



St. Lucie County Tourism Office Receives Prestigious Henry Flagler Award for
#LovetheFort & LovethePort Social Media Campaign

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From: PIO <PIO@stlucieco.org>

To: SLCTV <SLCTV@stlucieco.org>



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St. Lucie County Tourism
2300 Virginia Ave.
Fort Pierce, Florida 34982
www.VisitStLucie.com
Contact: Charlotte Bireley, Director of Tourism & Marketing
birelevc@stlucieco.org / 772.462.1539

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

St. Lucie County Tourism Office Receives Prestigious Henry Flagler Award for #LovetheFort & LovethePort Social Media Campaign

ST. LUCIE COUNTY – St. Lucie County’s Tourism Office (Visit St. Lucie) was awarded a first place “Henry” award at the annual Flagler Awards ceremony that took place at the Florida Governors Conference on Tourism Monday, Aug. 28. The Flagler Awards is an annual statewide competition recognizing outstanding Florida tourism marketing.

The St. Lucie County Tourism Office received its first-ever, first place award in the “Tourism Advocacy” category for its efforts last summer to combat the negative national media coverage regarding the green algae bloom in the Indian River Lagoon. While most of St. Lucie was not directly impacted by the algae blooms, and with a limited marketing and public relations budget, and maintaining sensitivity to its neighbors to the south, the tourism office utilized social media to clarify

that its waters were safe, clean and open. The campaign rallied St. Lucie County's local residents and tourism-related businesses to advocate for Visit St. Lucie using their social media networks to overcome the misinformed perceptions of the green algae's impact in St. Lucie County. The strategy focused on positive messaging and encouraged residents and the tourism industry to post photos on their social media platforms showing recreation, fun and family in the area's beautiful waterways using the hashtags #LovetheFort or #LovethePort. As an incentive, the office also incorporated a photo contest. The best image posted received a staycation package valued at more than \$1,000. As a result the Tourism Office received 538 photo entries and reached approximately 11,000 users and 7,100 in engagement on social media.

“Receiving this recognition among Florida's vast tourism industry is something for St. Lucie County to be very proud of. St. Lucie is considered a small tourist destination with an even smaller budget compared to our friends in South and Central Florida. This is where our innovation and resourcefulness really stood out,” stated County Commission Chairman Chris Dzadovsky, who also serves as chairman of the St. Lucie County Tourist Development Council. “This social media campaign was not only very successful, but it was done using no tourism marketing funds – just time and creativity.”

The Flagler Awards were created by VISIT FLORIDA, the state's tourism marketing organization, to honor tourism marketing professionals and offices that help position Florida as the No. 1 travel destination the world. Each year, the Flagler Awards pay tribute to the determined efforts of those who use their skill, resourcefulness, creativity and innovative spirit to market Florida.

For more information about St. Lucie County's tourism efforts follow its social media channels (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Pinterest @VisitStLucie) or visit www.visitstlucie.com or contact St. Lucie County Tourism and Marketing Director Charlotte Bireley, at 772-462-1539 or by email: bireleyc@stlucieco.org.

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Erick Gill
Communications Division Director
St. Lucie County Board of County Commissioners
2300 Virginia Ave., Fort Pierce, Fla. 34982
www.stlucieco.gov
772-462-1791 (office)
772-342-6014 (cell)
Facebook: www.facebook.com/StLucieGov
Twitter: @StLucieGOV
YouTube: www.youtube.com/StLucieGov
Instagram: @stluciegov

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