

[Narrator] You've tuned in to another  
edition of The Breakroom, a

weekly conversation about how  
the City of Saint Augustine

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

City of Saint Augustine's  
Communications Director Melissa

Wissel. The Breakroom 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 Breakroom.  
Thanks for tuning in. I'm

Melissa Wissel, communications  
director for the City of St.

Augustine. This week, we are  
talking trash with Olivia

Smith, our solid waste and  
sanitation manager. Olivia,

it's been a while but welcome  
back. [Olivia] It has. Thank you so

much. [Melissa] You are no stranger to  
the break room. [Olivia] No, we always

have good chats. [Melissa] I, there's a  
lot. So, the first thing I

want to bring up to our  
listeners is you've had a lot

going on with Nights of Lights.

[Olivia] Whoo. [Melissa] I think people don't

realize and well, people do  
realize because it's where all

these people coming from. All  
these tours, lots of trash [Olivia] It's in the limelight.

[Melissa] You hear all about the trash.

[Olivia] Yes. [Melissa] Give us a little bit of

your perspective. We're

going to just it's tough. [Olivia] It

is. [Melissa] You are in a really tough  
position Trying to keep up with

it. So, give us an update. Tell  
us how that's going, how it

goes. [Olivia] So, it it impacts us  
across the board for our entire

division. So, it's not just the  
residential, right? We get more

volume for garbage because  
people are shopping and we've

got Amazon deliveries and  
boxes. The commercial side,

we're servicing bars and  
restaurants and hotels. So,

obviously, increase of garbage  
and then the litter crew, the

pressure washers, they're  
impacted by the downtown foot

traffic. Everyone's out  
especially at night time. So

the volumes really pick up for  
us at night during the nights

of lights versus the normal  
foot traffic we see during the

day year round. Um and so we do  
go into overtime and overdrive

if you will to be able to keep  
up with just the volume of day

to day and evening flows of the  
[Melissa] I don't even you just saying

that right now you think night  
time more people we don't have

overnight. I mean on a regular  
basis. [Olivia] So we do have a shift.

[Melissa] You do have to go into overtime for more coverage [Olivia] They  
do have a night shift. So we

have a shift that runs it from  
5 PM to 1 AM. [Melissa] Okay. [Olivia] Seven days

a week. [Melissa] Okay so we have coverage. [Olivia] We do have that. So

we have two shifts. Yep. 5 5 AM to 1 PM and then 5 PM to 1 AM.

But when I speak overtime they're out there till two or

three in the morning and then the next shift is starting at

five AM. So that time frame that we're not touching

garbage. [Melissa] Yeah. [Olivia] Shortens even more. Um but just keeping up

with the demand. Sometimes those crews have to make that

hard call of does the Bayfront get another run. Is it Saint

George Street is at the plaza, you've got multiple things

overflowing and you're trying  
to keep up with your staffing

and just the the priority.

[Melissa] Right. [Olivia] Of the volume and

increase up the garbage. [Melissa] Well,  
and I can also imagine you're

also combating that volume of  
people down there. [Olivia] Yes. [Melissa] So,

you've gotta get your stuff  
down there to get swapped out.

You gotta get out the trash,  
bring in new, and [Olivia] you're

pushing carts and you're  
pulling heavy bags. So, it is.

It's a challenge all the way  
around. I just give so much

credit. [Melissa] Yeah. [Olivia] Um to the crews  
that do this because they are

overdrive from November when we  
start Nights of Lights around

the 18th all the way through  
January and then we kind of

take a breath and then we jump  
into spring season. [Melissa] Which is

which is just [Olivia] upon us [Melissa] and of  
itself another wave. [Olivia] Yes.

[Melissa] Festivals. [Olivia] Yeah it shifts a  
little bit. [Melisa] Parades, runs, [Olivia] But right more

weddings. Yes the runs are  
coming up. Um and so we feel

that our pressure washing and  
our litter crews that are in

that downtown corridor. That  
space restraint is very very

real. Um and so they want to  
Focus on customer service and

sanitation and aesthetics but  
it's hard to juggle all of that

when you really just need to

keep the garbage moving. That's

our priority. [Melissa] What can you tell  
me about I love to talk about

the big belly big belly trash  
cans. I think those are the

coolest. [Olivia] I I enjoy them as  
well. They're we have pretty

cool technology. [Melissa] Our so tell us  
what our big belly trash cans

are. [Olivia] Um so they have a solar  
unit on top of the trash slide.

So it's a set. So you get trash  
and recycling. The is the only

one that compacts. [Melissa] Okay. [Olivia] So it  
does make a vein of garbage.

Makes it very heavy when  
they're pulling those bags. The

recycling is loose because it's  
bottles and cans and things.



We've got 25 sets right now  
throughout primarily Saint

George Street. We've got a few  
along the Bayfront and the

Gibbs area by the Lions Bridge  
over at the City Marina and

then the plaza. So we are  
excited to bring in the next

series of those. We're going to  
bring in another set. [Melissa] Ooh more. More. [Olivia] Yeah

they're very efficient for our  
crews. Um obviously being solo

they kind of fit that  
environmental check that box

for us on a sustainability  
level but what folks don't

know, we have backdoor  
software. So, if there is a

door jam. If there is a sensor  
failing, if that battery is low

and is not charged, I get an  
update on that every few hours

and I can assign crews and  
dispatch them based on based on

that demand. [Melissa] So, then, you also  
get notifications, this one's

full, time to. [Olivia] Correct. [Melissa] empty. [Olivia] You  
understand the volumes based on

the areas and so, if we really  
need to hit the plaza harder

than maybe the north end of  
Saint George we can address

that at that time instead of  
just pulling bags that aren't

full yet so the effective and  
efficient aspects [Melissa] Or going to

check a bag that doesn't need  
to be [Olivia] Absolutely and so that's

imperative when we have these

heavy holiday seasons and

things [Melissa] are there going to are  
the new wave of the big bellies

are they going to go more  
concentrated more downtown or

they going to get spread out a  
little bit? [Olivia] we're still going to

keep them in the downtown area  
we see a lot of foot traffic

cathedral doesn't really have a  
lot going on even around city

hall. You know, when you look  
at King Street, you've got

Flagler on one side. You've  
got the Lightner and City Hall

on the other. Um we've got a  
lot of city parks. I mean, our

crews maintain 15 city parks.

[Melissa] Wow. [Olivia] So, to be able to look at

that and again, on a level of  
efficiency, the cans that are

overflowing, how do we offset  
that? So, that's what we're

going to hope to use the next  
set for. [Melissa] Uh keeping up. If

you're just now tuning in, you  
are listening to the break

room. I have Olivia Smith with  
me this week. We are talking

solid waste and sanitation  
Downtown Trash, pick up Nights

of Lights. Let's talk a little  
bit. I want to switch gears a

little bit to some of our  
residential and commercial

routes and you guys started a  
new change you actually are

giving your folks these  
holidays. [Olivia] We're trying [Melissa] The Mondays and the

Thanksgiving holiday and but  
that requires a shift. [Olivia] It does

[Melissa] and how have we as  
residents been doing in

responding? We we worked with  
you on a campaign

notifications. [Olivia] You you  
absolutely did. [Melissa] Fill us in on that. [Olivia] Um

it's a delicate balance. [Melissa] Yes.

[Olivia] And we're still kind of

piloting as we go. Um you know,  
the smaller holidays aren't as

impactful if you will and I  
don't want to say that lightly

to our residents or to our  
businesses but we're able to

catch up a little bit faster  
when we've got the major

holidays again. We've gotta

juggle. So, when we say that

Solid Waste is taking the day  
off, we are never actually

closed. [Melissa] Right. [Olivia] We just have to  
juggle and maybe we give half

the crew off. [Melissa] Right. [Olivia] And the  
other half the crew is

reassigned to something else  
and then we try to balance that

equality for the following  
holiday. Um our folks have

worked tire tirelessly for  
years. [Melissa] Sure. [Olivia] Through the

holidays. They also are  
everyone of them are on a

weekend rotation that people  
don't even know about. Plus

we've got the storm. [Melissa] Right. [Olivia] Um  
you know anytime we have a

storm and we're the boots on  
the ground. When you look at

that you're working almost year  
round. [Melissa] Sure. [Olivia] Um and so being

able to give them that little  
bit of balance so they can have

some time off and family is  
important to us. So we're

working on that. These  
campaigns we started some door

tags. [Melissa] Right. [Olivia] Um that's been new  
for us. So, instead of just

printing a flyer or using  
social media tools, we're

trying to channel what is the  
best avenue to get to them in

the most effective way and  
using time management, right?

So, we're not telling them at  
the last minute. The hang tags

go right on their carts [Melissa] I got one. [Olivia] or we  
can put em on their doors. Did

you get one? [Melissa] I did. [Olivia] And you're  
on the west side. [Melissa] I was like,

hey, I I helped design that and  
I. [Olivia] Yes. [Melissa] got one in my cart. So. And

yeah. [Olivia] The response. [Melissa] On the west  
side, yeah. [Olivia] The response has

been amazing. Um starting  
something new, you don't ever

know how it's if it's going to  
be well received. So, that was

important to us. Now, we still  
did flyers that gave a bit more

information. We still put it on  
all the social media platforms.

We still offer our phone number  
or Email address. It anyway

that folks you can reach out to



us to find out what your

schedule is but the altered  
schedule, the hang tags, we

received a lot of good  
information. [Melissa] Right. [Olivia] Could I get

it sooner? Can I get a bit more  
information on it? Um what what

is it that I need to know is  
changing because the door tag

is very simplistic letting you  
know there is going to be a

change. Please use the QR code  
or something to kind of Get you

further information. [Melissa] Well, and  
I think that's the thing too.

We're trying, we work together  
on messaging. What is the best

way and sometimes putting too  
much information. [Olivia] We lose

people. [Melissa] You see that flyer and  
you glaze over and all you see

is altered schedule. So, for  
listeners, check the QR codes.

We did start using our alert  
banner on the website which I

think was helpful. We used to  
use the banner only for

emergencies. [Olivia] Yes. [Melissa] But we found  
that it really does get folks

attention and the minute you  
get to the website, you're not

trying to search for something  
or look for anything. It's it's

right there. [Olivia] Yes and our  
department's working together

and being able to collect that  
data to find out how many

people went directly to the  
solid waste page or looking at

these banners being able to  
find out that the door tags are

successful and they are calling  
the office to say, oh last time

you guys didn't run Brush and  
so we're starting to create

that ripple effect and that's  
what we want to do is able to

educate our customers so that  
it's successful for everyone

and we can get the service back  
on track. [Melissa] Talking about the

programs that we do and  
notifying folks. We just had

another recycling event. [Olivia] Yes.  
Did one in November that was

huge. [Olivia] It was our best yet.  
America Recycles Day. [Melissa] This one was So so

which we kind of felt like well

we just hit everybody up in

November. [Olivia] Yep. [Melissa] Um what do we have coming up? We've got just

a few minutes left. [Olivia] Our Earth Day. Earth Day's in April. We

do it annually. Um I will say that we are an uptick on the

day-to-day drop off and I think it's because of the success of

branding and campaigning these events. [Melissa] Right. [Olivia] Right? It's

because we've been doing these for a decade or more. [Melissa] Yeah. [Olivia] And

so having that annual event and telling people at every event,

hey, don't stockpile this. Come see us at Solid Waste for

Electronics. [Melissa] Oh okay. Yeah. [Olivia] Or go to the Wastewater for Oil. I can tell

you that sometimes I have as  
many as five to six residents a

day that drop off electronics  
down at Solid Waste. So they're

not waiting so the events are still  
really popular. [Melissa] Right. [Olivia] For the

folks that know about it or  
want to come down but the fact

that we offer it daily, we are  
seeing an uptick and we're

moving material and oil more  
than we ever have. So, it's

definitely successful. Kudos to  
the community. [Melissa] And how did we

do? I know I think you've got  
some numbers for us for our

last or tell actually let's  
skip the the numbers from that

last one. Tell me about our  
glass recycling before we run

out of time. I know that's something we want to tell folks about

[Olivia] Yes, that's our newest program.

Um okay, so we started this in

May of twenty We started with

three locations. We have just

expanded the locations to the

west side and also we partnered

with Saint Augustine Beach. It

was a program they really

wanted. They weren't sure how

to kind of do an outreach

education program. We got

involved with them. We've

partnered. We now have five

locations in the last 6 months.

We have collected 33 tons of

glass. This is after it's been

quality control and cleaned.

So, we have successfully moved

66 thousand pounds. [Melissa] Wow. [Olivia] Of

glass in the right direction  
and out of our landfills. [Melissa] And

we have to take that. Uh we  
collect it and take it

somewhere. [Olivia] So. [Melissa] To be sorted. [Olivia] We  
transfer. [Melissa] We don't do it. [Olivia] Correct. We we just

put the bins out and then we  
swap them into a larger unit

and then we move that to the  
Murph and Jacksonville Material

Recovery Facility which then is  
able to transfer it to the end

user who processes everything  
to turn it back into glass and

other roadway projects. [Melissa] Well, I  
don't I you guys are amazing.

[Olivia] Thank you we have a great crew. [Melissa] and We I  
do want to give a shout out to

the work that you're doing to  
not only try to give the

employees a little bit of a  
break but you I know that ever

since you and I have met and  
been working on communicating,

you've really always made it  
such a priority to get the word

out. I know that our residents  
sometimes get frustrated. [Olivia] Yeah.

[Melissa] We we do the best that we can.  
Check the website. If you don't

subscribe to News and Notes,  
get on the website and

subscribe. It's under the how  
can I tab at the top. Uh your

staff is always Available on  
the phone. I know sometimes you

have to get the voicemail but  
it's what's your the phone



number down there? [Olivia] 8251049.

[Melissa] 1049. [Olivia] Yeah and it's just based

on demand if we don't answer

but you can Email us, call us,

and I think collectively as we

all work together and find out

what works and what doesn't

work. That's what we're here to

do is get that outreach

education to the people rather

it's the residents, the

businesses. It could just be a

visitor or internal staff as

well. So, that's our goal. So,

thank you so much for that recognition [Melissa] and you

guys do construction dumpsters.

[Olivia] Dumpster rentals. Roll offs.

All kind of stuff. [Melissa] Drop off

center. Talk about today. Folk

stuff. [Olivia] Yeah. Illegal jumping.

[Melissa] It's talking trash. [Olivia] We'll come back and we'll touch on more.

[Melissa] Loving love it when you come down. We talk trash Olivia. You

you really do have a lot going on. You guys are doing doing

great work. [Olivia] Thanks. [Melissa] And again ten forty-nine, eight to 5,

1049. If you've got questions for Solid Waste, Olivia Smith,

always good to have you. [Olivia] Thank you again. Have a great day. [Melissa] If

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Until next time. Thanks for

tuning in. 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. See  
you at this time next week for

another edition of The Break  
Room.