

ANNOUNCER: You've tuned in to another edition of The Break Room, a

weekly conversation about how the City of St Augustine

works from those who do the work every day. Hosted by the

City of St. Augustine's Communications Director Melissa

Wissel. The Break Room offers a closer look at the different

city departments and provides updates on current and upcoming

projects and events. And now your host, Melissa Wissel.

MELISSA: Welcome to The Break Room. Thanks for tuning in. I'm

Melissa Whistle, Communications Director for the City of St

Augustine. Every year, the commission recognizes

individuals for their

outstanding service and

contributions to the City by

way of presenting awards. We

had Greg White in The Break

Room talking about the Order of

La Florida Award. He was the

2022 recipient and we ran out

of time with our conversation

about not only what Greg is

involved with in his past, but

moving forward what exciting

projects we have ahead. So, I

have invited Greg back to The

Break Room to pick up our

conversation where we left off.

GREG: Pleasure to be here again. MELISSA: We

we talked about you, the work

that you've been doing, in case

our listeners didn't hear the

last interview. Would you just  
give us a snapshot of you, your

life here in St Augustine  
growing up. You married your

high school sweetheart. You  
served in the military. You've

got a great, great life story.

Tell us a little bit about that

to start us off. GREG: Yes, I'm  
married to my childhood

sweetheart. Her name is Lydia.  
We've been together 50 plus

years. I don't want to say a  
number because I get it wrong

and then she'll get angry,  
especially... We have four kids,

two boys, two girls, and grands  
and even have the pleasure of

having great grand, so it's, it's  
wonderful. MEISSA: What a wonderful

life experience. GREG: Been a great  
ride. MELISSA: And you lived here during

the civil rights, was a very  
hard time here in St

Augustine. Tell us a little bit  
about that and and a little bit,

maybe how that shaped how you  
see things and how you want to

make a difference. GREG: Well, I think  
the key here Melissa is to

truly make a difference. Even  
though we were very young

15, 16, 17, 18. The  
college kids at that time had

to be 19, 20, 21, 22 and  
like I mentioned earlier, the

high school kids would go with  
the the college kids, and we

would march from homes in King  
all the way to the plaza,

singing our songs and going  
around. I remember at First

Baptist Church, Doctor Martin  
Luther King came. This is after

Jose had parted to see, Jose  
Williams, and everybody was

excited that Martin Luther King  
coming. So, he comes to First

Baptist Church and he just give  
this speech and everybody on

the hills and ready to go.  
And my grandma was still living

at that particular time and she  
was ready to go. So, we all

line up. We line up in tools  
and we walk. My grandmama was

behind me and we're walking

towards the slave market, we

didn't say plaza during that  
time. And so I said, my mama stay

close by me now, stay close, okay,  
okay, okay. So as we walk and we

get to the corner, and I didn't  
see my grandmama. So I said gosh,

wonder what happened. So I  
circle back and I still didn't

see my grandma. I circle back  
and I still didn't see my

grandma. So now I have to go  
back to who I was walking with

and get with them we walk  
around the slave market, we come

back to First Baptist Church.

And as I walked, in my grandma

sitting on the pew, and I said  
mama what happened? She said God

told me to turn around. So she  
come back and she said she sit

back down. But that was the  
first memorance of me with with

Doctor Martin Luther King. And I  
thought, I always thought he was

a big man, but he's like 5'6", 5'7". MELISSA: And how old were

you? GREG: I was like sixteen. 16  
years old. MELISSA: That was, that must

have been exciting. GREG: Oh gosh,  
it was exciting. It was

exciting just to to get that  
close to the guy and to

listen to him and actually... MELISSA:  
Inspiring? GREG: Oh gosh, inspiring

wouldn't be the word. Yeah.  
Very inspiring. Very exciting

so. MELISSA: And you went and served in  
the military. Came

back, worked for FPL. Talk a little bit about some

of those projects you had  
shared with us last time in

case folks missed it.

Basically, the start of things

was people wanting community  
activities for kids. GREG: Exactly.

Exactly. We did the survey and  
the survey indicated youth

activities. And I thought it  
would be policing, but it's

youth activities. So, from that  
survey came to birth of the

Solomon Calhoun Center. The  
pool as well as the Pop Warner

football field to give our kids  
a place they could actually go.

Nationwide, more black kids  
drowned in Florida and

nationwide, than any other ethnic group. I know

for a fact that John Adam, the Baldwin girl Tyrone Bell, and I

can go on and on in my lifetime when I was a youngster kids

drowning in the pool. So it was very important that we have

that particular ethnic in there as well. And working with the

County Director then was Tom Crawford, we made all of that a

reality as we sit today. MELISSA: And you got involved also with the CRA

in Augustine. GREG: Oh yes. Yes. Yes. The CRA like I had mentioned

earlier. I got involved simply because the corner, the

prostitutes doing that time moved the kids to another

location, and that began my involvement with the CRA. MELISSA: You

really want, and and it, you're right it comes comes down to

providing a safe environment for kids. That they stay

in the community. They don't get in trouble. And

somewhere in all of that also became the birth of the kids

safe zone for the, with the Legion. Yeah. GREG: In our 26th year,

okay. And we've been very blessed that we've served, oh

gosh, hundreds upon hundreds and maybe thousands of kids, but

even with that particular program, Melissa, we have a

summer program that we

partnered with the YMCA. So,

opposed to just jumping in the pool splashing. We are actually

teaching these kids the skills that's going to last for a

lifetime. Teaching swimming with the YMCA. We've been doing

that since the beginning. MELISSA: And mentorship. GREG: And the mentorship

is great. The the kids, the kids just energize

you, you know. MELISSA: Right. They energize. They really do. If

you are just now tuning in, you're listening to The Break

Room. I'm Melissa Wissel, Communications Director for the

City of St Augustine. I have invited back Mr Greg White.

I have the honor of sharing the studio with him. He is the

recipient of the 2022 Order of La Florida Award. He's been

extremely involved in the community and specifically in

West Augustine with improving the lives of our families over

there. One of the other projects we we talked about

last time, the septic to sewer project. Let's talk about what

is coming, because there is a lot happening that is coming in

the future, which continues to make West Augustine a great

place. Talk, tell us about the health center. GREG: So be it. We

we've got a medical center coming on the corner of Brevard

and King Street in in West Augustine. We partnered with

Flagler Health Plus, okay? Epic Behavioral Health Center, also

the YMCA to address wellness, as well as some other private

entities. But let's come to Flagler Hospital Plus first.

They're going to provide the medical component in this, in

this center, and with their name recognition, we know that's

going to be successful. On the private sector, I've gotta

mention the gentleman named Mark Bailey, who has been a drum

major as far as this calls go to make it a reality. We were

able to see the

five-million-dollar grant from

the County to go ahead and pursue it.

We partnered with local

architects, with local civil  
engineers, as well as mechanical

engineers to get this health  
center going. Let's talk a

little bit about the mental  
illness. The mental illness in

the LMI area. LMI is low to  
moderate income area, okay?

It's a stigma that we've got to  
break, in in this sense. It's an

illness, just like cancer, just  
like any other illness. We

address cancer in my area, but  
it appears that they won't

address the mental illness. So,  
we partner with Epic to address

that particular need. Talk a

little about wellness. We

partnered with the YMCA, what

they say ounce of prevention is

worth a pound of cure. I think

it's the way it goes. So, we

partner with with YMCA to

bring in that wellness

component. So, those are the

three major components that

we're bringing in to the

medical complex. But we also did

a little bit research and we

also want to try to bring in

the pharmaceutical at that

medical complex, as well. So,

that's pretty much where we are

with the medical. Now, one would

say okay, when is it going to be

up? MELISSA: It isn't going to be

next year. GREG: I'm in hopes that  
this would be up at the end of

next year. Okay because  
we have a deadline with the

grant to have it finished by 2024, So the tock is  
clicking. MELISSA: It is ticking. GREG: It is  
yes clicking and ticking. It is

both of them. MELISSA: And you're right.  
A lot of times with those grant

funds, there's a timeline you  
have to start within a certain  
time, has to be completed in a  
certain amount of time.

And that ties in,  
before we run out of time.

Let's let's circle back just a  
little bit about the housing

that's coming in. That whole  
community corner there is

really, we're hoping to see a  
real burst. A real

blooming. GREG: Yeah. And again  
credit to the City Manager and

the powers to be with the City  
for getting infrastructure.

Water and sewer without an  
applicant. The vision to say

that we build it. They will  
come is unprecedented. Thank

you City Manager, appreciate you.  
It's bursting, right? We've we,

being our non profit, we partner  
with Ability Housing, who has a

reputation statewide at  
building some of the best

affordable units in the state  
okay. They have been very

fortunate that they receive  
funding to build 92 units and

they're going to serve 30% of  
the AMI, 60% of the AMI, up to

80% of the AMI. Most of the time  
when you hear workforce

housing. Well, that's  
plus 80%. Okay. That leave a

lot of the CNAs, a lot of  
the service workers, out

completely. So, not only do we  
get a perfect unit built by

Ability Housing, we given a  
safe unit built by Ability

Housing. MELISSA: And we can see that  
now. Being built out, is

it on, it's on Volusia? GREG: It's  
going to be on on the Volusia

and Chapin, right there on  
Volusia, where the PAL

Building is. But this okay

right. Right at that site.

MELISSA: Okay. Lots of great things  
going on. I have to say, I can't

think of anyone more deserving  
as we've mentioned of the La

Florida Award recognizes those  
who have contributed

extraordinary services to the  
community. You are obviously

committed. You're not giving  
up. You're not done. You're

certainly not finished, and we  
appreciate your countless

hours, your talents making  
St Augustine a better place.

Is there anything else we  
missed? We talked about the

septic to sewer, is there  
anything else you want to

share with us? You got just a few minutes left. GREG: No, I think

we've covered all the major components that make a

community whole, okay. The Sheriff Department with the new

Sheriff, Sheriff Hardwick he understands it. He's trying to

put a PAL building in the West section of St Augustine. So,

we could capture more kids. If you look at the Boys and Girls

Club, Congressman John L Mica stayed in St Johns County

four years. That's the reason that we have that Boys and

Girls Club. Okay. Because he had the vision to say we need

more youth activities, opposed to just one site. So we gotta,

we gotta, we gotta, we gotta

prepare for the youth. MELISSA: And that

pal building right now is

kind of old. It's kind of

tucked in the trees, so he's got

a vision for something bigger?

You know? The pal building? GREG: The

oh, oh yes. Oh yes. Oh much much

bigger. Much bigger than than

where they are. MELISSA: That's kind of

a, it's really off the beaten

path. GREG: Oh oh yeah it it is. MELISSA: I

went I had to go down there

about, I don't know, seven eight

years ago when we first moved

here and sign up my son for pal

football, and I was like, where

is this building? I mean, and it,

I was surprised because I

thought a program like Pal

would be some type of complex  
or something, so. GREG: So, his vision

is to be grand and his vision  
is to have the complex in the

West section of St  
Augustine. So it's coming. MELISSA: Well,

and if any, if the the new  
Sheriff's compound out there

off of 16 is any indication of  
the vision I think we're in for

a great, a great compound there  
for pal. GREG: He has been a drum

major in making things happen.

MELISSA: Well Greg, I I can't thank you

enough for coming by. You are  
quite a force in this

community. We are so fortunate  
and blessed to have you. GREG: Thank you. MELISSA: Keep on  
doing what you're doing because

we are better for it. GREG: Thank  
you. Appreciate it. MELISSA: If you

missed part of this broadcast  
and want to go back and listen

from the beginning, you can  
find us on your favorite

podcast app. We're on Spotify,  
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platforms. You'll find us @CityStAug. We're on  
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Instagram. Until next time,

thanks for tuning in. ANNOUNCER: You've  
been listening to The

Break Room, a weekly program

addressing projects and

programs offered by the City of

St Augustine. Join us each

week as the City's

Communications Director, Melissa

Wissel, has in-depth

conversations with the people

who make our town work to meet

the needs of our community. The

Break Room is produced by

Communication Specialist for

the City of St. Augustine, Cindy

Walker. See you at this time

next week for another edition

of The Break Room.