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Lee County Visitor & Convention Bureau
Sept. 8, 2016
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The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel earns Florida's top tourism marketing award for 26th time

LEE COUNTY, FL – The Lee County Visitor & Convention Bureau (VCB) earned its 26th Henry award, along with a Silver and a Bronze Award, at the 49th Annual Florida Governor's Conference on Tourism Flagler Awards Competition presented in Orlando on Sept. 7.

 "We are thankful for this recognition from Visit Florida and the Florida Commission on Tourism," said VCB Executive Director Tamara Pigott. "We appreciate their partnership and support over the years."

The Flagler Awards program, sponsored by Visit Florida, the official tourism marketing organization for the state, and the Florida Commission on Tourism, recognizes outstanding tourism marketing in Florida. The Flagler Awards honor individuals and organizations that help maintain and improve Florida's position as one of the world's most popular travel destinations. Eight out-of-state judges examined 255 entries in 17 categories.

This year, the VCB was honored with the following awards:

- Henry Award, "Island Findings Digital Campaign" in the "Internet Advertising" category

- Silver Award, "Song & Chance 2" in the "Social Media Marketing" category

- Bronze Award, "Summer Getaway Radio" in the "Radio Advertising" category

The "Island Findings Digital Campaign" earned the top award, a Henry Award, in the Internet Advertising category. With the goal of delivering a "Florida beach" message to new and younger potential vacationers during the trip planning phase, local residents shared stories via video about the unique and natural characteristics of the Fort Myers/Sanibel Island area.

The campaign also aimed to reach the same person across all their devices. As a result, more than 86 percent of all visits to the Island Findings landing page on FortMyers-Sanibel.com came from new visitors. In addition, the goal to increase bed tax revenue year-over-year by 3.5 percent was exceeded with a 7 percent increase from March 2015 through February 2016.

The Silver Award for "Song & Chance 2" in the Social Media Marketing category was achieved by creating buzz and awareness around The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel's Second Annual Island Hopper Songwriter Fest. The campaign ran from August to September 2015 and included a contest calling for songwriters to submit an original song to the application on the destination's Facebook page. Facebook advertising was utilized to target songwriters in key songwriting markets for entry outreach. The Facebook audience then voted on their favorite song. The winner received a trip to the destination, and a chance to perform at the festival.

The campaign exceeded its goal in all categories. It generated 155 song entries and received 13,200 votes.

The Bronze Award for the "Summer Getaway" radio commercial resulted from a campaign developed specifically to air in Miami, Tampa, Orlando and West Palm Beach, June 1 - 21, 2015. The commercial asked consumers to escape the hustle and bustle of their everyday lives and be saved by the shells on The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel. One of the strategies behind the radio spot was to target decision-makers: married women.

The Summer Getaway radio campaign generated 3,878,100 impressions. The campaign helped increase visitation from these four markets and bed tax revenue during the spring/summer season.

The winning Flagler Award submissions were evaluated by the creativity, innovation, production, quality, and effectiveness of each entry. Based on the judges' cumulative scores, awards were presented to the top three entries in each category: the Bronze Award for the third highest scoring entry, the Silver Award for the second highest scoring entry, and the Henry Award for the highest scoring entry in each category.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel includes Sanibel Island, Captiva Island, Fort Myers Beach, Fort Myers, Bonita Springs, Estero, Cape Coral, Pine Island, Boca Grande & Outer Islands, North Fort Myers, Lehigh Acres. For more information, visit www.FortMyers-Sanibel.com.

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