Chamber On Dections

ST. JOHNS COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE Ponte Vedra Beach Division

After Hours at THE PLAYERS 2025











<image>



March 2025





THE RECORDER

Castillo de San Marcos becomes first National Park area to earn CAC designation

St. Augustine's Castillo de San Marcos National Monument has been awarded Certified Autism Center designation by the International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards (IBCCES), making it the first national park area to earn CAC status.

The St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce, along with the Castillo and IBCCES, held a ceremony on Wednesday, Jan. 15, to acknowledge and celebrate this monumental achievement. Staff from the Chamber and the Castillo, as well as officials from St. Johns County and City of St. Augustine and representatives from other certified businesses, were in attendance to mark the certification.

Since 2023, the Chamber has led an initiative to achieve Certified Autism Destination status for St. Johns County, ensuring that the area offers multiple certified options for entertainment, recreation and lodging.

The Chamber manages a county matching grant to support certification for St. Johns County tourism and hospitality businesses through IBCCES. The certification signifies a commitment to inclusivity for autistic and sensory-sensitive individuals and their families.

"This certification is a monumental step forward in the movement to designate St. Johns County as a Certified Autism Destination, and I hope it will be a spark for more National Park Service sites around Florida and around the country to pursue certification," said Isabelle Renault, president and CEO of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce. "Having a National Park Service area earn the



Photo provided by St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce Members of other St. Johns County CAC businesses, along with Myron Pincomb of IBCCES and Isabelle Renault of the St. Johns County Chamber, present the Castillo's certification to Kristina Bransford and Gordie Wilson of the National Park Service.

designation is a testament to the importance of certification and of the program. Our hope is that this step will inspire other St. Johns County attractions to seek certification as well to ensure our community is a welcoming place for all visitors."

Autism affects one in 36 children in the United States, and estimates suggest about 20% of the population is affected by sensory processing sensitivity. As a result, it has become increasingly vital to equip businesses and organizations with the necessary knowledge and tools to effectively engage and assist these individuals. The Certified Autism Center designation marks a significant step

St. Johns County Certified Autism Centers

- City of St. Augustine Visitor Information Center
- First Coast Cultural Center
- Old Town Trolley Tours and associated attractions
- Ponte Vedra Visitor Information Center
- Sawgrass Marriott
- St. Augustine Sailing
- St. Johns County Cultural Council
- St. Johns County Parks & Recreation
- St. Johns County Visitors and Convention Bureau

Learn more about certification and apply for the matching grant at sjcchamber.com/autismcertification-matching-grant/.

forward for the larger movement.

As the first national park area to earn the designation, Castillo de San Marcos staff completed a specialized training and certification process, equipping them with resources and best practices to assist visitors. IBCCES also conducted an onsite review to create sensory guides and offer additional recommendations to improve the visitor experience.

"Park staff are committed to the National Park Service's vision to provide amazing, meaningful experiences for everyone who visits these national treasures," said Gordie Wilson, superintendent of the Castillo and Fort Matanzas sites. "This initial step helps us rise to the challenge of creating a fun, equitable and accessible environment where visitors thrive."





Aliyah Meyer





Lacy Danielson

Katrina Fundora

Chamber adds new staff members

The Chamber has recently added to its staff, with new team members in economic development, membership and marketing.

Aliyah Meyer is the Chamber's economic development coordinator. She is a 2024 graduate of Flagler College, earning a bachelor's degree in economics. She is applying her skills through research and advocacy work, most recently on the Chamber's Attainable Housing efforts.

Katrina Fundora joined the Chamber staff in January as the member engagement manager. She previously worked at Hyatt Place St. Augustine/Vilano Beach as a group sales coordinator and is using her knowledge of St. Johns County to connect with Chamber members and help them maximize their membership.

Lacy Danielson joined the Chamber staff as the communications and tourism development specialist and is the newest member of the team. She will support the Chamber's tourism initiatives, including the Ponte Vedra Visitor Information Center, as well as the overall marketing and communications efforts.

Chamber Foundation to hold annual fundraiser gala

The St. Johns County Chamber Foundation will hold its annual fundraiser gala on Thursday, April 3, at the Tringali Barn in St. Augustine.

The Denim & Diamonds 2025 Gala will bring together the community to raise funds to support the foundation's mission to serve the entire community and promote growth through leadership opportunities, workforce education and economic development programs.

The foundation's cornerstone program, Leadership St. Johns, is celebrating its 25th year, and some members of this year's class benefitted from scholarships made possible through last year's Foundation Kickoff fundraiser. This year's event will raise additional funds to expand scholarship opportunities and to work toward establishing a disaster relief fund for local businesses.

At the event, attendees can bid on a variety of items in silent and live auctions, including a stay in Italy, memorabilia from the Jacksonville Jaguars, gift baskets from local businesses and much more. Businesses or individuals interested in donating auction items can do so by contacting the Chamber Foundation



Photo provided by Tringali Barn at Heritage Farms

The St. Johns County Chamber Foundation's Denim & Diamonds 2025 Gala will be held Thursday, April 3, at Tringali Barn in St. Augustine.

at 904-829-5681 or info@sjcchamberfoundation.org. Sponsorships are also available.

The event will also feature dinner, drinks, a photo booth, entertainment and of course many networking opportunities.

The SJC Chamber Foundation was established in 2023 to extend the Chamber's commitment to strengthening the community through leadership, education and economic development. Its mission is to drive lasting impact by providing scholarships for Leadership St. Johns, a premier leadership development program, fostering a skilled local workforce, and establishing an emergency fund for businesses facing natural disasters or economic challenges.

The foundation creates opportunities for growth by supporting professional leadership, workforce education and disaster recovery initiatives, ultimately benefiting individuals and businesses throughout the county.



SJC Chamber Foundation Denim & Diamonds Gala

Date: Thursday, April 3

Time: 5:30 p.m.

Location: Tringali Barn, St. Augustine **Tickets:** \$100 each or \$750 table of eight; available at bit.ly/foundation_gala_2025

To donate, sponsor or buy tickets, or for more information, contact the foundation at 904-829-5681 or info@ sjcchamberfoundation.org.

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Photo credit: First Coast Headshots for the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce

Chamber Golf Classic returns for 2025

The St. Johns County Chamber will host its annual Golf Classic on Monday, May 5, at Stillwater Golf and Country Club in St. Johns.

Swing into action with a day of networking, friendly competition and supporting local businesses while experiencing the brand-new Stillwater course and clubhouse. This year, all golfers can take a chance at a Hole in One Contest to win a 2025 Hyundai Santa Fe XRT courtesy of Hyundai of St. Augustine.

The golf tournament serves as a primary fundraiser for the Chamber to support the work as the premier advocacy organization for the St. Johns County business community.



The event starts with check-in from 8 to 9 a.m. and a 9 a.m. tee time. An awards luncheon will follow. Registration is open at bit.ly/sjcchamber_ golf2025; special early bird pricing is available through April 1.



Photo provided by St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce

The Chamber Radio Hour is hosted by Ed Dwyer, left, of Dwyer Advisory. The first show aired at the beginning of March and featured updates from the Chamber's Senior Vice President of Economic Development & Public Policy Scott Maynard and County Commissioner Sarah Arnold.

Chamber launches monthly radio show on WSOS

The St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce has launched a monthly radio show on WSOS 103.9.

The Chamber Radio Hour airs the first Saturday of each month and is hosted by Ed Dwyer of Dwyer Advisory. Listeners can join the Chamber team and special guests as they discuss topics important to St. Johns County businesses, share updates about what the Chamber is doing, highlight Chamber members and more.

The inaugural episode of the show featured a look at the Chamber's programs and events, an update on the Florida Black History Museum and the economic impact of THE PLAY-ERS Championship in the area with guests Isabelle Renault, president and CEO, St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce; Scott Maynard, senior VP of economic development and public policy, St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce; Aliyah Meyer, economic development coordinator, St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce; Sarah Arnold, county commissioner, District 2.

The community can listen live on 103.9 FM the first Saturday of each month at 9 a.m., or go to sjcchamber. com/radio to listen to past episodes.

Social Society hosts After Hours





Photos by Susan Griffir

The Social Society hosted a Chamber After Hours on Jan. 29. Owner Seri Kertzner has created a fun and creative space where customers will find all of the supplies needed to throw a fabulous party, including a balloon bar with delivery options, trendy gift ideas and stunning pieces for everyday entertaining.

Vista Wellness ribbon cutting and After Hours



hoto provided by St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce

Vista Wellness & Integrative Health held both a ribbon cutting ceremony and Chamber After Hours event on Feb. 19. As a committed health care provider, Vista Wellness & Integrative Health supports patients' health and wellness goals through safe, sustainable and medically supervised approaches.



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Chamber presents legislative priorities to county's legislative delegation

Orv Dothage, chair of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce, recently presented the 2025 Legislative Priorities for the Chamber to our legislative delegation. The event was chaired by newly elected state Rep. Kim Kendall and included Sen. Tom Leek, Rep. Judson Sapp and Rep. Sam Greco. This annual hearing allows local residents and officials to request legislation or state funding and share their opinions on matters of state concern ahead of the 2025 Regular Legislative Session.

The Chamber's priorities focus on economic development, attainable housing, infrastructure and transportation, and tourism.

In addressing the need for additional

Chamber advocacy & public policy

The Chamber's advocacy agendas are available online at sjcchamber.com/ advocacy. Read regular updates on the state legislative priorities at bit.ly/sjcchamber-news.

attainable housing support, Dothage said, "Please consider supporting legislation to incentivize builders and developers further to increase their production of 'attainable housing' for our county's essential workers such as teachers, public safety, health care, tourism/hospitality and manufacturing employees. Without the ability to offer attainable housing in St. Johns County, these workers are forced to commute from as far away as Palatka, Jacksonville and Daytona, where housing is cheaper, clogging up our roads and battering our transportation infrastructure."

Dothage also pointed out the need for more funding to support infrastructure and that the Chamber's goals directly aligned with the county's goals. Due to the drastic increase in population over the last decade, infrastructure development has become a critical issue. This goal also has a direct impact on economic growth, as transportation and logistics are key factors in any business's decision to expand or locate here.

The Chamber also supports eliminating Florida's sales tax on commercial rent. In recent years, the Legislature has dramatically lowered the sales tax on commercial rents, and the Chamber has encouraged this delegation to support its final elimination. Every month, business owners are reminded of this tax, which takes scarce dollars away from small businesses that could be used to hire additional workers, replenish inventory and pay current bills so that businesses can continue to thrive and prosper.

The Chamber also supports the county's goal of establishing the Florida Museum of Black History in St. Johns County. The State of Florida Black History Museum Task Force selected the county as the preferred location last year. This museum would, in part, highlight the role of African-American participation in defending and preserving Florida and the United States, including the contributions of the residents of Fort Mose, the Tuskegee Airmen and all African-American veterans.

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St. John Knits hosts After Hours



Photo provided by St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce

St. John Knits hosted a Chamber After Hours event on Feb. 26. Linda Blackstock organized a delightful evening of networking, food and drinks.

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THE RECORDER



Leadership St. Johns kicks off 25th year



The Leadership St. Johns Class of 2025 marks the program's 25th year with the largest class ever.

The St. Johns County Chamber Foundation kicked off 2025 with the 25th Leadership St. Johns class. This cohort of 29 local professionals marks the largest class ever.

Since 2000, more than 400 community and business leaders have graduated from Leadership St. Johns. The program provides structured, interactive programs and activities emphasizing local economic, education, government and volunteerism issues, among others.

LSJ accelerates the development of leadership skills for business, government and community professionals by building relationships and enhancing their knowledge of St. Johns County. Participants at all levels of career advancement establish themselves as key players in the county's business landscape as they make connections with a diverse group of civic, business and community leaders, professionals and advocates to build a powerful network.

With representation from every business sector in St. Johns County, employers of LSJ participants value the experience and knowledge gained as participants use these new tools to advance the organizations' goals and make an ongoing positive difference in the community. LSJ is the cornerstone program of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to strengthening the local business community through leadership opportunities, economic development programs and continuing education.

Flagler College hosts After Hours



Photo provided by St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce

Flagler College hosted a Chamber After Hours on March 4 as part of their annual Business Week. Chamber members and Flagler students and alums networked and mingled while enjoying food and drinks and hearing about the economic opportunities in the community. Aliyah Meyer, the Chamber's economic development coordinator and a Flagler alum, was among the speakers.



Membership in the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce provides access to resources, partnerships and potential customers to grow your business.

READY TO BECOME PART OF THIS TRUSTED NETWORK?

Join today!



Chamber Insights:

64%

of consumers are more likely to buy from a business that is a member of the chamber of commerce^{*}

Based on a survey by the Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives

Epic Theaters opens its IMAX theater



Photo provided by St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce

Epic Theaters of St. Augustine held its official ribbon cutting on Jan. 8 to celebrate a brand new IMAX theater and revitalized lobby. Epic rolled out the red carpet for guests and held a special event with great food and an exclusive screening of a feature film.

Rolland Reash Plumbing ribbon cutting



Photo provided by St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce

Rolland Reash Plumbing held its ribbon cutting on Jan. 21. The business' experienced plumbers have served this area over multiple generations. Their team has high standards and always strives to exceed customer expectations.

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RISE at Nocatee holds grand opening



RISE at Nocatee held its ribbon cutting ceremony and grand opening on Jan. 9. RISE at Nocatee brings its 55+ active living experience to one of the best master-planned neighborhoods in Florida.

Cereset ribbon cutting



Photo by Susan Griffin

Cereset Ponte Vedra on a ribbon cutting ceremony on Jan. 22. Cereset is a center for brain health and wellness located in the heart of Ponte Vedra Beach in the Veranda Buildings. They use a safe and non-invasive approach to record the "echo" of the brain's real-time dominant frequency. That frequency acts as a "mirror" for the brain to see itself and begin restoring its natural ability to correct any of its imbalances.



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Diesel Barbershop ribbon cutting

Diesel Barbershop held a grand opening and ribbon cutting on Jan. 23 for its newest location at World Golf Village. The business aims to provide the best men's haircut and beard-grooming experience in a fun and enjoyable atmosphere.

> Photo provided by St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce

Dirt Destroyer ribbon cutting



Photo provided by St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce Dirt Destroyer held a ribbon cutting ceremony on March 5.

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Your Health ribbon cutting

Your Health marked the introduction of their at-home services to St. Augustine with a ribbon cutting on Feb. 27. Your Health provides personalized preventative care plans and regular checkins to help individuals stay healthy, avoid hospital visits and live confidently from the comfort of their own homes.

> Photo provided by St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce

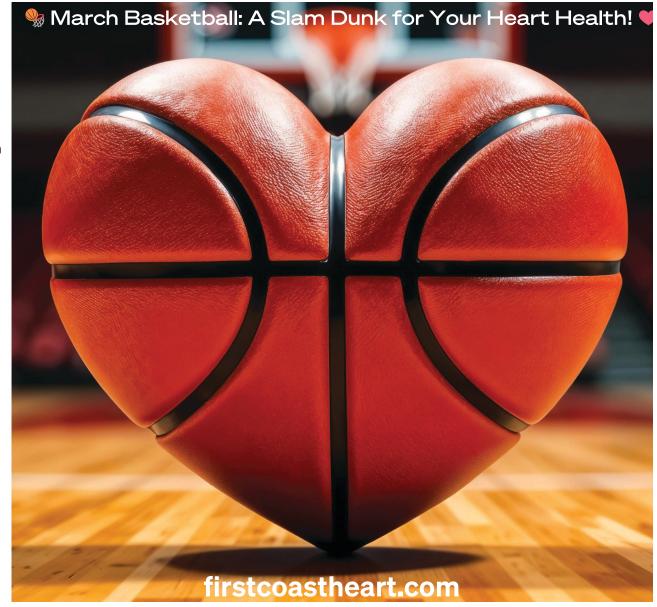




& Wine staff gather to celebrate the store's grand opening on March 6.

Photo by Holly Tishfield







After Hours at THE PLAYERS

The St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce and Jax Chamber hosted the annual After Hours at THE PLAYERS on Thursday, March 3, at TPC Sawgrass. Hundreds of local business leaders from the First Coast region spent the evening networking and celebrating another year of THE PLAYERS Championship. Local restaurants provided food samples, and other vendors had the opportunity to showcase their products and services to attendees.

Photos provided by St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce



St. Johns County Parks & Rec, Waterworks earn autism designation

To kick off 2025, St. Johns County Parks & Recreation and the The Waterworks have earned the Certified Autism Center designation from the International Board of Certification and Continuing Education Standards.

The CAC credential is awarded to organizations whose staff undergo autismspecific training and certification, providing knowledge on best practices, skills and resources to welcome autistic and sensorysensitive individuals to their location.

Parks & Rec celebrated the achievement on Saturday, March 8, alongside Kite Day at Treaty Oaks Park in St. Augustine.

"This effort is more than just a designation — it is a commitment to ensuring that every family who visits St. Johns

County can feel welcomed, supported and empowered to enjoy all that our beautiful community has to offer," said Isabelle Renault, president and CEO of the St. Johns County Chamber. "St. Johns County Parks and Recreation has taken a major step forward in that mission, reinforcing that outdoor spaces, nature and play should be accessible to everyone."

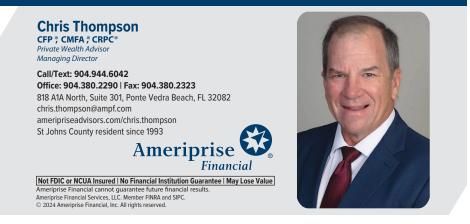
The Waterworks designation as a Certified Autism Center brings a more inclusive venue option to the community, where guests can experience high-quality cultural events, concerts, educational programof the St. Johns Cultural Council, which manages The Waterworks cultural center, also received IBCCES autism training. The addition of Parks & Rec and The

ming, art classes and more. Members

Waterworks to the list of CAC organizations brings St. Johns County closer to earning the designation of Certified Autism Destination by IBCCES, which ensures that the area offers multiple certified options for entertainment, recreation and lodging.

For more information, go to sjcchamber. com/autism-certification-matching-grant.

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Pictured from left: Brianna Angulo of IBCCES, Tess Simpson of St. Johns County Parks & Recreation, County Commissioner Clay Murphy, Pamela Murphy and Isabelle Renault of St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce.

Photo provided by St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce



Sawgrass Pet Resort milestone



Photo provided by St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce Sawgrass Pet Resort celebrated its five-year anniversary on March 9 with a Chamber After Hours event. Business owner Kate Wagner established the pet resort to provide a pleasant and worry-free experience for both pet and owner.

The Amp adds a new dimension



Photo provided by St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce The St. Augustine Amphitheatre recently celebrated the opening of its first onsite merch shop, its renovated box office and The Kookaburra Coffee Outpost.



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