

GARY C. WHEAT, CDME

RELEVANT WORK EXPERIENCE

January 2017-Present	PRESIDENT/CEO, VISIT MACON, INC. ◆ Supervise organization with 21 employees ◆ Oversee budget of \$3.5 million from contract with Macon-Bibb County Government ◆ Increased average daily rate by 54% since 2017 ◆ Hotel/Motel tax collections increased by 60% during tenure ◆ Served with Ocmulgee National Park and Preserve Initiative to expand Ocmulgee Mounds acreage ◆ Lobbied U.S. Congress successfully to designate Ocmulgee Mounds a National Historical Park ◆ Developed Macon Cares Medical Destination program which engaged 12,000 users in first year ◆ Visit Macon awarded multi-year bids to host GHSA basketball, wrestling, cheer championships ◆ Visitor Center Gift Shop revenue has exceeded sales goals the past five years ◆ Graduated with Global Healthcare Medical Travel Professional Certification ◆ Oversaw construction and management of 32-court indoor pickleball facility ◆ Developed and launched three-year Visit Macon Strategic Vision Plan ◆ Absorbed Film Macon and attracted over 23 new feature film/series productions in four years ◆ Launched initiative to renovate and expand 120,000 sq. ft. Wilson Convention Center ◆ Oversaw Visit Macon's acquisition of Creek Media, LLC and <i>The Creek 100.9 FM</i> ◆ Oversaw Visit Macon's acquisition of Rock Candy Tours, LLC ◆ During tenure, Visit Macon featured in <i>New York Times</i>, <i>Time Magazine</i>, <i>USA Today</i> ◆ Responsible for acquiring over \$6 million in additional non-hotel/motel tax funds for Visit Macon ◆ Instrumental in developing plans for three new downtown hotels with over 500 new rooms ◆ Organized and implemented Muscogee (Creek) downtown signage translation program ◆ Created and launched Macon Music Trail and Macon Music Effect programs
December 2010-December 2016	PRESIDENT/CEO, VISIT AURORA, CO, INC. ◆ Initiated new destination marketing organization for city of 350,000 ◆ Created organizational structure and job descriptions for staff of six ◆ Oversaw budget of \$1.7 million from contract with City of Aurora ◆ Developed new Visit Aurora website and database ◆ Website hits posted a 400% increase from year one to year two ◆ Lodger's tax revenue posted double-digit increase five consecutive years ◆ Hotel occupancy increased over 15% in five years ◆ Sales staff developed bids, presented and booked three international events in year one ◆ Served as Board Member in finishing the Colorado Freedom Memorial in 2013 ◆ Developed public relations campaign to assist City with creating support for Gaylord Resort project ◆ Board Member for Aurora Symphony Orchestra and Aurora Cultural Arts District ◆ Created new revenue-generating medical travel model to showcase Aurora's world-class healthcare ◆ Developed two new revenue generating programs for Visit Aurora, Inc. ◆ Launched new branding campaign following brand study and market research ◆ Founding member of Alliance to Advance Aurora, which joins all area economic partners
December 2008-December 2010	EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, LONGMONT AREA VISITORS ASSOCIATION ◆ Initiated new destination marketing organization following passage of lodger's tax ◆ Created organizational structure, job descriptions and hired staff ◆ Oversaw budget of \$300,000 from 2% lodger's tax ◆ Created and developed new LAVA website as well as Official Visitors Guide ◆ Website hits posted a 245% increase from year one to year two ◆ Lodger's tax revenue increased 20% from year one to year two ◆ LAVA staff booked over 4,000 new room nights into market in first year ◆ Negotiated, created and hosted weekly <i>Discover Longmont</i> radio show to promote tourism ◆ Recruited and negotiated long-term contract with Heaven Fest, which will attract 30,000 annually ◆ Board Member for Front Range Tourism Cooperative ◆ Joined area economic partners in initiating <i>Be Alive in Longmont</i> campaign to promote local business

- December 2007- EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SOUTH BEND/MISHAWAKA CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU
 December 2008
- ◆Oversaw the operation of annual CVB budget of \$1.1 million
 - ◆Reorganized staff responsibilities as well as organizational chart for CVB
 - ◆Supervised a staff of five full-time employees and six part-time interns
 - ◆Sales initiatives produced a 22% increase in future bookings for group and convention markets
 - ◆Served on Northern Indiana Tourism Development Commission committee to develop new brand
 - ◆Planned and implemented two new initiatives for the South Bend Regional Sports Commission
 - ◆Implemented Tourism Expert program to educate front-line tourism employees on area attractions
 - ◆Developed Camps for Champs Program for Boys and Girls Club
 - ◆Created Tourism Passport Program with area attractions
- June 2004- EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, WATERLOO CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU
 December 2007
- ◆Directed the operation of annual CVB budget of \$425,000.00
 - ◆Responsible for CVB producing three consecutive record years in hotel/motel tax revenue
 - ◆Supervised a staff of four full-time employees and 12 part-time interns
 - ◆Established CVB Board Development and Planning Retreat
 - ◆Facilitated Waterloo being awarded Dan Gable International Wrestling Institute and Museum
 - ◆Developed and created Cedar Valley Sports and Entertainment Commission
 - ◆Worked to produce new brand to market the Waterloo-Cedar Falls metro area as a destination
 - ◆Served on committee which succeeded in Waterloo being designated an Iowa Cultural District
 - ◆Joined Isle of Capri Casino in developing new marketing campaign for upcoming opening
 - ◆Served as Treasurer (2004-2005) of Eastern Iowa Tourism Association
 - ◆Served as President of Eastern Iowa Tourism Association (2006-2007)
 - ◆Served on Waterloo River Renaissance Committee in plans for riverfront revitalization
 - ◆Planned and assisted on design for upcoming Riverloop Exposition Center in downtown

AWARDS & MEMBERSHIPS

2024 Georgia Association of CVBs Travel Blazer Award
 2022 Georgia Association of CVBs Larry Allen Leadership Award
 2021 Southeast Tourism Society Chairman Award
 2020 Georgia Association of CVBs Travel Blazer Award
 2020 New Town Macon Emerging Partner Award
 2019 Macon Economic Development Council Champion Award
 2014 International Softball Association/Senior Softball USA "Complex of the Year" Award
 2009 National Association of Sports Commissions "Best New Community Program" Award
 2007 Iowa Department of Economic Development Governor's Award
 Cedar Valley "20 Under 40" Leadership Award
 Board of Trustees – Museum of Arts and Sciences (2020-Present)
 Board of Directors – Georgia Chamber of Commerce Travel and Tourism Council (2021 Chair)
 Board of Directors – Historic Heartland Travel Association (Treasurer)
 Board of Directors – Hay House
 Board of Directors – Five Sullivan Brothers Recognition for Military Commitment (2005-2007)
 Board of Directors – Colorado Freedom Memorial (2011-Present)
 Graduate – Certified Medical Travel Professional
 Graduate – Leadership Aurora
 Graduate – Cedar Valley Leadership Institute
 Graduate – Certified Destination Management Executive

EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI
 Master of Science, Sports Administration, May 1994
 Bachelor of Science, Coaching and Sports Administration, May 1992

PROFESSIONAL REFERENCES (AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST)
