



"Tourism Buzz!"



**By: Eve Szymanski: Director of Tourism & Film Development
Clay County Chamber of Commerce**

Tourism Buzz August 2006

VISIT FLORIDA Visits Clay County!



Mr. Frank "Bud" Nocera, President and Chief Executive Officer for VISIT FLORIDA, was the guest speaker at the July 12th meeting of the Clay County Tourism Advisory Board meeting at Clay County Chamber of Commerce. Mr. Nocera came in to discuss VISIT FLORIDA programs, and how they impact Clay County tourism and vice versa. He presented several opportunities for a county of our size. Bud used to be with the Jacksonville Convention and Visitors Bureau and is very familiar with Clay. He was also here just in time to make the announcement below.....

Clay County Chamber of Commerce Receives Advertising Grant!

VISIT FLORIDA, on behalf of the Florida Commission on Tourism, the private/public partnership responsible for marketing Florida as a visitor destination, has awarded a Tourism Advertising Marketing Grant to the Clay County Chamber of Commerce for the 2006-2007 Fiscal Year, which started July 1, 2006. The announcement of the grant, in the amount of \$2500 came during the Commission's June 15th meeting in Fort Myers. "The purpose of these grants is to help local governments and nonprofit entities do more effective tourism marketing."

"These funds will be used for printing a Clay County Tourism Map making it easier for visitors to find locations of interest. It will help us better position Clay County as a desirable destination." said Brian Sponaugle, chairperson of the Chamber's Tourism & Film Advisory Board.



The Great Clay County Bug Out Winner for July!

Hector Coraminas of **D & H Embroidery** was our winner of a \$100 Savings Bond on July 20th! He spotted the Tourism Bug when he was on a site visit to Carnival's Celebration at JaxPort. The Savings Bond is sponsored by **Bug Out Service, Inc**, just one of our Tourism Partners.



Annual Clay County TDC Applications Deadline Met!

Twenty nine annual event applications were received by the Clay County Tourist Development Council (TDC) by the new deadline of July 1, 2006. These were for events occurring between October 1, 2006 and September 30th, 2007. This was the first time receiving applications was done on an annual basis. This will allow for much better planning by the event planners, site venues, TDC and the tourism office. A community calendar of events with information will be available sooner for better planning and promotion. Planners will have longer lead time to find sponsors, vendors and volunteers. The number of annual events and their impact for tourism in Clay County is growing and is very exciting. These are not all of the events in Clay County. There were approximately 100 events listed on the Clay County Community Calendar from Jan. 1 through Dec. 31, 2006. The TDC will be meeting in August and September in order to review and make recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners for the promotional funding requests.

CVB Survey

In an effort to better serve the tourism efforts of Clay County, the CC Tourism Advisory Board took the initiative and sent out a survey to other tourism offices and convention & visitors bureaus in Florida. It is the time of the year for creating our product development plan for next year, and we wanted to get some input from other counties. Our questions had to do with how they handle funding for events, how they differentiate between events that have real tourism impact and other more local events that improve the quality of life for our citizens? Do they have "bid pools" for offering an incentive to organizers to bring their event into the county? Do they work with both profit and non-profit organizations, and do they have a set of values that determine the level of qualifications? We will share the results next month.



The New Sleep Inn is Taking Shape in Fleming Island!

The new Sleep Inn and Suites is coming along nicely! It's part of the Choice Hotels, Inc. Franchise and will have 90 suites, a boardroom and all the good things Sleep Inns are noted for. We look forward to it's opening in the late fall and welcoming it to our family of Clay County accommodations.

Just in case you missed it, the **Clay County Tourism Bug** is going through "Metamorphosis". Keep watch for our new partner.



Southern Monster Truck Showdown is Back!

Six trucks are signed and there's a possibility of 2 more joining the event this year at the Clay County Fairgrounds on September 15, 16, & 17! The secondary act will be Pro Stadium trucks! These trucks are the smaller equivalent of monster trucks and are similar to the "Baja" trucks you would see out West at the sand dunes. The gates open at 6 pm on Friday & Saturday and the show starts at 8. On Sunday, the gates open at noon and the show starts at 2 pm. The Pit Party is one hour before showtime.

www.southernmonstertruckshowdown.com



◀ Humanities Day Was August 1!

Humanities are the study of literature, philosophy, and the fine arts. Leadership Clay was hosted by the Clay County Chamber Tourism. They went back to Clay's "Roots" in history with real historic people, transitioning to the present at the Jack Mitchell Art display at the Thrasher Horne Center for the Arts. The group was treated to breakfast at the Clarke House, then off to the historic triangle and the newly restored old courthouse, museum & jail, the home of the Clay County Archives. River Park Inn is an original 3 story mansion, dating back to the late 1800's and is now an award winning bed & breakfast in Green Cove Springs. They enjoyed a gourmet lunch at Magnolia Point Golf & Country Club and then were off to visit St. Margaret's original Episcopal Church, with so much of Clay history surrounding the Fleming family.

Our warmest thanks go to the wonderful and generous sponsors of the event: **Clay Today, Destination Planning Corporation, Magnolia Point and Country Club, Ronnie's Wings, Oysters and More and Auto Club South.** We would also like to thank all of our wonderful tour guides: John Bowles aka; Bill Clarke at Clarke House, Claude Bass - Clay County Archives and Historian, Ed Shields – President, Clay County Historic Society, Pat Garlinghouse Historian Extraordinaire at the River Park Inn B & B, Janet Robinson, seen above at Margaret Fleming herself, and Kathryn Wills, our exceptional guide at Thrasher Horne Center for the Arts.

So, we have Fast, Furry, Fabulous Feathered Friends coming to Clay County. There's Football, Fillies with Fetlocks and plenty of Frisky Fun on the Calendar of Events!

August-September Calendar of Events:

8/19	N FL Dressage Assn Fall Horse Show	CCFG
8/25-8/27	N FL Hunter Jumper Horse Show	CCFG
9/2-9/3	Summertime Blues SportsFest	Eagle Harbor Soccer Club Plus!
9/1-9/3	N FL Hunter Jumper Horse Show	CCFG
9/9	First Coast Hunter Jumper Horse Show	CCFG
9/10	BBE Exotic Bird Show	CCFG
9/15-9/17	Southern Monster Truck Showdown	CCFG
9/22-9/24	Kenney Williams Memorial Team Roping	CCFG
9/30	CC Humane Society Bark in the Park Dog Walk	CCFG
9/30	First Coast Hunter Jumper Horse Show	CCFG

www.claytourism.com (Calendar of Events) for more!

Contact the tourism office at **904-394-7401** or **eszymanski@claychamber.com**