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## Augusta City Classic to honor performer Russell Joel Brown

It's been a banner year for Russell Joel Brown.

And on Oct. 28, the Augusta-born entertainer will receive the Augusta City Classic's inaugural Image Entertainment Award.

"It's so great to come home and receive an award. There's nothing like being recovered in your hometown. I'm so grateful," said Brown, who has been performing with the touring show of Disney's *The Lion King* for 11 years.

The award he's receiving at the Oct. 28 awards banquet at the Marriott Hotel Riverfront marks his commitment to the arts as well as his commitment to his hometown.

During the summer, Brown took a break from the road and had the opportunity to perform Disney's *The Lion King* on Broadway. Aside from performing roles in the ensemble, he is the understudy for the role of Mufasa and was able to take the stage in one of the Broadway shows as the stately lion on the role of Mufasa, which was a career highlight.

He's since returned to the traveling production.

While he's on the road for most of the year, Brown also makes a point to come back to Augusta and share his gifts and talents with arts organizations. He often performs in fundraisers for area arts groups, only asking for his traveling expenses to be covered.

He's performed in benefits for organizations such as the Jessye Norman School of the Arts and the Lucy Craft Laney Museum of Black History. He's also been featured at the Star Spangled Fourth concert at St. Paul's Episcopal Church.

Next year, he has confirmed that he will be part of an event with the Colton Ballet Company, formerly Dance Augusta. Brown studied dance under the late Ron Colton, who founded the Augusta Ballet School.

Also being honored at the banquet will be Clint Bryant, Augusta University athletic director, and Coach Al Young. Both will be inducted into the Augusta City Classic Hall of Fame. Cazzie Russell, who is an NCAA Hall of Famer who spent 12 seasons playing in the NBA from 1966-1978, will be the keynote speaker.

The banquet begins at 7 p.m. at the Marriott, 2 10th St. Admission is \$75.

Brown will sing the national anthem at the start of the Oct. 29 Augusta City Classic game, which will feature Benedict College playing Albany State College in a 2 p.m. start at Lucy Craft Laney High School stadium.