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What's Happening!

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New Tourism Marketing Plan

On July 24, The Clay County Chamber of Commerce Tourism Development office made its presentation to the Clay County Board of Commissioners for a new three year budget with the biggest change for marketing, including advertising. The office has had a budget of \$100,000 for the past three years that will end on September 30, 2007.

The new budget is for \$161,000. It includes \$68,500 for advertising. The rest of the breakdown includes: \$12,900 for trade shows and conferences, \$1200 for organizational dues and \$78,400 in operational expenses: salary, taxes and administrative. The director's salary went from \$45,000 for the last 3 years to \$50,000 for the next three years.

The most exciting part is having a presence with Visit Florida, the marketing organization of the state. By partnering with and advertising in the planned publications and websites, we will have a print circulation of 2 million and reach several million on their respective websites. We represent and promote all of Clay County on an annual basis and will have a much broader reach because of additional purchasing power.

Who is the Clay County Tourist Development Council?

The Clay County Tourist Development Council was established when the bed tax was first implemented in about 1998. The council is established by Florida Statute 125.0104. The members are approved by the Board of County Commissioners. They are all registered voters in Clay County. There can be three but no more than four hoteliers representing Clay County hotels. There is one representative from the largest metropolis (Orange Park) and the other cities are rotated. Three are with tourism related businesses. The chairperson is one of the County Commissioners. Here are the current members of our TDC: Chairperson, the Honorable Commissioner Chereese Stewart of District #4. Mr. Travis Cummings represents Orange Park. Her Honor, Mary Lou Hildreth is the Mayor of Keystone Heights. Mr. Paz Patel represents Comfort Inn Orange Park. Ms. Pat Garlinghouse represents the River Park Inn Bed & Breakfast. Ms. Denise Buzzy represents the New Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites opening this fall. Ms. JJ Killinger represents the Orange Park Mall, a Simon property. Mr. Ray Chute is a thespian with the Orange Park Community Theatre. There is a current opening on the council for a tourism related business person. This august group met on June 28 to review in detail the new marketing plan for tourism. It was recommended to the BCC. They turned around and met again on July 12 to review all 14 annual events applying for promotional funding from the Tourist Development Council Trust Fund. They worked very hard to consider at the budget as a whole and review the applications. We salute our TDC!

Camp Blanding Opens Its New Conference Center!

Many people remember the Non-commissioned Officers Club on Kingsley Lake at Camp Blanding. On July 20, The Florida National Guard celebrated a ribbon cutting and the expansion to that very same building. It's now about 10,000 square feet with a large meeting room, buffet area, bar and separate breakout. The spacious deck overlooks our beautiful and crystal clear Kingsley Lake. It's a wonderful addition to Camp Blanding for their meetings and was a team effort with the Florida Army & Air National Guard, the Clay County Chamber of Commerce and the Florida Defense Alliance. Congratulations to all on a job very well done!



Southern Monster Truck Showdown September 14-16!



We welcome the Southern Monster Truck Showdown for the 3rd Annual Event on September 14 through 16 at the Clay County Fairgrounds. The East Coast X-treme FMX riders will be performing daring, acrobatic stunts like backflips, etc. There will be a Show & Shine contest, lawn mower racing and more! The Pit Party is free with your tickets and starts at 6:30-7:30 on Friday & Saturday and 12:30-1:30 on Sunday. Getting up close to those monster trucks is half the fun! See you there! Go to www.southernmonstertruckshowdown.com or check out www.claytourism.com for more information or call 904-394-7401.

The 20th Annual First Coast Ham Jam!

The 20th Annual **First Coast Ham Jam** will be happening September 27 through 30 this year! Warmer weather should make for even more enjoyment of this annual event on the shores of the St. Johns River at Reynolds Park Yacht Center in Green Cove Springs. (It has moved from November in past years.) **Eric Church** **Billy Currington** will appear in concert on Friday evening starting at 8:30 p.m. His hits include Must Be Doin' Something Right and Good Directions. **Blake Shelton** will be the Saturday Night Headliner starting at 8:30 p.m. You will remember OJ' Red and Some Beach. You can go to www.firstcoasthamjam.org or call 904-276-4746 for more information.



The Jacksonville Landing Visitors Center Promotion

Clay County will be in the window of the visitors center at the Jacksonville Landing for the month of September! If you have a Fall Event, please make sure to drop off something to promote it. **The Florida Sun Cats** have sent me two adorable stuffed cats. **Southern Monster Trucks** sent "Little" Monster Truck! We need them by mid August. The item needs to be at least a foot or two in size and be something that represents your event. A poster would give you maximum exposure. No cost, we just need the stuff by Mid August! Call or email the tourism office!

Event Updates:

Just to keep you in the loop as things are coming along for next year. **The Southeast Wizard of Oz Fest** is underway for next March 8 & 9, 2008. It has been expanded to include an "Oz" Themed Cruise on the Sovereign of the Seas the following week. Watch www.southeastwizardofozfest.com for updates on the Orange Park festival and www.cruisingwiththemunchkins.com for cruise information. **First Coast Winter Lights** is on track for this year starting with the Thanksgiving timeframe.

August-September Calendar of Events

8/10-11	4H Open Summer Series Horse Show	Clay County Fairgrounds (CCFG)
8/18	North FL Dressage Fall Series	CCFG
8/25	North FL Hunter Jumper Horse Show	CCFG
8/31 - 9/2	North FL Hunter Jumper Horse Show	CCFG
8/31 - 9/1	Labor Fest	Keystone Heights
9/7 - 9/9	First Coast Hunter Jumper Horse Show	CCFG
9/7 - 9/9	Cinderella	Orange Park Community Theatre (OPCT)
9/14 - 9/16	Southern Monster Truck Showdown	CCFG
9/14 - 9/16	Cinderella	OPCT
9/21 - 9/23	Cinderella	OPCT
9/27 - 9/30	First Coast Ham Jam	Reynolds Park Yacht Center (RPYC)
9/27 - 9/29	Cinderella	OPCT
9/29	First Coast Hunter Jumper Horse Show	CCFG

904-394-7401 www.claytourism.com eszymanski@claychamber.com

Websites for Additional Information:

www.middleburgcivicassociation.com
www.southernmonstertruckshowdown.com
www.firstcoasthamjam.org
www.nfladressage.org
<http://nfhja.com>
www.dressageonthefirstcoast.com/fchja
www.opct.org