

Transcript

00:00:00 **Narrator**

You're tuned into another edition of the break room, 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 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.

00:00:20 **Narrator**

Melissa Wissel.

00:00:21 **Melissa Wissel**

Welcome to the break room. Thanks for tuning in. I'm Melissa Wissel, communications director for the City of Saint Augustine.

00:00:27 **Melissa Wissel**

In studio this week, I've invited the city's fire Marshall Abby Pedigo, to join me. We usually talk about fire prevention, smoke detectors, holiday, fire safety, lots of good topics, but this week we are going to do a recap of a recent girls fire camp held at the Saint Augustine Fire Department spark the flame. It was the first year I want to hear all about it. Welcome back.

00:00:48 **Abby Pedigo**

Yeah. Thanks for having me.

00:00:49 **Abby Pedigo**

This ended up being a phenomenal event. I cannot speak highly enough about the outcome the way it turned out, it just exceeded all of our expectations, especially for being the first year we held it

00:01:02 **Melissa Wissel**

My my first intro to this idea was Carlos called and said I've got an idea and I need somebody that could.

00:01:09 **Melissa Wissel**

Fire with me, I said. Sign me up and so we talked about it. We ran the idea through legal, got the thumbs up. Tell us the inspiration. Why a girls fire camp. Why Saint Augustine? And where did all this?

00:01:21 **Abby Pedigo**

Problem.

00:01:22 **Abby Pedigo**

Well, there's nothing really like this around here in the North Florida area, we were inspired by the Iona McGregor Fire Department, which is down near Fort Myers. They hold a similar girls empowerment camp called Camp Braveheart, and they invited some of our our female firefighters.

00:01:38 **Melissa Wissel**

Great.

00:01:42 **Abby Pedigo**

Emmalee and Hannah, down to volunteer at at their event this year, which is held during spring break every year, and they've been running the camp for five years. And when our girls went down and checked it out, they they got Carlos involved too and said we really need to bring something like this.

00:02:00 **Abby Pedigo**

To our area because it's it's just too cool.

00:02:03 **Melissa Wissel**

Did they come back and we're just like, Oh my gosh this?

00:02:05 **Abby Pedigo**

Was the coolest thing. They were full of ideas, full of inspiration and motivation to make it happen. So we ended up that was around March, March.

00:02:15 **Melissa Wissel**

Yeah.

00:02:15 **Abby Pedigo**

They were there and we were.

00:02:15 **Melissa Wissel**

Yes.

00:02:17 **Abby Pedigo**

Able to pull.

00:02:19 **Abby Pedigo**

It together by May 31st of this year and and hold our own thanks in huge part to Iona McGregor, they provided us.

00:02:22 **Melissa Wissel**

Yeah.

00:02:29 **Abby Pedigo**

Legal documents and waivers and press releases and all sorts of, you know, camp layouts and and information.

00:02:37 **Abby Pedigo**

As well as a list of.

00:02:38 **Abby Pedigo**

Volunteers from around the state.

00:02:40 **Melissa Wissel**

OK.

00:02:41 **Abby Pedigo**

Who they would.

00:02:42 **Abby Pedigo**

Who they call on for their camp. So we were able to pull together female volunteers female.

00:02:49 **Abby Pedigo**

Firefighters from all over the state to act as sort of camp counselors for our event, and we would not have been able to do it with without their help, Iona Macgregor's and and the girls from all over the state

00:02:55 **Melissa Wissel**

Right.

00:03:03 **Melissa Wissel**

When chief came to me and he said he wanted to do this. Like you said it was March and I think Harley and I were like, OK like like, like mid June, July. He's like no may like now like, oh, OK, sure, sure, whatever. Let let us know. And the cool thing too. Like you just said.

00:03:18 **Abby Pedigo**

Right.

00:03:23 **Melissa Wissel**

It wasn't just. It's not like you guys just tapped into St. John's Fire Rescue. You had statewide support for this.

00:03:30 **Abby Pedigo**

Dad, we even had a girl from Virginia a a fire department in Virginia. Come down and volunteer for the event. But, but yeah, female firefighters from all over the state.

00:03:40 **Abby Pedigo**

Right. And we were able to recruit about. We had a ratio of about one camper to one volunteer for the event. So around 25 or 30 volunteers for each day.

00:03:52 Melissa Wissel

And the event. So let's talk about the event. It was it was two days, but it was a one day actual.

00:03:58 Abby Pedigo

Event correct. Yes we had.

00:04:00 Abby Pedigo

Different campers each.

00:04:01 Melissa Wissel

Day and it was stations, explain the stations. I thought there was a bounce house. I will admit. I I drove up that where I'm like, oh, that's cute. They have a bounce house. No, it was not a bounce house.

00:04:03 Abby Pedigo

Yeah.

00:04:09 Abby Pedigo

It does look.

00:04:10 Abby Pedigo

Like a bounce house, it was an inflatable house. It's a fire safety house that we borrowed from the city of.

00:04:15 Abby Pedigo

Palatka, we we smoked that out with a fog machine and we made that our search and rescue house. So that was one of the stations was a search and rescue station where the girls could go in, crawl through like they're doing an actual search in a in a building that's on fire. And they had to find the victims and and work together as a team to pull the victims out.

00:04:36 Abby Pedigo

So we separated the girls into teams early in the day and had five or six girls per team and had four different stations, so they they stayed with their team throughout the day and went from station to station.

00:04:49 Abby Pedigo

But that was one of the stations with.

00:04:51 Abby Pedigo

Search and rescue.

00:04:51 **Melissa Wissel**

Was there a light was there was, was it mannequins or actual people?

00:04:55 **Abby Pedigo**

Both. Right. We started with mannequins and as the girls started getting the hang of that and they wanted to be challenged more than we started using actual camp counselors and and they would pull the the camp counselors out. So that was really cool.

00:05:07

00:05:09 **Abby Pedigo**

Well, the one of the other stations was engine operations. So the the fire engine, the engine company is responsible for putting water on the fire basically. So they pulled hose lines, they sprayed water, we had cones set up for them to spray. But they also had to.

00:05:29 **Abby Pedigo**

Move the hose line up the stairs in the parking garage and and.

00:05:34 **Melissa Wissel**

Oh.

00:05:34 **Abby Pedigo**

OK, we were able to borrow a digital fire prop that they were able to spray. So it it looked like fire and they would spray the.

00:05:39 **Melissa Wissel**

OK.

00:05:42 **Melissa Wissel**

Were oh wow.

00:05:43 **Abby Pedigo**

The fire out and we kind of made that a game where we timed.

00:05:46 **Abby Pedigo**

Them to see which which group could go through the evolution the fastest. Pulling the hose line up the stairs and spraying out the the digital fire prop and and working together as a team to.

00:05:49

After.

00:05:57 **Melissa Wissel**

Do that and that hose is heavy.

00:05:59 **Abby Pedigo**

It is heavy. Yeah. Engine three. Quarter hose. That's full of water, so.

00:06:00 **Melissa Wissel**

Can you get water and then the timing of?

00:06:04 **Melissa Wissel**

And the timing element too. Were you planning that or did that also kind of, was that like, uh, we want to time ourselves or was it time? Yeah.

00:06:10 **Abby Pedigo**

Little or both. Yeah, they they wanted the challenge that as girls so competitive, I mean a few of them, you could tell they were just exhausted and they wanted to keep running it to try to improve their time and get the best time. So it's great. That was one of the other camps.

00:06:13 **Melissa Wissel**

Nothing like some competition amongst famous.

00:06:22 **Melissa Wissel**

That's great, that's.

00:06:25 **Melissa Wissel**

Another one I'm going to just interrupt you really quick if you if folks are just tuning and you're listening to the break room. I have Abby Pettigo with us this week. She's our city fire Marshall and she is doing a recap of the recent spark, the Flame Girls Empowerment Fire camp. So continue.

00:06:27

Yeah.

00:06:39 **Abby Pedigo**

On. Yeah. So the third station that we ran for the camp was a repelling station and we actually.

00:06:46 **Abby Pedigo**

Repelled the girls off the top floor of the parking garage, which is five stories up.

00:06:53 **Abby Pedigo**

We had some really experienced rope technicians working that station and we got the girls in the harnesses and and we're able to lower them down the parking garage just just how they would do in a in a real fire department rescue if they needed to rescue somebody from a high of an angle

00:07:11 **Melissa Wissel**

I've heard.

00:07:13 **Melissa Wissel**

Chief Aviles shared this that was, that was sort of the I'm going to call it the money event. That was the one that really brought to.

00:07:22 **Melissa Wissel**

To fruition or really brought to the point of what this camp was about, right? Get goosebumps to get a little slumped thinking about it. It's so imperial. Should share some of that. What you what you saw?

00:07:32 **Melissa Wissel**

About.

00:07:32 **Abby Pedigo**

Just building confidence and.

00:07:35 **Abby Pedigo**

Yeah, building confidence and empowering the girls and and just showing them that they can do anything they put their minds to. So that was the one that the that kind of posed the the biggest challenges for the girls.

00:07:50 **Abby Pedigo**

Mentally fear.

00:07:52 **Abby Pedigo**

Yeah, we hi, all of it.

00:07:54 **Melissa Wissel**

Yeah. Uncomfortable, unfamiliar. That's what I'm supposed to be doing.

00:07:56 **Abby Pedigo**

Yes.

00:07:58 **Abby Pedigo**

Yes. So we saw several who just said absolutely not. I'm not, I'm not repelling from way up here when they looked down and and at first some of them did not but we were able to just take slow incremental steps.

00:08:05 **Melissa Wissel**

And they didn't.

00:08:13 **Abby Pedigo**

Umm, I watched the the leader of that rope rappelling station. A girl from Iona McGregor, Fire Department who was a rope technician down there, explained to the girls. How do you eat an

elephant? One bite at a time. So let's just take it slow first. Put the harness on and then put the helmet on and then come up to the edge and just see how we would lower you and and just take it slow.

00:08:34 **Abby Pedigo**

And by the end of it, every single girl in camp over each day 25 campers each day ended up repelling down the parking garage. Yes, yes. And you could just see when they got back down after after being being lowered down, how excited they were and how proud of themselves they were and and.

00:08:43 **Melissa Wissel**

Even though one just said absolutely not.

00:08:54 **Abby Pedigo**

That was just huge.

00:08:55 **Melissa Wissel**

And encouragement from their teammates. I.

00:08:57 **Abby Pedigo**

Heard yes, yes.

00:08:58 **Melissa Wissel**

The girls, really.

00:08:59 **Melissa Wissel**

Supporting one another, we we often hear how girls can be mean.

00:09:03 **Melissa Wissel**

Not supportive, but really supportive.

00:09:05 **Abby Pedigo**

Yeah, we didn't see anybody unsupportive over this event. They were cheering each other on and and encouraging one another. And it was.

00:09:07 **Melissa Wissel**

That's great.

00:09:12 **Abby Pedigo**

It was really.

00:09:12 **Melissa Wissel**

Did they run back up?

00:09:13 **Abby Pedigo**

Cool to see. They did. Yeah. Yeah. We had a few asking if they could go again, even though they had not wanted to to do it to begin with. So yeah, yeah. Really cool.

00:09:13 **Melissa Wissel**

To the top.

00:09:20 **Melissa Wissel**

Even better, like, gives me goosebumps and cool. What was the you said? Four station.

00:09:26 **Abby Pedigo**

Yes, the last station was a we got a dispatcher over from Saint Johns County Fire Rescue and she talked to the girls about dispatch. Why you call 911 and how to call 911. She also taught them hands only CPR. And how to use a fire extinguisher.

00:09:26 **Melissa Wissel**

Yep.

00:09:40 **Abby Pedigo**

Sure. So that was a, that was a really cool, informative station and we were able to borrow the Sheriff's Office, Big Communications bus that they have for that station. So the girls were able to go in, in the AC for a few minutes and talk about dispatch and communications and learning the hands, only CPR.

00:09:42 **Melissa Wissel**

A little bit of that.

00:09:59 **Melissa Wissel**

That can be scary too.

00:10:00 **Melissa Wissel**

You know, you oftentimes hear about kids calling 911.

00:10:04 **Melissa Wissel**

And being on the phone with the dispatch dispatchers are dispatch is a tough job, too. I hear there's a lot of turnover.

00:10:09 **Abby Pedigo**

It is a tough job I.

00:10:10 **Abby Pedigo**

Have so much respect for for dispatchers to have to hear what's going on and not be able to.

00:10:15 **Melissa Wissel**

See what's going on or our our dispatch. One of our ladies who's a dispatch officer with the fire department. Excuse me. With the Police Department. Patrice Drinkard has been on here and has talked about the way she phrases. It is it's.

00:10:29 **Melissa Wissel**

You are on the end of the phone when someone is going to get a little choked up. You know you are catching someone at their worst.

00:10:36 **Melissa Wissel**

Most vulnerable moment, whether it's them or the person that they're with in crisis.

00:10:39 **Abby Pedigo**

That's yes, their worst day.

00:10:42 **Melissa Wissel**

Yep. So those that's great that they got a chance to to learn about that. And of course the CPR and fire extinguisher. I don't know that I've ever actually.

00:10:52 **Melissa Wissel**

Uh deployed a fire extinguisher. Well, that's it. Come by I.

00:10:55 **Abby Pedigo**

We offer free.

00:10:57

Don't have extinguisher.

00:10:57 **Melissa Wissel**

Spirits to go to camp though, right?

00:10:58 **Abby Pedigo**

Training. No, we our department does provide free extinguisher training and if you want ever needs it.

00:11:03 **Melissa Wissel**

So so to that, so fire camp was a huge success next year. I'm sure it'll be. I'm not going to say bigger and better, but it's going to be fantastic.

00:11:12 **Melissa Wissel**

Plastic. I know, Harley. I think I volunteered Harley to help with coordinating with whatever you guys come up with next. So we look forward to next year's, maybe even something at spring break. I

know, I know. There's been a little bit of chat chatter about that. So look, look For more information about that, but.

00:11:29

Yes.

00:11:33 **Melissa Wissel**

Before we go real quickly, we've got about two minutes. Give me a quick reminder to our listeners. You mentioned the fire extinguisher train.

00:11:42 **Melissa Wissel**

We also do talk smoke detectors. What? What? What else can we remind our listeners?

00:11:47 **Abby Pedigo**

About we have free CPR training, free fire extinguisher training. We do provide smoke alarms and we'll install them for you for free. If you're within the city limits and you need them and you just talked to Carlos about hurricane season. So but you know.

00:12:01 **Abby Pedigo**

Get get ready for hurricane season that's coming and we'll just keep our fingers crossed.

00:12:06 **Melissa Wissel**

Hurricane guides? Yep, guides are out.

00:12:06 **Abby Pedigo**

It doesn't hit us too hard. Yes, hurricane guides.

00:12:09 **Abby Pedigo**

Out it's very dry out there. We haven't had a lot of rain. So if if you're burning outside, you know, make sure you're properly disposing of your smoking materials. Make sure you're putting out your grill, putting out your bonfires, not throwing cigarettes out the window. That sort of thing. Very dry out there right now.

00:12:27 **Melissa Wissel**

Very dry.

00:12:29 **Melissa Wissel**

And keeping a hose near your.

00:12:32 **Melissa Wissel**

Fires if you're burning.

00:12:32 **Abby Pedigo**

Yes, yes. Have a. Have a hose nearby. If it's super windy, just don't burn in the city limits. It's illegal to have open burning or bonfires, but you can have a a little fire in a in a fire pit. Commercially made fire pit. I don't know why anyone would be burning and it's 90° outside, but if you are, just be responsible.

00:12:45 **Melissa Wissel**

Right. Those little those little.

00:12:49 **Melissa Wissel**

No, it's 90° not at all.

00:12:52 **Melissa Wissel**

Take heed. Well, I appreciate you coming by. We'll look forward to having you back again. We will look for you guys. I think our next upcoming event where we where we will see you all out and about is probably 4th of July so.

00:13:05 **Melissa Wissel**

In the forest for 4th of July, keeping everybody safe so.

00:13:07 **Abby Pedigo**

Yes.

00:13:10 **Melissa Wissel**

Everything for and congratulations for a great first year out the door. And how did they look like? How did the?

00:13:14 **Abby Pedigo**

Thank you so much. It's huge. It's huge.

00:13:18 **Melissa Wissel**

Guys take it.

00:13:19 **Abby Pedigo**

They loved it. The ones who were there were absolutely blown away. We've gotten so much positive feedback. I don't think they expected it to go as well as it did and and for them to have as much fun as they did too.

00:13:20 **Melissa Wissel**

Yeah, yeah.

00:13:30 **Abby Pedigo**

Oh, everybody who was a part of it was just good, very, you know, very excited about it and.

00:13:36 **Melissa Wissel**

Inspired everything. I will say everything you guys do comes out really well. You've got a great team down there and congratulations.

00:13:43 **Abby Pedigo**

Thank you very much.

00:13:45 **Melissa Wissel**

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00:14:05 **Melissa Wissel**

In and around the city, and most importantly, that you hear it hear from the people doing the work to make it happen every.

00:14:11 **Melissa Wissel**

Today, follow the fire department on Facebook and Instagram at City Saint Aug fire. You can also find the city at City Saint Aug. Thanks again for tuning in until next time.

00:14:21 **Narrator**

You've been listening to the break room, a weekly program addressing projects and programs offered by the City of Saint 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.

00:14:39 **Narrator**

Of the break room.