



Authentic GEORGIA

Locally made, locally owned



Bill Oyster teaches the art of making fly fishing rods in his studio in Blue Ridge.

~ Story by Randy Southerland

Georgia has a vibrant business community ranging from big name corporations to small operations making high quality products of all kinds. Making Georgians aware of the true diversity of their homegrown economy is the job of Authentic Georgia, a program launched by the Georgia Chamber of Commerce.

The program was inspired by the success of Georgia Grown, an effort to promote the state’s agricultural products. The state’s other makers and doers wanted a similar program to spotlight their products to a wider audience.

“How could we brand what we make and build in Georgia like what we’ve done with Georgia Grown,” asks Georgia Chamber of Commerce President Chris Clark.

The goal of this program is to tell the unique stories of these small companies, products, and the entrepreneurs that created them.

“If you look at the research, millennials and boomers, as well, are making decisions about where they eat, what they eat, what to buy, not necessarily always on price, but more of what’s the purpose of the company,” explains Clark. “Where are they located? Is there an interesting story?”

Authentic Georgia helps tell their stories. The program promotes small businesses that create and sell Georgia made products through a robust online and social media program aimed at reaching new generations of consumers.

Through the program, members are able to use the Authentic Georgia logo, signage, and merchandise. Their businesses and their stories are featured online and included in events, media coverage, and advertising. Businesses also get help in doing their own media campaigns.

The program spotlights a wide array of Georgia companies ranging from a microbrewery like Atlanta Brewing Company to a vehicle rental company like Automax/



Tepuy is Spanish for a mesa found in the Guiana Highlands of South America. It means "house of God." *Tepuy*'s designs are inspired by designer Elena Carne's (right) South American roots and expresses her love for natural beauty and life itself.



Oyster Bamboo Fly Rods are handcrafted and are heirlooms for future generations of fly fishermen.

Authentic Georgia helps tell their stories. The program promotes small businesses that create and sell Georgia made products.

Busmax to Pleasant Union Farm to cart maker Textron Specialized Vehicles to Okefenokee Swamp Park. All are unique and all have a great story to tell. Here are a few of those stories.

Oyster Bamboo Fly Rods, Blue Ridge

Oyster Bamboo Fly Rods is one of the leading producers of handcrafted fly rods. Founder Bill Oyster sells custom made rods and teaches classes on making them to eager students from around the country and the world.

Oyster never intended to build a business around his passion for fly fishing. When an Atlanta newspaper ran a story about his rods, he started getting calls from fly fishing enthusiasts. All had the same question – how can I get one?

After resisting the idea, he finally gave in and a new business was born. Today, Oyster makes his rods at a store on

Main Street in downtown Blue Ridge.

"It was just something started out of a passion for fly fishing," says Oyster.

Today, he operates a successful shop in downtown Blue Ridge where customers can select and purchase rods. He also sells many of them to fisherman who learn of his store online.

He draws students from as far away as England, Scotland, Australia and New Zealand, as well as every corner of the United States to learn the art of making fly rods directly from this master teacher. Out-of-towners can even stay on site at the Cast and Blast Inn.

Tepuy Active Wear, Americus

Owner Elena Carné started her own clothing line at the age of 15 in her home country of Venezuela. She was designing and making beachwear and bathing suits and, in the process, discovered a lifelong passion. Her

To Learn More

about this program and the companies that are authentically Georgia, visit the chamber's website and read their stories. Then experience Authentic Georgia for yourself. authenticga.com

All American Khakis

1578 Warrenton Highway
Thomson, Georgia 30824
allamericankhakis.com

Mossy Creek Natural

915 Carroll Street
Perry, Georgia 31069
mossycreeknatural.com

Oyster Bamboo Fly Rods

494 East Main Street
Blue Ridge, Georgia 30513
oysterbamboo.com

Paulk Vineyards

1788 Satilla Road
Wray, Georgia 31798
paulkvineyards.com

Tepuy Active Wear

502 W. Forsyth Street
Americus, Georgia 31709
tepuyactivewear.com

Welcome Back.



Have a great 2019-2020 school year!

Join us and be
Walton Proud!

We are **WALTON PROUD**

WALTON
Chamber
of COMMERCE

www.waltonchamber.org
www.waltonproud.com

