

[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 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. [Melissa] 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 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

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