

# TourismMarketing Today

The Official Newsletter of Destinations Florida, Inc. | [www.DestinationsFlorida.org](http://www.DestinationsFlorida.org) | August 2020

## DMO Leaders and VISIT FLORIDA *Service Is the Story*

Service seems to be in a DMO leader's DNA. A quick look at the VISIT FLORIDA Board of Directors tells the story. Dan Rowe, president and CEO of the Panama City Beach CVB, is chair, and Virginia Haley, CDME, president of Visit Sarasota County, is immediate past chair. Other board members are secretary David Reese, president of Florida's First Coast of Golf; newly appointed board member Georgia Turner, executive director of the West Volusia Tourism Advertising Authority; and Robert Skrob, executive director of Destinations Florida. Nerissa Okiye, tourism director of the Martin County Office of Tourism & Marketing, recently completed her term on the board.

Here, Haley and Okiye share about their service with VISIT FLORIDA, how they have benefited, and what they have learned.

Haley is a longtime volunteer with VISIT FLORIDA, having served on

numerous committees before becoming chair of the VF board. One of the takeaways from her years of service is the power of the contributions that members of the VF's councils and task forces make.

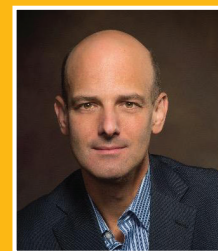


Virginia Haley presents the chair's message at the VISIT FLORIDA Chairman's Dinner during the 2019 Florida Tourism Leadership Summit in Panama City Beach.

"It is amazing to see an idea from one person in a council meeting turned into a VF program," Virginia says. "It happens all the time, and that private-sector industry input is what makes VF strong."

## Including Everyone

by Robert Skrob, CAE



I've always been proud of the ways DMOs work to be inclusive.

My introduction to

inclusivity was from Bill Talbert of the Greater Miami CVB. He was getting ready to testify about the importance of VISIT FLORIDA before a Senate committee in 2003. While we waited for the meeting to begin, Bill showed me several ads featuring African-American and Latin families. He went on to explain to me how important it is that our advertising be inclusive. Bill Talbert's team at

*DMO LEADERS continues on pg. 3*

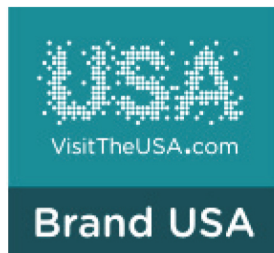
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# HAPPY Birthday

Loretta Shaffer  
August 20

Debbie Meihls  
August 29



DMO LEADERS ... continued from pg. 1

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Okiye was appointed to the VF board in late 2018. She echoes Haley's comments about the value of service with VISIT FLORIDA.

"I served on the Executive Committee, as chair of the Industry, Small Business, and Rural Development Committee," Nerissa says. "I was also a part of the Strategic Plan Task Force that recently completed some intense but extremely beneficial work on the VISIT FLORIDA Strategic Plan.

Okiye says she was surprised by the tremendous teamwork that takes place at VISIT FLORIDA and the sheer volume and intensity of the external demands the team faces.

"And yet customer service never waivers," Nerissa says. "They want and need board members to be involved. Your opinion is valued and essential to the process. I represented a small DMO and advocated for the needs of DMOs with limited budgets and staffing. It is extremely important to get involved and participate in the process."

Haley stresses the value that volunteering with VISIT FLORIDA brings to the local DMO.

"When you serve on a VF council or on the board, you gain an

*DMO LEADERS continues on pg. 4*

DESTINATIONS  
FLORIDA

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#### On the Cover

De Leon Springs State Park in West Volusia County is home to Spring Garden Run, which begins at the park and travels downstream 10 miles to the St. Johns River. A favorite of kayakers and canoers, De Leon Springs produces 19 million gallons of water a day. Georgia Turner, executive director of the West Volusia Tourism Advertising Authority, began her term of service on the VISIT FLORIDA board on July 1. Read more on page 4.

Photo: West Volusia Tourism Advertising Authority

EVERYONE ... continued from pg. 1

the GMCVB reflects this desire to be inclusive.

Speaking for myself, I believe it's important that we all make efforts to become more inclusive in our culture. While DMOs have been leaders in this movement, it's time to take it even further. Consider these questions:

- How can we be more inclusive in our advertising?
- How can we be more inclusive in our team membership? Not just entry-level positions, but how can we help less represented team members move into leadership roles?
- What can we do to help our tourism industry be more inclusive at every level of organization?

With the interruption in tourism, I know many of us are just trying

to hold on right now. Taxes have plummeted and budgets are tight. Our industry is hurting.

Talking about inclusion may sound trivial when the survival of many of our tourism industry businesses is in doubt. But this cannot be put off any longer.

Destinations Florida will host a session on inclusion at our annual meeting. Let's take time to consider how we can help make everyone feel welcome.

I'd love to know about anything you've been doing within your DMO in your advertising, with your team, and/or within your industry. Let's use your successes as examples for others to follow.

Thank you for everything you do. I understand how challenging it can be.

# Georgia Turner Appointed to VISIT FLORIDA Board



Georgia Turner

West Volusia Tourism Advertising Authority (WVTAA) is honored to announce its executive

director, Georgia Turner, has been appointed to serve on the VISIT FLORIDA Board of Directors. She began her appointment on July 1.

"Tourism is the top industry in Florida, with hundreds of millions of people visiting each year, and it's our job to make sure those tourists have an amazing time and keep coming back," says Turner. "Sustainable tourism is what we strive for in West Volusia County, and I am deeply honored to get to be a part of making that happen for our amazing state as well."

Turner began her Florida tourism career in 1988, working at the Daytona Beach CVB as public relations director and later as the director of specialized markets. While at the CVB, Turner helped to create Biketoberfest and helped bring the Shriners International 2017 convention to the Ocean Center in Daytona Beach. She also worked for the Flagler County Chamber of Commerce as vice president of tourism development; was the media relations and group sales manager for the Florence-Lauderdale CVB in Alabama; ran her own tourism public relations and marketing firm; and finally took over as executive director of WVTAA in 2016.

insight on new VF programs that are going to be rolled out in the year to come," Virginia says. "This has helped Visit Sarasota as we build our marketing programs. But the most valuable benefit of VF service would be the relationships you build with leaders around the state. I can now pick up the phone and ask how they are solving challenges in their businesses, whether it is a destination, a restaurant, or a car rental, which I can directly apply to meet challenges right here in Sarasota."

Now, as Haley recently concluded her year of service as chair, she reflects on the many things she learned from the experience.

"I got to see on a close-up basis how very nimble the VF team is," she says. "I assumed the chair position just a couple of weeks after the huge VF personnel layoffs because of the FY2019-20 budget reduction. It was an emotionally challenging time for the remaining team, and yet they did not miss a beat."

Haley encourages her colleagues to join other Destinations Florida members who have or are currently volunteering with VISIT FLORIDA.

"I would urge DMO directors to raise your hand and volunteer to serve on one of the VF councils,



Nerissa Okiye (right) and Lindsey Norris of VISIT FLORIDA (second from right) pose with team members from Coastal Living in Stuart, Florida, the 2016 America's Happiest Seaside Town.

Virginia says. "It is a great introduction to understanding VF and its programs. Then if you do have an opportunity to serve on the board, you have a better working knowledge of VF."

Okiye agrees, saying, "Get involved. I have served on several committees and will continue to be a part of the Small Business and Rural Development Committee. Not only do you get a behind the scenes look at the incredible work that VISIT FLORIDA is doing to promote Florida, but you get to represent your sector of the tourism industry. I was able to champion the needs of the smaller DMOs."

DESTINATIONS  
FLORIDA

ANNUAL MEETING

Streamsong Golf Resort & Spa  
Bowling Green, Florida  
October 7-9, 2020







**Alexander Michael Kaptzan**  
August 4, 1967 – May 21, 2020

The Destinations Florida family has lost a valued member. Alex Kaptzan passed away suddenly on May 21 at the age of 52. Alex was born in Mexico City. He grew up in Miami, where he attended Palmetto High School and graduated from Florida International University. After being hired by the Doral Country Club, he met and married his beloved wife, Ivette. The hospitality industry drew him to Tampa. These were his people, and he loved celebrating this city with them. He most recently served as senior vice president of convention sales with Visit Tampa Bay. A recent highlight of his life was meeting Barack Obama and telling him they shared the same birthday, August 4.

Visit Tampa Bay's Patrick Harrison, chief marketing officer, remembers his friend and colleague, saying, "Alex was a man of integrity, humor, and kindness. I will always remember our deep sea fishing and our shared appreciation of a good (or even average) cigar. The last photo that was taken with both of us together also included President Obama, and the smile on Alex's face that day will always be how I remember him."

## Meet Florida's Newest CDME Recipients

Congratulation to those who have earned their Certified Destination Management Executive (CDME) designation, the only integrated executive program specifically designed for the destination management industry. The focus of the program is on vision, leadership, productivity, and the implementation of business strategies. This year's CDME class was recognized during Destinations International's annual convention, which was held virtually July 14-15.

### Who should enroll in the CDME program?

The suitable applicant is an experienced professional who has developed a broad knowledge base mirroring Destinations International's professional tracks and destination organization industry standards. After completing the program, destination organization leaders should be able to approach challenges from a multidisciplinary perspective.

Destinations International recommends, though does not require, that an applicant be currently employed by a destination organization with at least three years of industry-related experience.

Learn more at <https://DestinationsInternational.org/cdme>.



**Michelle Moore**  
Sr. Director of Meeting Sales & Services  
Experience Kissimmee



**John Poole**  
Executive Director  
Kissimmee Sports



**Rob Price**  
Formerly of Visit Tampa Bay



**Stacy Ritter**  
President & CEO  
Greater Fort Lauderdale CVB





## Airbnb Case Appealed to Florida Supreme Court

In this column last month, I discussed a recent decision from the Fourth District Court of Appeal (Fourth DCA) holding that Airbnb and similar companies were not obligated to collect or remit tax on the rentals they facilitated in Palm Beach County. The decision resulted from the 2014 lawsuit brought by the Palm Beach County Tax Collector against Airbnb and other online short-term rental companies.

The Fourth DCA's opinion can be read here: <https://bit.ly/4thDCAairbnb>



Will the Florida Supreme Court hear an appeal of the Fourth DCA's opinion in the Airbnb case? Time will tell.

Photo: Florida Supreme Court

In my last column, I noted that by the time you were reading it, the Tax Collector might have already filed an appeal to the Florida Supreme Court.

Well, guess what? That's exactly what happened.

On July 1, papers were filed with the Florida Supreme Court seeking review of the Fourth DCA's decision.

It's important to note that not every appeal filed with the Court is heard. Just like with the U.S. Supreme Court, merely because you *ask* for review doesn't mean you'll *get* the review you seek.

Long ago, when I was a lowly law student, I had the opportunity to serve as an extern at the Florida Supreme Court. Most of my time was spent writing memoranda about whether cases that were filed with the Court met the standard to be reviewed. (Spoiler alert: most of the time the answer was no.)

So, it remains to be seen whether the Court will take up this case for review, or whether it will let the Fourth DCA's decision stand without further comment. Time will tell how this issue is ultimately resolved.

*Steven M. Hogan is a shareholder with the Ausley McMullen law firm in Tallahassee. Destinations Florida has retained Mr. Hogan to consult with our members on the Tourist Development Tax and related legal issues. You can contact Mr. Hogan at [shogan@ausley.com](mailto:shogan@ausley.com). Nothing in this article constitutes legal advice. Please seek counsel of your own choosing before making decisions that impact yourself or your organization.*



Steven M. Hogan

## Communicate the Value of Your Destination Promotion Efforts

Empowering members of your industry with the facts and educating lawmakers is a weekly task. To help you, Destinations Florida and our members created the report *Destination Promotion: Empowering Florida's Growth*.

The report reveals the truth behind common misconceptions about Florida tourism and the unique role Florida's local destination marketing organizations play in attracting visitors.

You are welcome to download and distribute this report for:

Members of your industry who are excited to advocate and need to understand what to say;

Educating members of your TDC and elected officials about the impact of destination marketing in your community;

Distributing at your community speaking engagements as a powerful leave behind for attendees who want more information;

Onboarding new staff members at your DMO to accelerate their understanding of your organization; and

Ideas for your own materials documenting the value of your tourism marketing efforts.



**Download your copy of the report at [EmpoweringFloridasGrowth.com](http://EmpoweringFloridasGrowth.com). If you'd like to have the print files complete with trim marks for full bleeds, send an email request to [Suzanne@DestinationsFlorida.org](mailto:Suzanne@DestinationsFlorida.org).**

**Download a PDF copy at [EmpoweringFloridasGrowth.com](http://EmpoweringFloridasGrowth.com)**





## Daytona Beach: Back in Business Safely

The Daytona Beach Area CVB collaborated with the Daytona Regional Chamber on a Back in Business Safely campaign. The free program, open to all local businesses, includes downloadable checklists, guidelines, and signage for reopening. CVB Executive Director Lori Campbell Baker says, "We encouraged local key opinion leaders to commit their support of local businesses via their social media." The CVB also produced a Marketing Recovery Toolkit for its tourism partners complete with images, video, virtual backgrounds, family fun activities, virtual site visits, social media tips, and public relations tools. [DaytonaBeach.com](http://DaytonaBeach.com)



## Anna Maria City Pier Celebrates Reopening After Damage From Irma

The historic Anna Maria City Pier recently had its soft reopening and is now accessible to visitors Friday through Sunday. The \$6.8 million project was commissioned to replace the original pier built in 1911, which was removed after it was destroyed by Hurricane Irma in September 2017. Its reopening marks an important milestone for the Bradenton Area, giving all who frequent the destination something to celebrate and reinforcing its commitment to preserving Florida's rich history. [BradentonGulfIslands.com](http://BradentonGulfIslands.com)



The Anna Maria City Pier reaches out more than 800 feet into Tampa Bay.

## Staying Safe in the Florida Keys

More than 100 banners with messages about mandatory facial coverings and safety directives were hung on electrical transmission poles along the famed Florida Keys Overseas Highway and in Key West's tourist district. The banners were conceived by Monroe County TDC Director Stacey Mitchell with support from County Mayor Heather Carruthers and were created by the TDC. Video packages, featuring County Administrator Roman Gastesi in both English and Spanish, aired on regional broadcasts while Associated Press distributed banner photos. [Fla-Keys.com](http://Fla-Keys.com)



Signs remind visitors and residents to Stay Safe in the Florida Keys.

## Orlando Pioneers Personalized Medical Concierge Program for Convention Events

Visit Orlando and the Orange County Convention Center are teaming up with Orlando Health on a groundbreaking partnership to provide convention groups with customized medical guidance, planning, and support through 2020. The new program features direct access to PPE for attendees, planner access to a medical expert, a 24/7 virtual medical concierge, and many other resources. This program gives planners the tools, access, and comfort that the destination, the convention center, and medical professionals are with them every step of the process to keep attendees safe. [VisitOrlando.com](http://VisitOrlando.com)



Orlando's new medical concierge program provides every group at the Orlando Convention Center with personalized medical collaboration, planning, and support.





## New Podcast Celebrates The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel

The Lee County VCB recently launched Shellcast, a new podcast that gives listeners a chance to soak up some virtual sun and experience a slice of Southwest Florida paradise in a unique way. Episodes transport listeners to a Sanibel Island beach, a boat en route to Cayo Costa State Park, the Burrowing Owl Festival in Cape Coral, and more. Shellcast is available on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, and Google Podcasts. [FortMyers-Sanibel.com](http://FortMyers-Sanibel.com)



On the beach at Cayo Costa State Park, Capt. Brian Holaway talks about nature and shells in a Shellcast episode while Ray Sarracino, the podcast's audio technician, records the interview. Photo: Jackie Parker

## Summertime Campaign Brings Diners to Florida's Space Coast

Florida's Space Coast Office of Tourism launched a summertime version of the ever-popular Flavor on the Space Coast to help jump-start the recovery of local restaurants. The event ran from June 12 through July 5 with incredible dining experiences at many different price points. "Restaurants are the lifblood of the tourism industry, and if we can help them get back on their feet, it helps everyone," says Peter Cranis, executive director of the Space Coast Office of Tourism. [VisitSpaceCoast.com](http://VisitSpaceCoast.com)



Pub Americana is one of more than 30 restaurants that participated in Flavor on the Space Coast.

Photo: Florida's Space Coast Office of Tourism

## The Palm Beaches Pledges Safety

In an effort to continue raising its bar for safety, The Palm Beaches' tourism community rallied behind a promise to follow guidelines set forth by health and government officials and to encourage guests to follow the mandated mask, distancing, and sanitation requirements. The Palm Beaches Pledge, led by Discover The Palm Beaches, creates further unity and consistency across the destination, which is already on its way to earning GBAC STAR accreditation. [ThePalmBeaches.com](http://ThePalmBeaches.com)



The Brazilian Court is one of myriad hotels to sign the Palm Beaches Pledge for safety. Photo: The Brazilian Court

## Punta Gorda Named No. 2 in USA TODAY 10Best



Punta Gorda was named No. 2 in the *USA TODAY* 10Best Readers' Choice Travel Awards for Best Small Town Food Scene. A panel of experts, including editors from *USA TODAY* and 10Best.com, selected 20 nominees. Readers had four weeks to vote. Punta Gorda was the only Florida town nominated in its category. The top 10 list consists of small towns with a population of fewer than 25,000, and food scenes with chef-driven restaurants and local flavors and variety. [PureFlorida.com](http://PureFlorida.com)

88 Keys in the Wyvern Hotel is one of more than 50 independently owned restaurants in Punta Gorda that serves its own unique flavor.

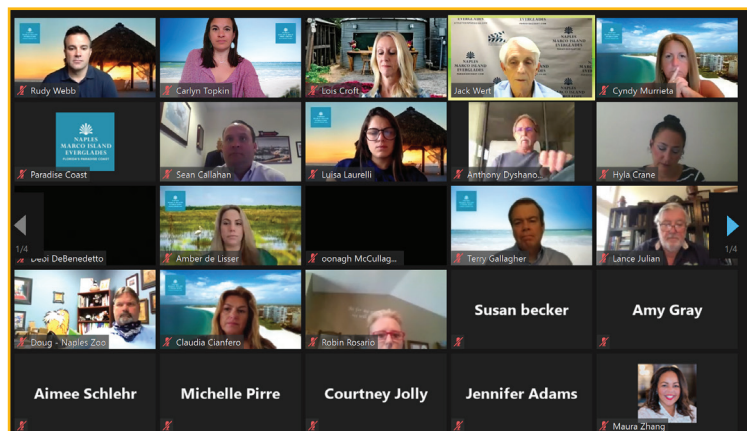
Photo: PureFlorida.com





## Florida's Paradise Coast Zooms Partner Meetings

With the rapidly changing travel environment, the team at Florida's Paradise Coast increased frequency of its monthly partner newsletter, *Paradise CoastLines*, to weekly. To add a more personal touch, in June the CVB began alternating weekly updates with an e-newsletter and a virtual meeting. During the Zoom, Executive Director Jack Wert provides updates on beach closures, small business loans, and everything in between. Guest presenters have included representatives from FRLA, VISIT FLORIDA, and more. The average attendance is 70 partners. [ParadiseCoast.com](http://ParadiseCoast.com)



Tourism partners from Florida's Paradise Coast participate in one of the new bimonthly webinars hosted by the CVB to update the community on regulations throughout the region.

## Ocala/Marion County Instills Confidence in Visitors

The Ocala/Marion County VCB recently launched the reentry campaign *Imagine*, and as part of continued efforts to stay top-of-mind, the VCB is publishing new content on [OcalaMarion.com](http://OcalaMarion.com) that encourages visitors to imagine exploring the destination safely. This includes blogs suggesting things to do outdoors with the family, top socially distant things to do, and the latest reopening and safety information. Ocala/Marion County is sharing the beautiful destination while establishing visitors' confidence that it is a safe place to spend time. [OcalaMarion.com](http://OcalaMarion.com)



Ocala/Marion County is encouraging visitors to take to the destination's opportunities to have fun while also safely social distancing.

## South Walton Sees Full Rebound in Visitation

South Walton has kept the safety of visitors and industry partners at the forefront of its messaging. Starting with a #VirtualBeachVibes campaign, and then transitioning to a Beach Safely awareness campaign, South Walton has focused on safety, and is seeing a full rebound in visitation numbers. In fact, June and July occupation rates were up 4% and 3%, respectively, compared to 2019. That occupation increase is on top of a 7% increase in available units. RevPAR also surpassed 2019 levels for June and July. [VisitSouthWalton.com](http://VisitSouthWalton.com)



South Walton is open, fully and safely.

## Fastpitch Comes to Panama City Beach

The Panama City Beach Sports Complex welcomed more than 80 softball teams July 6-11 for this year's USFA Fastpitch World Series tournament. Panama City Beach was thrilled to welcome families to the destination for a weekend filled with sporting events. The premier facility has implemented several guidelines to enhance the safety and cleanliness of the venue. The fun didn't stop there though; the PCB Sports Complex welcomed teams and visitors for round two of the USFA Fastpitch World Series July 13-18. [VisitPanamaCityBeach.com](http://VisitPanamaCityBeach.com)



USFA Softball Tournament takes place at the Panama City Beach Sports Complex.





## Sports Tourism Is Booming in Columbia County

Since Governor DeSantis reopened youth sports across the state, sports tourism has been booming in Lake City and Columbia County. The Southside Sports Complex has seen an estimated 10,000 visitors pass through the gates since tournament play resumed at the award-winning facility on May 30. Hotel bookings continue to trickle upward, and the occupancy rate for the weekend of June 6 was 13.8% higher than during the same period in 2019. [SpringsRUs.com](http://SpringsRUs.com)



*The Southside Sports Complex is open!*

## It's a New Era of Meetings in Tampa Bay

Tampa Bay is thrilled to be welcoming back meetings safely, and the Tampa Convention Center is taking every precaution necessary to ensure a productive and safe meeting. To highlight some of the enhanced protocols put in place, Visit Tampa Bay created the *Safe Meetings in Tampa* video, where viewers can follow along with national account director, Brittany Callahan, through the new era of meetings and conventions. [VisitTampaBay.com](http://VisitTampaBay.com)



Visit Tampa Bay takes meeting goes into the new era of meetings at the Tampa Convention Center.

## Savor Sarasota Restaurant Week Makes Changes That Spell Success

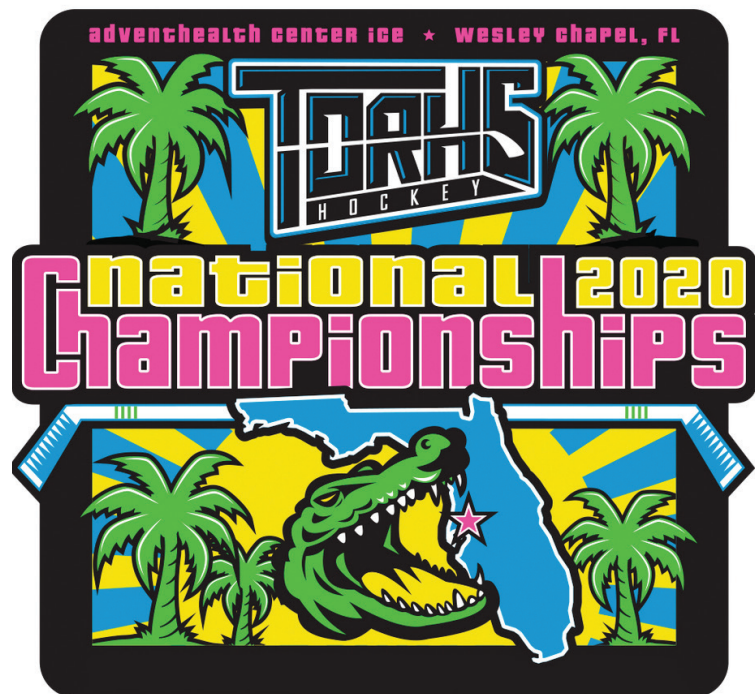
With modified plans, Savor Sarasota Restaurant Week occurred in June. Changes included opening registration to all county restaurants and aggregating curbside and to-go options; running digital, social, and broadcast ads within Sarasota County; when a PR opportunity was cancelled last minute, VSC created content sessions with restaurant chefs; the local influencers list was put to the test; and a social contest provided \$750 in gift cards. For those 61 participants, "free" marketing equaled success. [VisitSarasota.com](http://VisitSarasota.com)



The modified Savor Sarasota logo encouraged to-go dining during Restaurant Week this year.

## TORHS Hockey National Championships Held in Pasco County

In partnership with Experience Florida's Sports Coast, TORHS Hockey hosted its annual National Championships at AdventHealth Center Ice July 2-11 where 113 teams from all over the United States competed. Strict protocol was put in place for all teams and families to follow during the event, which created a safe environment for all attendees. Following a Stay-to-Play policy, 100% of the room nights booked were in Pasco County. [FLSportsCoast.com](http://FLSportsCoast.com)

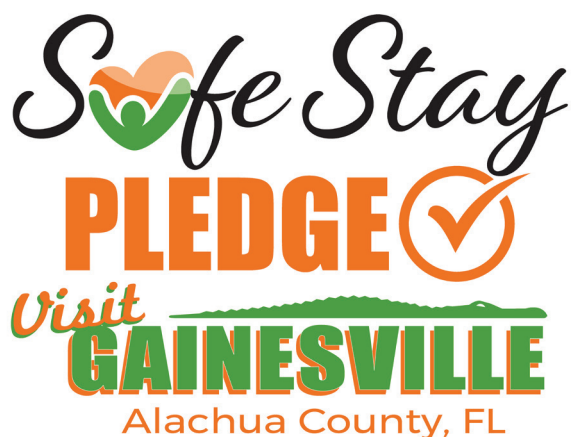






## Visit Gainesville Alachua County Pledges Safe Stays

The Visit Gainesville Alachua County Safe Stay Pledge, created in partnership with the Alachua County Hospitality Council, communicates the destination's shared commitment to cleanliness and safety, and was deployed as a way to instill confidence among employees, residents, and travelers. The campaign was publicized via traditional media, web and social platforms, the What's Good consumer-facing guide, direct mail to group meeting planners, and paid media. [VisitGainesville.com](http://VisitGainesville.com)



## Gulf County Offers 360° Virtual Tours of Their Great Outdoors

Gulf County, Florida is the first destination to partner with Threshold 360 for a completely outdoor initial capture. The goal was to capture 360° views of more than 70 beautiful outdoor locations including parks, beach accesses, boat ramps, and more. The end result is a collection of picturesque virtual tours, showcasing the natural beauty and resiliency of the destination. The rollout timing comes when virtual tours and outdoor experiences are a must for potential visitors. [VisitGulf.com](http://VisitGulf.com)



Visitors can take a Gulf County virtual tour at [VisitGulf.com/parks](http://VisitGulf.com/parks).



## Helping Marketers Reach Travelers from Dream to Destination

Sojern's digital marketing solutions for travel are built on more than a decade of expertise analyzing the complete traveler path to purchase. The company drives travelers from dream to destination by activating multi-channel branding and performance solutions on the Sojern Traveler Platform for more than 10,000 customers around the world.

[www.sojern.com/contact](http://www.sojern.com/contact)







## Greater Fort Lauderdale Partners Take Safe + Clean Pledge

More than 200 Greater Fort Lauderdale hospitality partners and businesses have taken Visit Lauderdale's Safe + Clean Pledge, providing a unified message that health and safety standards and protections are a top priority. Spa Days and Dine Out Lauderdale are in full swing, running through September. Locals and visitors can relax and recharge with signature spa treatments from \$99. Foodies can indulge in specially created dinner menus priced at \$35 and \$45. *Sunny.org*



Martine BienAimé of Riverside Hotel proudly displays Visit Lauderdale's Safe + Clean Pledge.  
Photo: Riverside Hotel

## GMCVB Introduces Miami Spice To-Go, Expands Miami Eats Program

The Greater Miami CVB continues to expand its commitment to restaurants and recently adapted its beloved Miami Spice Restaurant program to promote restaurants offering to-go



Miami Spice offers to-go and outdoor dining.

as well as outdoor dining for their prix fixe meals, which include appetizer, main course, and dessert for \$25 lunch/brunch and \$39 dinner. The new Miami Spice options complement the existing and award-winning Miami Eats program developed by the GMCVB in April when local restaurants experienced their first wave of closures. *MiamiAndBeaches.com*



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## Social Distance by Nature With Kissimmee's Outdoor Adventures

Experience Kissimmee continues to raise awareness about the many outdoor adventures the destination has to offer. Kissimmee has plenty of outdoor activities that were social distancing even before it was encouraged—like airboat rides along the headwaters of the Everglades. Not to mention, Wild Florida's Drive-Thru Safari Park where guests can drive their own cars. Other options include Gatorland, Orlando Tree Trek Adventure Park, Revolution Adventures, and more. [ExperienceKissimmee.com](https://www.experiencekissimmee.com)



Wild Florida is one of Kissimmee's natural social distancing options.

## Discover Martin County Launches #MartinTogether Campaign

In an effort to help visitors and residents alike feel more confident while exploring Martin County, the Office of Tourism and Marketing has launched the #MartinTogether campaign. Local businesses can visit [MartinTogether.com](https://www.MartinTogether.com) to sign the pledge, indicating they're following all of the most current operational guidelines and best practices set by the CDC. Once signed, businesses are added to a dedicated #MartinTogether directory to help people make informed decisions about where they're eating, shopping, spending the night, and more. [DiscoverMartin.com](https://www.DiscoverMartin.com)



Martin County businesses can now join the #MartinTogether movement to indicate their dedication to the health and safety of their patrons.



## Measuring the way media moves us

[www.arrivalist.com](https://www.arrivalist.com)



**79% of domestic  
hotel searches in  
1H July '20 were for  
July - August '20,  
suggesting that  
consumers are  
looking to travel now**

Additionally, nearly 2 in 3 domestic hotel searches in 1H July '20 were made for the month of July '20.



Source: Tripadvisor Internal Data, 1H July '20 (June 29th - July 12th, 2020). Excludes Markets with less than 1,000 July - August '20 hotel searches



# FLORIDA TOURISM STRONG RECOVERY MARKETPLACE

Destinations Florida's Partners have put together the Florida Tourism Strong Recovery Marketplace booklet with resources that can help DMOs now and as we move forward into recovery. Our Partners will be updating their research, reports, and programs on an ongoing basis. Visit often for up-to-date support.



[DestinationsFlorida.org/StrongRecoveryMarketplace](https://DestinationsFlorida.org/StrongRecoveryMarketplace)





## Pensacola Saving Turtles With Red Flashlight Filters

Visit Pensacola is excited to share that the Pensacola Beach Chamber of Commerce is now providing turtle-safe red flashlight filters to the public. The covers filter out the wavelengths of the visible light spectrum that are harmful and distracting for turtles trying to nest. An essential part of the area's ecosystem, protecting Pensacola's sea turtles is an initiative shared between organizations throughout Escambia County. [VisitPensacola.com](http://VisitPensacola.com)



Pensacola's white sand beaches attract more than just tourists. Four of the six species of sea turtles found in U.S. waters make an annual pilgrimage to the beaches during nesting season.

## Destin-Fort Walton Beach Launches Cultural Initiative

As part of the newly launched Destin-Fort Walton Beach Cultural Initiative, museums, performing arts centers, and chamber of commerce partners within the destination will receive complimentary marketing benefits to assist in promoting local cultural events and programming. From presenting organizations at the area Welcome Centers to featuring them on the destination website, the county will lend assistance with current and future marketing to include strategic planning, social media management, website assistance, and community engagement. [DestinFWB.com](http://DestinFWB.com)



The annual Mattie Kelly Arts Festival takes place in the fall and features more than 100 fine artists from the United States exhibiting their original art.

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## St. Pete's Latest Attraction for Fresh Air and Positive Vibes

The gleaming new St. Pete Pier made its debut July 6 and was definitely worth the wait! The sprawling 26-acre district (perfect for physical distancing) offers plenty to see, do, and eat set against the expansive backdrop of Tampa Bay. Visitors to the district can spread out on a cool tilted lawn and soak up the Florida sunshine, enjoy interactive exhibits about marine life (we promise it's not just for kids!) at an outdoor "wet classroom," and savor tasty local fare, surrounded by dazzling views.

[VisitStPeteClearwater.com](http://VisitStPeteClearwater.com)



St. Pete Pier: Where else can you experience dramatic public art, a fishing deck, kid-friendly amenities, and a marketplace of community artisans, all in one district?

Photo: [VisitStPeteClearwater.com](http://VisitStPeteClearwater.com)

## A New Traveler-Focused Podcast Comes to Orlando North, Seminole County

Take a deep dive into the tourism industry through the stories shared by the voices of Seminole County residents, industry leaders, destinations marketers, and local businesses. Get the inside scoop on all things travel while also meeting the individuals who help to make the industry thrive. [DoOrlandoNorth.com](http://DoOrlandoNorth.com)



New episodes of the ONSC Podcast are released every Monday and Wednesday and are available on Spotify, Apple Podcast, Google Podcast, iHeart Radio, Speaker, and Podcast Addict.

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## St. Augustine Named to USA TODAY's 10Best

The nation's oldest city was recently ranked among Best Historic Small Towns by *USA TODAY*'s 10Best Readers' Choice Awards in 2020. The list of nominees was put together by a panel of experts and *USA TODAY* editors, and readers were asked to vote for their top choice. St. Augustine, founded in 1565 and the oldest continuously occupied European settlement in North America, came in at #8. [FloridasHistoricCoast.com](http://FloridasHistoricCoast.com)



The iconic Castillo de San Marcos, built by the Spanish in 1695  
Photo: Florida's Historic Coast

## Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach VCB Names Sean Doherty Interim Director

Sean Doherty has been tapped to lead the Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach VCB, serving as interim director.



Sean Doherty

Doherty has served the tourism bureau since 2005, first as sports marketing manager and most recently as sales and sports marketing manager. He joined the county after serving as vice president of events for the Greater New Orleans Sports Foundation, where he worked on a Super Bowl and men's and women's NCAA Final Four basketball tournaments. He also served as tournament director for the NCCA Women's Volleyball Final Four. Doherty is recognized as a certified sports event executive by the Sports Events & Tourism Association.

"I've been honored to showcase and promote all Charlotte County has to offer to event organizers and meeting planners over the years," Doherty says. "I look forward to the challenge of helping the destination make a full recovery from the challenges we're now facing and reach new heights in the years ahead."

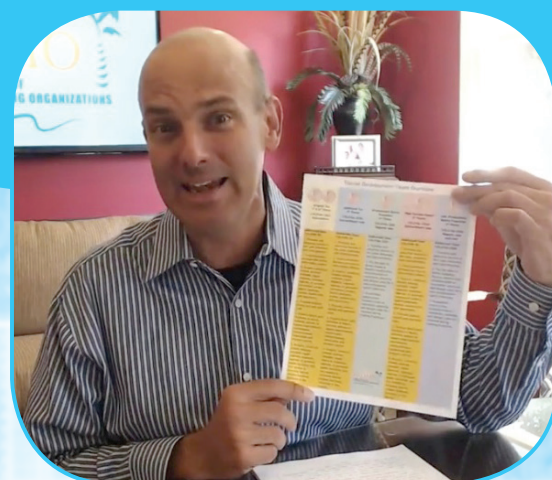
Doherty earned a master's degree in sports management from the University of Florida. He is a 2016 graduate of Leadership Charlotte and serves on the board of directors for the Gulf Island Coast chapter of the Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association and the Charlotte Players. He and his wife Tonya live in Gulf Cove with their two daughters.

## TOURIST DEVELOPMENT TAX LAWS EXPLAINED

Robert Skrob, executive director of Destinations Florida, has created a 27-minute video explaining Florida Tourist Development Tax laws for Destinations Florida members so you can understand the law and explain it to individuals within your community. Destinations Florida members can access the video here:

[DestinationsFlorida.org/tdt-laws](http://DestinationsFlorida.org/tdt-laws)

Email [Suzanne@DestinationsFlorida.org](mailto:Suzanne@DestinationsFlorida.org) if you need assistance with a log-in.



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## Legal Resource for Your DMO

As a member benefit for you, Destinations Florida has retained Steven M. Hogan with the Ausley McMullen law firm to provide insight into the operation of the TDT and related issues to Destinations Florida.

There are several situations where it would be helpful for you to have a legal opinion for your community. As a member benefit, you can speak with Mr. Hogan about the facts and laws at a general level.

To take advantage of this program, feel free to reach out to Steve Hogan at the information below:



**Steven M. Hogan**  
Ausley McMullen  
850/224-9115  
[shogan@ausley.com](mailto:shogan@ausley.com)

If you require specific advice on decisions that your DMO will make under the TDT or other law, you can hire Mr. Hogan to advise you separately as your lawyer.

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# INSIDE: DMO leaders benefit from serving on the VISIT FLORIDA board

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Destinations Florida serves as the single unifying voice for all of Florida's DMOs, providing continuing insight and direction as we face an increasingly competitive tourism marketplace. Organized in 1996, Destinations Florida strives to increase the overall effectiveness of Florida DMOs' destination marketing efforts through industry education, legislative outreach, enhancing professionalism and facilitating communication.

Destinations Florida represents the 55 official county DMOs that promote their communities throughout the world. These tourism promotion activities help to attract 118.8 million visitors to Florida, generating \$112 billion in spending and 1.4 million jobs. These activities are made possible by Tourist Development Taxes provided by Florida Statutes Section 125.0104. Statistics: VISIT FLORIDA Research