

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CFW'S 2016
EMERGING
DESIGNER
COMPETITION:
EAST
PRESENTED BY
BENEFITFOCUS®
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**10TH ANNUAL BAKER MOTOR COMPANY CHARLESTON FASHION WEEK®
ANNOUNCES 16 EMERGING DESIGNER SEMIFINALISTS**

CHARLESTON, S.C. (December 17, 2015) – [Baker Motor Company Charleston Fashion Week®](#) (CFW), one of the nation's leading fashion events, is proud to announce its Emerging Designer Top Design 16 semifinalists for the March 15-19, 2016 competition and runway show.

Officially called the Emerging Designer Competition: East presented by [Benefitfocus](#), the top 16 designers were selected from a large pool of applicants from across the East Coast who applied for the coveted opportunity to showcase their talent on a nationally recognized runway in front of leading fashion insiders and more than 1,000 guests each night.

"This year's applicant pool was the strongest ever. Congratulations to the 16 semifinalists! We are eager to see what the next generation of emerging talent will showcase on the runway in March," says Jacqueline Lawrence, production director for CFW.

The five-day event, which takes place in Marion Square in downtown Charleston, showcases collections from emerging designers, nationally renowned featured designer runway shows, glamorous on-site tents including the Belk Tent, a multi-media, entertainment and shopping Style Lounge, hip after-parties and much more.

The Emerging Designer Competition began nine years ago and serves as a platform for undiscovered talent, connecting them with fashion industry insiders and tastemakers from CFDA members to top designers like David Hart. Previous winners and contestants have been featured in *VOGUE*, *Marie Claire*, *ELLE*, *Women's Wear Daily* and on CNN, along with other major media outlets; and their collections have been picked up by stores including Anthropologie, BARNEY's New York, and Neiman Marcus.

This year's fashion panel is again headed by fashion icon and New York Fashion Week Creator Fern Mallis, and will include CFW 2016 Featured Designers Raul Arevalo and Brad Schmidt of CADET, Shane Gabier and Christopher Peters of Creatures of the Wind, and Tracy Reese. The 2016 Emerging Designer Grand Prize Winner, selected by the panel at the end of the week, will receive an enhanced prize package worth more than \$40,000, including the following:

- \$10,000 cash
- Featured Designer for Opening Night of CFW 2017
- Once-in-a-lifetime lunch with Fern Mallis in New York City in 2016
- Opportunity to intern for a well-known designer during New York Fashion Week in Fall 2016
- A private showing of their collection at New York City retailer *In Support Of* in Fall 2016

The Baker Motor Company Charleston Fashion Week® 2016 Emerging Designer Competition: East semifinalists chosen to debut their collections are:

Brendan Combs	Georgia
Destani Hoffman	Alabama
Elias Gurrola	New York
Emily Seifert	New York
Jamie Morrison	North Carolina
JD Noble	Georgia
Jessica Lache Fulks	North Carolina
Jonathan Millner	North Carolina
Kelsey Kawamoto	South Carolina
Lauren Stilwell	North Carolina
Lisa N. Hoang	North Carolina
Michael Mack	New York
Morgan Cook	Georgia
Ricky Lindsay	Florida
Samantha De La Fuente	Florida
Storm Dorris	Georgia

For more information, including ticket prices and availability, visit www.charlestonfashionweek.com.

About Benefitfocus® Benefitfocus (NASDAQ: BNFT) provides a leading cloud-based benefits management platform that simplifies how organizations and individuals shop for, enroll in, manage and exchange benefits. Every day leading employers, insurance companies and millions of consumers rely on our platform to manage, scale and exchange benefits data seamlessly. In an increasingly complex benefits landscape, we bring order to chaos so our clients and their employees have access to better information, make better decisions and lead better lives. Learn more at www.benefitfocus.com, [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#).

About Baker Motor Company Charleston Fashion Week®

Showcasing fashion designers, retailers, and models, the 10th Annual Baker Motor Company Charleston Fashion Week® (CFW) has quickly become one of the premier fashion weeks in North America. Named a Top 20 Event for March by the Southeast Tourism Society, this multimedia event presents high-end runway shows, interactive entertainment, chic after-parties and press events. The 2015 event featured more than 40 runway shows, 7,000 attendees, *Charleston Weddings* magazine's Spring Bridal Show, the Emerging Designer Competition: East presented by Benefitfocus and the Rock the Runway Model Competition™. Baker Motor Company Charleston Fashion Week® 2016 is scheduled for March 15 – 19, 2016. For more information visit www.charlestonfashionweek.com.

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