Oconee CVB lands top Southeast tourism award

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NEW ORLEANS, La. — The Mountain Lakes Convention and Visitors Bureau picked up one of the Southeast's most prestigious awards Wednesday night, accepting a Shining Example Award for "Best CVB," during a dinner sponsored by the Southeast Tourism Society.

Shining Example Awards recognize outstanding contributions in tourism in the Southeastern states. In conjunction with the STS fall meeting, CVB organizations that have advanced the cause of travel and tourism in the Southeast are honored in three categories based on the size of their budget. Mountain Lakes CVB was honored for those organizations with a budget under $2 million.

Mountain Lakes CVB Director Ken Sloan accepted the award.

Tim Todd, executive director of Upcountry South Carolina, nominated Oconee for the award. In his nomination letter, Todd cited the fact that, in three years, the CVB has generated an economic impact of over $5 million to the area and has established itself as a permanent fixture in the county.

Among the achievements he cited were development of a website, two editions of a visitors guide, a tourism DVD, a Tourism Action Plan and completion of a hotel and conference center study.

He also credited Sloan with producing a monthly newsletter, developing a relationship with FLW Outdoors, which has resulted in several bass tournaments in the county, and negotiated a shared resource deal with the SC Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism for a bus and group tour sales manager.

"I am extremely honored to receive this award on behalf of all those visionaries who recognized the value and significance of tourism in Oconee County long before the CVB was established and on behalf of all those who have supported our tourism mission," Sloan said. "I am very proud of what we have accomplished in our first three years and look forward to even more accomplishments in the years to come."

The Oconee-based CVB was chosen from among 115 nominations from across the Southeast. "It is an extreme honor and an accomplishment for the Mountain Lakes CVB to even be considered for such an award just three years into existence, and definitely a reason to celebrate as this recognition is awarded from the professionals in the tourism industry," Sloan added.

Sloan said the development of successful partnerships with members of the local, state and regional tourism industry, as well as support from the county's administration have played a role in establishing Oconee County as a destination.

"Tourism and tourism product development are positive tools that we can use to leverage continued economic impact to Oconee County. The return on investment makes sense, and we look forward to continued success," he said.

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