



AreaNews

Andalusia Interpretive Center receives 'Travelblazer' award

Special to The U-R

The Andalusia Interpretive Center received a 2025 'travelblazer' award from the Georgia Association of Convention & Visitors Bureaus during the GACVB Annual Conference. The award celebrates tourism attractions that foster innovative partnerships and collaborations while boosting economic development in the state.

"Andalusia, Flannery O'Connor's home, continues to inspire and educate visitors from around the world. The addition of the interpretive center provides a deeper understanding and holistic perspective of Flannery and her family's history," said Angela Criscoe, executive director of the School of Continuing and Professional Studies, which encompasses Georgia College & State University's Historic Museums division.

"This travelblazer award recognizes not just a historic home, but a living legacy where literature, Southern culture and personal history converge to create an unforgettable experience for every guest who steps through our doors," Criscoe said.

The Andalusia Interpretive Center opened its doors in March 2023. The



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The Andalusia Interpretive Center is one of five travelblazer award winners for 2025.

5,300-square-foot space was a \$3.5 million investment in the preservation and interpretation of O'Connor's life and work. The center includes artifact and archival storage and an exhibition space, plus a retail and conference space, as well as staff offices.

Jay Markwalter, statewide tourism director for the Georgia Department of Economic Development, presented the travelblazer awards.

"The interpretive center

offers a window into the world of one of America's most iconic authors, featuring open-concept exhibition spaces, artifact storage and even the opportunity for visitors to witness the curatorial process. This groundbreaking approach allows O'Connor's materials to be preserved right before our eyes," Markwalter said.

"Thanks to the tireless efforts of Georgia College & State University, the interpretive center not only preserves O'Connor's

legacy, but also provides a platform for the public to experience and learn about the environment that shaped her stories," Markwalter continued.

The travelblazers program launched in 2020 and, according to GACVB, "is designed to recognize community destination development projects exemplifying multi-partner collaboration and creative product development."

The award was presented by Markwalter, along with GACVB Executive Director Amanda

Dyson-Thornton, Georgia Trend Publisher Ben Young, and Executive Director of Visit Milledgeville Rebekah Snider, who serves as the current president of the board of directors of GACVB.

The Andalusia Interpretive Center is one of five travelblazer award winners for 2025. The awards presentation took place Tuesday, Feb. 4, during the GACVB Annual Conference held at the Gas South Convention Center in Gwinnett County.