

AAF Tuscaloosa // Cornerstone Initiatives 2025-2026

INTRODUCTION

Following our successes of last year, the American Advertising Federation of Tuscaloosa continued to focus on and embrace opportunities for innovation and growth in our Cornerstone Initiatives. Our commitment to Advertising Education and the American Advertising Awards remained strong, ensuring the continued success of these flagship programs. Simultaneously, we strengthened our leadership through board positions focused on Diversity & Multiculturalism and Government Relations. Having individuals in these positions ensure the amplification of voices previously underrepresented in our chapter. This continued commitment to intentional diversification has strengthened both our leadership and membership, enhancing our impact across these Cornerstone Initiatives. The success of these initiatives reflects the value of our evolving approach and our commitment to fostering a more inclusive and forward-thinking chapter that celebrates not only creative excellence in the work but in those who create it.

ADVERTISING EDUCATION

Tuscaloosa is home to The University of Alabama (UA), Shelton State Community College and Stillman College. This affords AAF Tuscaloosa the unique opportunity to directly impact the educational experience of students pursuing degrees in advertising in addition to educating the local community about the industry.

Strategy & Goals

- Be champions of and for students, including, but not limited to, AAF UA chapter members, by supporting their activities and providing opportunities for scholarships, awards recognition and professional development.
- Encourage club leadership to get involved in local, district and national student-related activities.

Tactics

- **Activity support**

- AAF Tuscaloosa proudly supports The Backbone Awards as part of its commitment to fostering the next generation of creative professionals. Through active promotion on social media and direct mentorship, AAF Tuscaloosa helps amplify the impact of these student-led awards, which celebrate the often-unsung heroes of creative teamwork. Additionally, AAF Tuscaloosa Board Member Mark Barry plays a key role in facilitating the awards, and guiding students in their organization and execution. This support aligns with AAF Tuscaloosa's mission to nurture young talent and strengthen the local advertising community. *(Exhibit AE1)*
- AAF Tuscaloosa has a rich history of supporting the UA National Student Advertising Competition team, including inviting the team to deliver their presentation to chapter membership, assisting with event support to District 7 personnel coordinating the event, which was hosted at UA for the third year in April 2025, and budgeting funds to support their travel to ADMERICA, should they make it to the final round of competition. AAF Tuscaloosa members were proud to support the team during the national competition at ADMERICA. *(Exhibit AE2)*
- **Financial support**
 - For several years, AAF Tuscaloosa has paid all of the Silver ADDY forwarding fees to the District competition, removing any financial barriers to potential ascension to the National Awards competition. *(Exhibit AE3)*
 - AAF Tuscaloosa offers three student scholarships that are administered by The University of Alabama: Betty Heard scholarship (endowed), Ronnie Quarles Memorial Scholarship and Ricky Yanaura Memorial Scholarship. *(Exhibit AE4)*
- **Award Recognition**
 - This year we had three schools submit entries into the Student competition of the American Advertising Awards: The University Alabama, Mississippi State University and, for the first time, Mississippi University for Women. Led by faculty member Mark Barry, UA's Creative

Specialization Minerva program took home 15 gold or silver student ADDYs, three Judges' Choice awards, and one Mosaic ADDY award. (*Exhibit AE5*)

- We promote and share District and National student program and scholarship opportunities through owned media channels. (*Exhibit AE6*)

- **Leadership**

- Board Members Mark Barry and Jay Waters serve as advisors for UA's NSAC team. Additionally, Jay Waters serves at the District 7 National Education Executive Council. Two of our at-large board members, Mike Little and Jonathan Cumberland serve as advisor to AAF UA and Associate Professor in UA's Graphic Design program, respectively.

- **Professional Development**

- With the help of AAF Tuscaloosa, Senior Instructor, AAF UA Advisor chapter member Mike Little helped arrange a number of speakers, and panels including an alumni panel, ADlympics, portfolio review and career panel. (*Exhibit AE7*)

Results

AAF Tuscaloosa actively supports local advertising students and professionals by providing financial assistance, mentorship, and professional development opportunities. The chapter enhances student success through scholarships, awards recognition, and funding for competition entries, ensuring accessibility to district and national opportunities. We foster industry engagement through speaker panels, workshops and student-led presentations, strengthening connections between students and professionals. AAF Tuscaloosa leadership plays a vital role at the local, district and national levels, advocating for student involvement and educational excellence in advertising.

DIVERSITY AND MULTICULTURAL INITIATIVES

With sweeping changes in the federal government's approach to diversity, equity and inclusion, AAF Tuscaloosa enhanced its efforts to provide a home for all West Alabama communicators. We started the year by rolling out Tiles of Impact, a social media campaign devoted to celebrating AAF and community members of all

shapes, cultures, genders and beliefs. We also doubled-down on featuring diverse speakers to our Lunch and Learns by inviting Whitney Molden, Kevin Lake, and Jimmy Hart to present. Diversity Chair Huey Rudder organized AAF Tuscaloosa's Media Mafia to capture Druid City Pride festival content pro bono.

Strategy & Goals

- Implement Tiles of Impact to celebrate multicultural communicators in West Alabama
- Invite at least one diverse speaker for membership programming
- Celebrate the LGBTQIA+ community by capturing Druid City Pride content via AAF Tuscaloosa's Media Mafia
- Award at least one Mosaic ADDY at the American Advertising Awards

Tactics

Tiles of Impact, a collaboration between the Diversity and Communications committees was a success. AAF Tuscaloosa posted three features, highlighting Julie Mann of United Way of West Alabama, Adam Miller of Theatre Tuscaloosa and Druid City Pride. The posts celebrated West Alabama's multiculturalism while showing how entrenched diversity is within southern culture. *(Exhibit DM1)*

Working alongside the programming committee, AAF Tuscaloosa invited three multicultural speakers during the 2025-2026 year: Jimmy Hart, Kevin Lake, and Whitney Molden. While their topics were not DEI, the programming itself highlighted the impact of varied points of view and furthered AAF Tuscaloosa's goal of ensuring everyone has an opportunity to be heard and represented. *(Exhibit DM2)*

Furthermore, AAF Tuscaloosa's membership selected Temporary Emergency Services (TES) as its beneficiary of this year's Brand-Aid Public Service competition. TES is a Black-owned and operated nonprofit in West Alabama that focuses on providing clothing, furniture, toys, and amenities to people unable to provide for themselves, including domestic abuse survivors, house fire survivors and unhoused people. Choosing this organization as the client for our Public Service competition highlights the importance of diversity, equity and inclusion among chapter membership.

Every year, we encourage our American Advertising Awards judges to choose a Mosaic ADDY winner. The Mosaic ADDY honors companies and individuals who display their commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion through creative work, advocacy, and company-wide initiatives. Creative content must distinguish itself by amplifying underrepresented communities with depth and authenticity. All winning entries must have a unique vision that gives viewers a broader understanding of the BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, and Disability communities; and that promotes systemic change through equity and inclusion. This year, our judges awarded both a professional Mosaic ADDY for the “Excavating Erasure” Microsite and a student Mosaic ADDY for an Integrated Advertising Campaign for “Sunsilk: Bounce Back.” (*Exhibit DM3*)

Results

Through this multi-pronged approach, AAF Tuscaloosa was able to provide myriad diverse perspectives in both promotion, communications, programming, and public service. Our membership continues to grow in representation and we continually strive to ensure our membership makeup is reflective of the diversity in our community.

GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

This year, AAF Tuscaloosa maintained continuity as the Government Relations chair returned for a second term and formed a member committee. Government Relations chair Jimmy Hart was tasked with keeping his finger on the pulse for any legislation on a local and state level that could affect local advertising, communications and related industries.

Strategy/Goals

- Bring governmental affairs to board if advertising or communications legislation or topics arise
- Promote the City of Tuscaloosa and Visit Tuscaloosa and be good partners to the advertising industry through programming and communications.

Tactics

- **Governmental Affairs**

- o After identifying relevant legislation, the officer briefed the AAF Tuscaloosa board on two tax and legislative issues. In August 2025, voters in Northport, adjacent to Tuscaloosa, elected a new mayor and replaced half of the City Council. AAF Tuscaloosa leadership encouraged members living in Northport to vote. The winning candidates supported strategic event development and stronger cooperation across municipal boundaries. AAF Tuscaloosa also continued sharing updates from Mayor Walt Maddox on efforts to close a loophole in the Simplified Sellers Use Tax distribution, which is costing the community tens of millions of dollars. *(Exhibit GR1)*
- **Programming & Communications**
 - o The Government Relations Committee has begun working with a representative from iHeart Media to develop a program that would provide training and networking opportunities related to the role of political campaign advertising. We hope to implement this program in 2026.
 - o AAF Tuscaloosa hosted a program on the Visit Tuscaloosa rebrand, showing how municipal organizations can leverage their local assets and creativity to promote tourism and investment in the community. *(Exhibit GR2)*
 - o The chapter was kept informed about and showed up to various civic leadership and volunteer opportunities, including Oktoberfest, the Native American Festival in Moundville and the Kentuck Festival of the Arts. *(Exhibit GR3)*

Results

In 2025, AAF Tuscaloosa actively engaged in discussions surrounding key local legislative matters. Many members volunteered through civic leadership and event volunteerism, for which municipal organizers were very grateful. Through these efforts, AAF Tuscaloosa continued its commitment to fostering informed civic engagement and supporting the betterment of our community.

AMERICAN ADVERTISING AWARDS

This year's American Advertising Awards was a resounding success, surpassing the committee's goals. The event was themed "ChromADica," around Technicolor days of Hollywood, inspired by icons like Marilyn

Monroe, Gene Kelly and Audrey Hepburn. Despite professional entry submissions being down slightly year over year, our student entries increased by over 10% and included submissions from a new collegiate entrant: Mississippi University for Women. Gala tickets sales were particularly strong this year and the event was attended by over 90 professionals, students, and community members. While not typically a money-making event for the chapter, this year's awards program netted nearly \$1,000 in profit.

Strategies & Goals

- Increase gala ticket sales by 5%.
- Meet or exceed projected budget.
- Present a full slate of awards in keeping with national goals, including Gold & Silver ADDYs, a Mosaic ADDY, Best in Show, and Judge's Choice in both the professional and student competitions.

Tactics and Results

AAF Tuscaloosa used a combination of email and social media to get the word out about the 2025-2026 American Advertising Awards. In total, the awards committee posted to Facebook and Instagram 19 times and sent three emails. While the email campaign had a 77% open rate, the social media posts underperformed, averaging around 4 likes per post - though we did notice an uptick in engagement as we promoted the event itself, averaging 11 likes per post. The post-award posts did particularly well: the award winners post received 64 likes and the Silver Medal post received 83 likes. Considering this, we would advise next year's American Advertising Awards committee to prioritize quality over quantity, focusing on people and success stories to drive submissions and event attendance. (*Exhibit AAA1*)

AAF Tuscaloosa held the American Advertising Awards Gala on February 26, 2026 in the Smart Communities and Innovation building at The University of Alabama. Despite fewer award submissions this year, the event sold 78 individual presale tickets, one group purchase of 10 tickets and 2 tickets at the door, resulting in 90 total attendees. The event netted nearly \$1,000, surpassing our goal of breaking even. (*Exhibit AAA2*)

With this year's "ChromADica" theme, we blended elements from Hollywood's golden age, Technicolor and disco. We decorated the space with bright colors, floral patterns and recognizable faces from Hollywood's

past. We hosted a DIY flower bar, where attendees could color their own foam board flowers with Technicolor-inspired hues, and we decorated each table with mirrorballs and diamond-filled glasses. After the show, we celebrated with pizza and karaoke. (*Exhibit AAA3*)

AAF Tuscaloosa continued its tradition of subsidizing all student Silver ADDY entries being forwarded to the District-level competition. In total, AAF Tuscaloosa forwarded seven Silver ADDY winners for students from Mississippi State University, Mississippi University for Women and The University of Alabama - the widest student representation AAF Tuscaloosa has had in at least three years. The chapter also awarded two Mosaic awards this year, one for each the student and professional competition.

In addition to the numerous ADDY awards presented, we also highlighted the people behind the work. Among the night's special awards presented were Ad Person of the Year, the Dan Kilgo Community Service Award, the Silver Medal award, and, for the second year, a Brand-Aid Public Service Competition Award. All in all, it was an evening full of celebration of both creative excellence and the students and professionals who bring color to the advertising community of West Alabama and East Mississippi.

ADVERTISING EDUCATION EXHIBITS

Exhibit AE1. Backbone Awards support

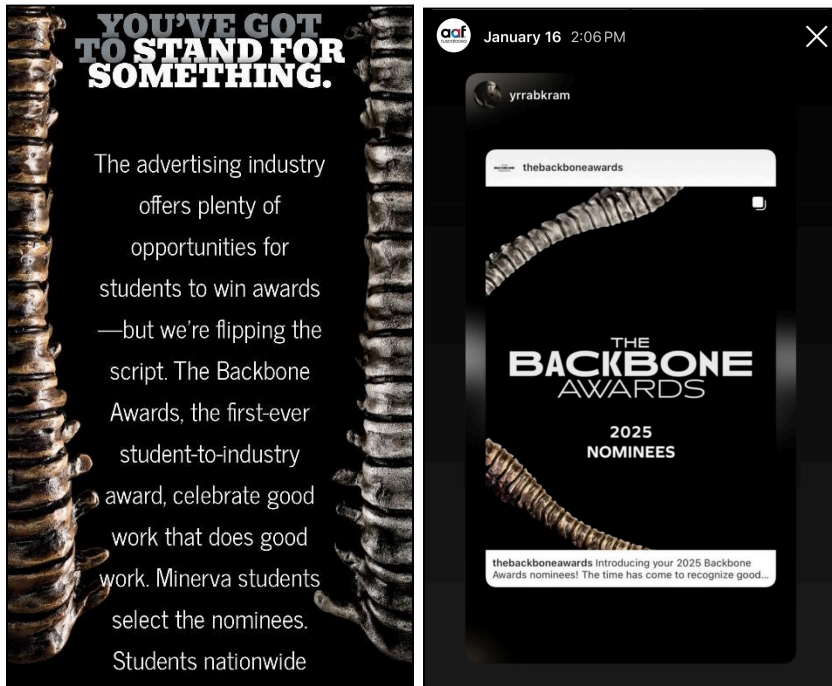


Exhibit AE2. UA Ad Team presentation & support at ADMERICA



Exhibit AE3. Student Silver Forwarding

Re: [EXTERNAL] Re: Edit to pro entrant title

 **Rebecca Royen** <rebecca.royen@ua.edu>

Thursday, February 12, 2026 at 6:19 P

To: Amy Riddle; Cc: Amy Riddle

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59.9 KB

 AAF_T_PRO_Silver Wi...
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 AAF_T_Student Silver...
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 AAF_T_STU_GOLD_F...
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[Download All](#) • [Preview All](#)

Thank you!! Here are forwarding reports (and I put a check in the mail today) but I did notice that when saving the silver reports it doesn't give you an option to rename the file or choose the destination, like the directions say. Obviously, you can rename it after but thought you might want to know that it's a little different than the directions indicate. Our show is February 26, so please wait to contact the Pro Silver winners. [Our payment covers pro gold, student gold, and student silver forwarding.](#)

Thx
RR

Exhibit AE4. Student Scholarship Opportunities

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA*

myBama

College of Communication & Information Sciences

News

About

Research

Departments

Undergraduate

Graduate

Alumni

Financial Aid

Undergraduate Scholarships

College and Departmental Scholarships

College Funding

Departmental Funding

Funding

Financial Aid

Financial assistance can be key to reaching your educational and career goals. The University of Alabama's Student Financial Aid office is your source to learn about applying for federal financial aid, types of aid available and other related information.

UA FINANCIAL AID

Departmental Scholarships

Advertising & Public Relations

Betty Heard Endowed Memorial Scholarship

Amount: Approximately \$500 to \$1,000 annually; nonrenewable

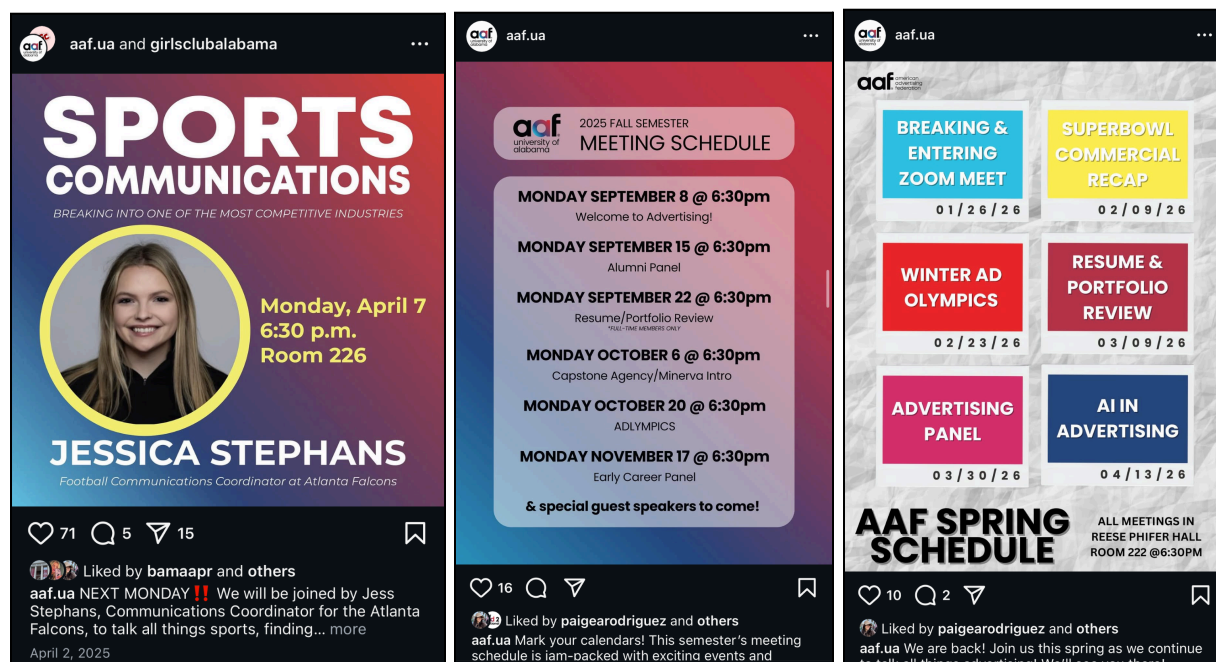
Exhibit AE5. Student Silver ADDY recipients



Exhibit AE6. Mosaic Scholarship Social Share



Exhibit AE7. AAF UA Programming Social Posts



DIVERSITY AND MULTICULTURALISM EXHIBITS

Exhibit DM1. Tiles of Impact

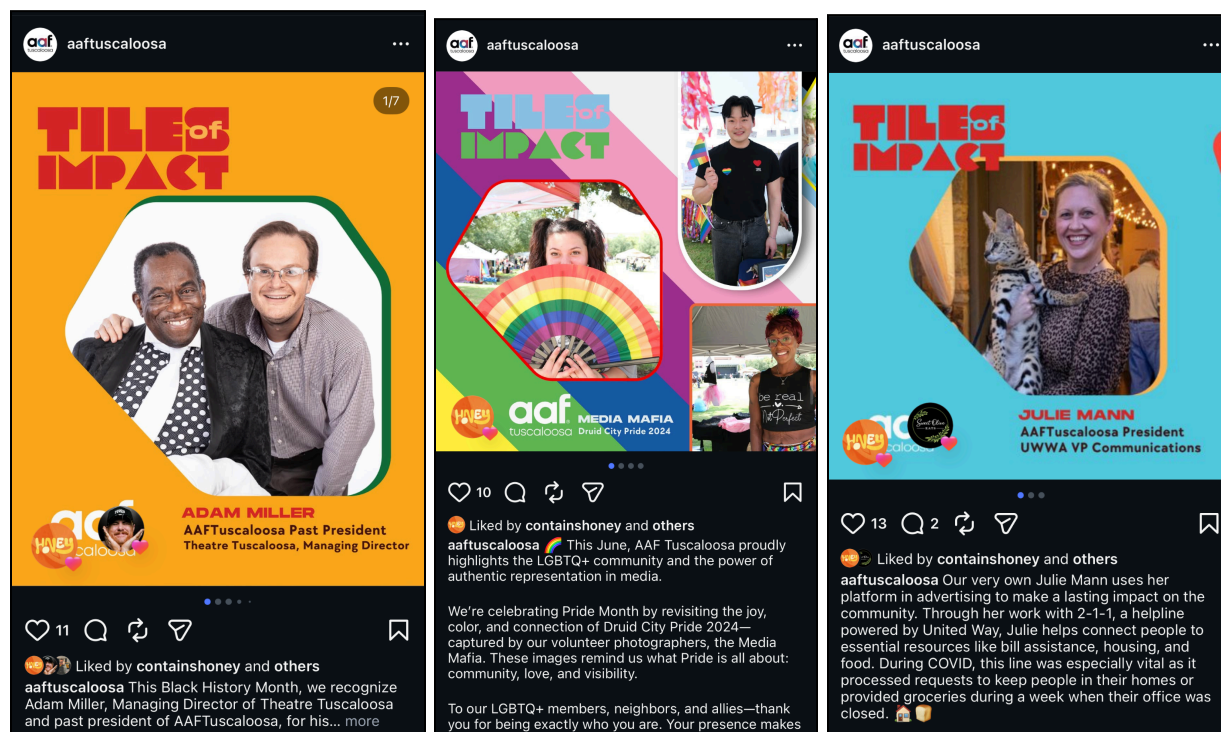


Exhibit DM2. Diversity in Programming Social Posts



Exhibit DM3. Mosaic ADDY Winners



GOVERNMENT RELATIONS EXHIBITS

Exhibit GR1. Northport Elections Fall 2025

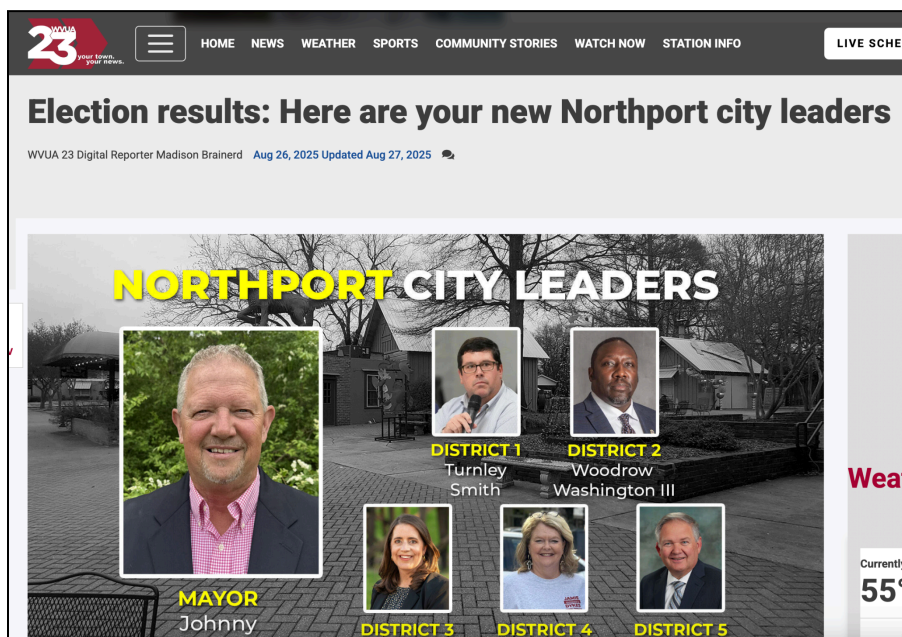


Exhibit GR2. Government Relations Programming

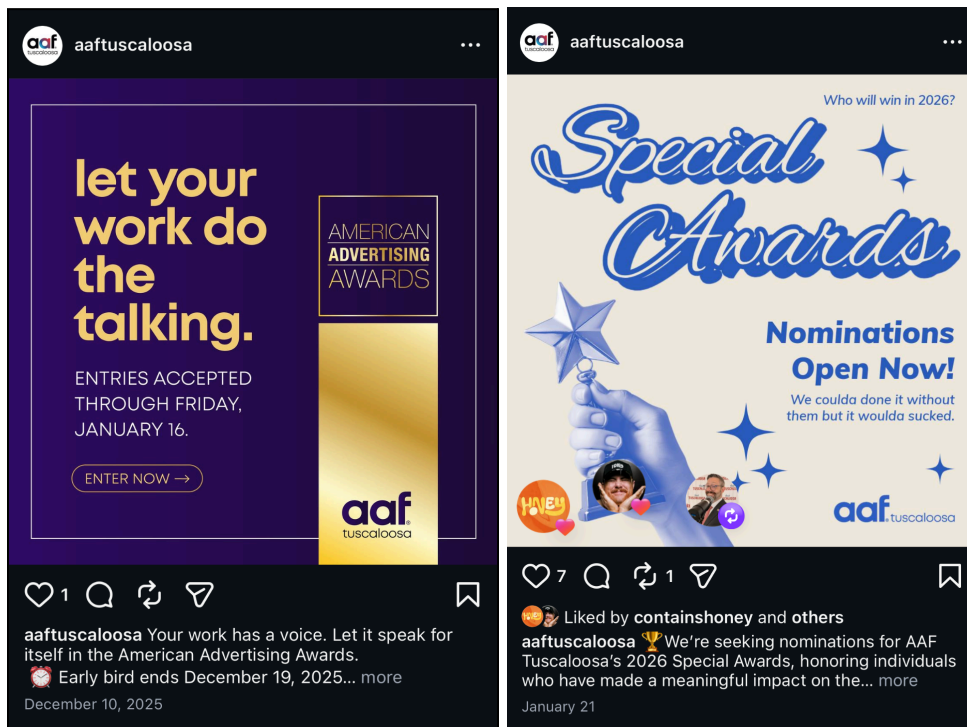


Exhibit GR3. Community Event Volunteering



AMERICAN ADVERTISING AWARDS EXHIBITS

Exhibit AAA1. Social Media Posts



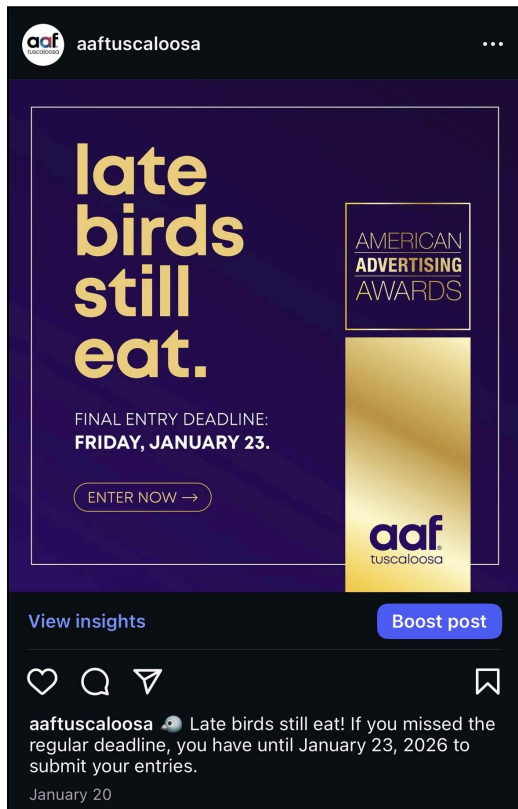


Exhibit AAA2. Budget

AAA Budget		ACTUAL	PROJECTED	
INCOME			qty	\$ ea
Entry Income	Member Early Bird	\$ 1,950.00	30	\$65.00
	Member Regular	\$ 880.00	11	\$80.00
	Late Fees	\$ 60.00	6	\$10.00
	Student Early Bird	\$ 60.00	2	\$30.00
	Student Regular	\$ 1,925.00	55	\$35.00
	GROSS ENTRY FEES	\$ 4,875.00	2 Visit Tuscaloosa entries unpaid	
National Entry Fees [EXPENSE]	National Professional fees	\$ 820.00	41	\$20.00
	National Student fees	\$ 1,140.00	57	\$20.00
		\$ 1,960.00		
	NET ENTRY FEES	\$ 2,915.00	\$4000 budgeted	
				2912.92
Gala Ticket Sales	Professional	\$ 1,920.00	32	\$60.00
	Student	\$ 1,540.00	44	\$35.00
	Group Sponsorship (10 tk)	\$ 600.00	1	\$600.00
	Pending offline payment	\$ 60.00	1	\$60.00
	Venmo payment at door	\$ 60.00	1	\$60.00
	GROSS TICKETS	\$ 4,180.00		
Ticket Processing fees	TicketSpice	\$ 78.00	78	\$1.00
	CC processing	\$ 133.57	\$ 3,001.57	4.45%
		\$ 211.57		
	NET TICKET SALES	\$ 3,968.43	\$4000 budgeted	
Drink Ticket Revenue		\$ 266.00	38 tickets sold via venmo, check written	
	Total Income	\$ 7,149.43		
EXPENSES				
District Forwarding Fees	Pro Gold Forwarding	\$ 360.00	4	\$90.00
	Student Gold Forwarding	\$ 150.00	5	\$30.00
	Student Silver Forwarding	\$ 210.00	7	\$30.00
	NATIONAL Stu Silver Forwarding	\$ -		\$35.00
	Shipping to District 7	\$ -		\$0.00
		\$ 720.00	\$1000 budgeted	
Judging	Judge's Gifts	\$ 300.00	3	\$100.00
Awards	Gold Award Plates (Pros)	\$ 99.00	9	\$11.00
	Gold Awards (Students)	\$ 567.60	22	\$25.80
	sales tax	\$ 72.16		\$72.16
	set-up charge	\$ 55.00		\$55.00
Special Awards	Ad Person of Year	\$ 175.00	1	\$175.00
	Dan Kilgo	\$ 98.00	1	\$98.00
	tax (10%) + shipping for above	\$ 99.26	1	\$99.26
	Silver Medal	\$ 158.65	1	\$158.65
Gala	Band/DJ/A/V	\$ 100.00		
	Host stipend	\$ 200.00		
	Event signage/printing	\$ 152.90		
	Event Insurance	\$ 106.00		
	Gala Favors	\$ 517.00		
	Catering	\$ 1,226.10	70	\$15.00
	Appetizers/Late night	\$ 68.73		
	Bar	\$ 1,945.88	200	\$7.00
	Photo Booth	\$ 75.00		
	Photography	\$ 200.00		
	Misc.	\$ 6,216.28	\$7500 budgeted	
	Total Expense	\$ 6,216.28		
	NET PROFIT	\$ 933.15		

Exhibit AAA3. Gala Photos





