



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Record-breaking bed tax collections announced at Tourism Outlook Annual Meeting

2021 Junonia Award goes to former Sanibel City Manager Judie Zimomra

LEE COUNTY, Fla. – The Lee County Visitor & Convention Bureau (VCB) announced record-setting bed tax collections for the 2020-2021 tourism season today at its Tourism Outlook Annual Meeting at the Marriott Sanibel Harbour Resort & Spa in Fort Myers.

Bed tax collected for the fiscal year was \$53,332,883 – breaking all records in the county’s history. It increased almost 40 percent more than in 2020 and almost 25 percent from 2019.

“The best bed tax in history is definitely something to celebrate,” said Brian Hamman, Lee County commissioner and chair of the Tourist Development Council. “Our destination stayed open, welcomed visitors and watched as tourism thrived. In fact, it never even slowed down during the usually slower summer months.”

The VCB is funded by a 5% tourist tax collected from tourists on accommodations rented for six months or less. The allocation of bed tax funds is applied as 20% for sports facilities, 26.4% for beach and shoreline and 53.6% for tourism marketing.

“The fact that we had our best year during a pandemic speaks to our destination and its natural settings,” said Tamara Pigott, executive director of Lee County Visitor & Convention Bureau. “It’s where every traveler wanted to go because of our beaches and wide-open spaces. The gifts we have from Mother Nature well positioned our destination during this time.”

In addition to the record-breaking bed tax, the VCB also unveiled a new branding strategy, new marketing campaign, new website and new visitor guide.

The VCB presented its annual Junonia Award to Judie Zimomra, who recently retired as Sanibel city manager. During her 20 years of service, Zimomra helped secure more than \$30 million in tourist development tax funding for beach and shoreline projects.

“Today, we are recognizing her leadership, dedication and passion – but most importantly the way our visitors benefitted from her commitment to everything she did,” Pigott said. “She was truly an ambassador who proved how amazing it is to live, work and play on Sanibel Island.”

Created in 2006, the VCB's Junonia Award recognizes individuals who positively impact Lee County's tourism community by demonstrating unique capabilities, leadership, commitment and dedication. The award is named for the junonia, a treasured shell known for its rarity and exceptional quality.

Last year's recipient was Jeanne Bigos former general manager of Outrigger Beach Resort on Fort Myers Beach.

Keynote speaker Samantha Brown, host of the Emmy Award-winning travel series "Samantha Brown's Places to Love," spoke about ways travelers can have more meaningful experiences by being more in the present and the emotional value of travel.

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***Photo attached**

Tamara Pigott, executive director of Lee County Visitor & Convention Bureau, and the 2021 Junonia Award winner, Judie Zimomra, former Sanibel city manager.

