



JOHN J. TECKLENBURG
MAYOR

*City of Charleston
South Carolina*

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‘Sweetgrass Baskets of Peace’ Unveiled at Charleston International Airport Thursday

Charleston, S.C.— Charleston Mayor John Tecklenburg, Explore Charleston CEO and Charleston County Aviation Authority Chair Helen Hill, Bloomberg Philanthropies Women’s Economic Development Initiative leader Verna Eggleston, “Called to Forgive” author Rev. Anthony Thompson and Gahaya Links Rwanda Founder and CEO Joy Ndungutse celebrated the unveiling of sweetgrass baskets woven by master weavers in Rwanda and the Lowcountry at the Charleston International Airport Thursday morning.

Why it matters: “Hands to Heritage” is an initiative that creates economic opportunities while promoting peace. Master sweetgrass basket weavers in South Carolina and Rwanda joined together to collectively create “baskets of peace” representing reconciliation for direct descendants of slaves in the South, as well as survivors of the Rwandan Genocide. The baskets are now showcased in a new display at the Charleston International Airport, welcoming visitors.

This initiative was sponsored by the Bloomberg Philanthropies Women’s Economic Development Initiative. The Initiative partners with governments, nonprofits and the private sector to foster opportunities for women that lead to economic independence.

What they’re saying: Helen Hill, CEO, Explore Charleston; Chair, Charleston County Aviation Authority said: “‘Hands to Heritage’ is a powerful example of community alignment and shared values. Amazing things happen when public, private and civic entities collaborate. Explore Charleston and the Aviation Authority were honored to participate in this initiative with the City of Charleston at Bloomberg Philanthropies’ invitation. We share a passion for efforts that build awareness, promote healing and inclusion, protect the region’s heritage, empower women and minority-owned businesses, and encourage sustainability.”

Charleston Mayor John Tecklenburg said: “The City is honored to have participated in this women’s economic empowerment initiative. The effort, dedication and detail in



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these two ‘baskets of peace’ showcase a healing and coming together between direct descendants of slavery in South Carolina and survivors of the Rwandan Genocide, and bolsters business opportunities here and abroad.”

Verna Eggleston, Women’s Economic Development Initiative leader, Bloomberg Philanthropies: “My task with Bloomberg Philanthropies took me here in 2017 when we brought together mayors in the region and asked them to help us identify people who worked with their hands. This industry of hand-makers is a \$65 billion annual industry occupied 95% by women — women who work from home. You have this economic development opportunity in South Carolina and we want it to see it grow alongside our portfolio of 103 countries in our Women’s Economic Development Initiative.”

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