everyone is welcome to get involved.”

Sessions said the community partners who made the award possible will be honored as Visionary Citizens at a future city council meeting.

Georgia Municipal Association CEO and Executive Director Larry Hanson and *Georgia Trend Magazine* Co-Publisher and Editor-in-Chief Ben Young presented the awards.

During the awards ceremony, Young praised the city's efforts to leverage grant funding and partnerships with volunteer groups like Tybee Clean Beach Volunteers, which keeps harmful items like plastic bottles, drinking straws, cigarettes, and tangled fishing lines off the beach.

"Tybee's coastline is home to endangered sea turtles and nesting shore birds," Young said. The animals can ingest or become ensnared in these harmful cast-offs. Litter build up can also block storm drains, exacerbating coastal flooding and endangering lives and property."

Specific efforts the award acknowledged include:

- **"Keep Tybee Tidy"** public outreach campaign, which included signage and messaging for beachgoers to follow beach rules, "Keep Tybee Tidy," and "Take Only Memories, Leave only Footprints."
- **Tybee Clean Beach Volunteer Fight Dirty Tybee Beach Clean Ups.** Working with TCBV founder Tim Arnold, the city and TCBV have hosted more than 400 clean-up events with 12,000 volunteers, including residents, visitors, city staff and city council members.
- **Certified Turtle-Friendly Restaurant Designations.** Tybee Clean Beach Volunteers and the City award this designation to local businesses that have eliminated plastic bags, plastic straws, and polystyrene (i.e. Styrofoam™). Find the complete list of Turtle-Friendly restaurants at www.tybeecleanbeach.org.

- **Beach Borrow Toy Boxes.** Built by the Tybee Island Department of Public Works, these boxes are located at beach crossovers and allow beach visitors to leave or take unwanted beach toys.
- **Smoke/Vape-Free Beach Ordinance.** As of June 1, 2022, by ordinance of the city council, Tybee became a smoke/vape free beach to prevent dangerous chemicals, cartridges and cigarette butts from polluting the sand and water. TCBV has removed over 400,000 butts from Tybee’s beach in the last 3 years.

The annual Visionary City Awards are a partnership between GMA and *Georgia Trend*.

“The Visionary City Awards are an important annual acknowledgement of the innovative and inspiring work done by cities that helps lead our state forward,” GMA’s Hanson said.

More information on other winners is available at www.gacities.org.

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