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## Florida's Historic Coast Creates New Experiences with Grant Awards

### *Organizations secure funding to create and restore cultural exhibits and historical landmarks*

St. Augustine, Fla. (November 26, 2024) – With nearly 460 years of history, St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra and The Beaches are known globally for providing high-quality cultural and historical experiences. Thanks to the superb work of dedicated representatives, many organizations are welcoming grant funds for new exhibits and projects.

While the City of St. Augustine has several firsts, one is a bit of a sweet secret. Chocolate was introduced to the new world via the Nation's Oldest City when a Spanish ship known as the Nuestra Senora del Rosario y el Carmen arrived there in 1641 after being severely damaged by a hurricane. It's cargo – crates of cacao. To honor this decadent moment in history, The Forrest E. Mars, Jr. Chocolate History Grant has awarded a group of University of Florida researchers a \$14,000 grant. The grant will support an interactive exhibit featuring an ArcGIS story map and a virtual tour of St. Augustine's chocolate history at The Governor's House Cultural Center and Museum. The "[Sweet Beginnings: Unwrapping St. Augustine's Chocolate Legacy](#)" exhibit is set to open to the public Saturday, December 7, 2024 and will remain open through March 31, 2025.

Just Southwest of St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra and The Beaches lies the quaint town of Hastings. Henry Flagler established the region as a farming community to supply his luxury hotels with fresh produce. In June 2024, eight nonprofit organizations across Florida were awarded funding through Florida Humanities to create exhibitions that showcase local stories centered on foodways and food history, with expert support from the Smithsonian.

In early 2026, [Hastings Main Street](#) will debut a 6-month public exhibit with oral history workshops, guest speakers, interactive events, and more. "This grant will launch a new beginning in showcasing the rich fabric of history through expanded agritourism in southwest St. Johns County," said Jena Dennis, Chair of Hastings Main Street.

The [Ximenez-Fatio House and Museum](#) is one of only 31 remaining coquina and tabby structures in St. Augustine. It has been awarded a \$173,544 grant by the National Parks Service as part of a campaign to improve the Country's most historic assets as the nation approaches the 2026 Semi-quincentennial Celebration of the Declaration of Independence. The grant will be used to repair and restore portions of the 226-year-old home that serves as a living history museum.

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**Located midway between Daytona Beach and Jacksonville**, Florida's Historic Coast includes historic St. Augustine, the outstanding golf and seaside elegance of Ponte Vedra, the rural beauty of Hastings, Elkton, St. Johns, and 42 miles of pristine Atlantic beaches. Visitor Information Centers are located at 10 Castillo Drive, St. Augustine; 200 Solana Rd. Suite B, Ponte Vedra Beach; and at the St. Johns County Beach Pier Park, 350 A1A Beach Blvd., St. Augustine Beach. For advance travel information, call 1.800.653.2489 or go to the Visitors and Convention Bureau website at [www.FloridasHistoricCoast.com](http://www.FloridasHistoricCoast.com). Check us out on social media Instagram @FloridasHistoricCoast; @ViajaStAugustine, [Facebook.com/OfficialStAugustine](https://www.facebook.com/OfficialStAugustine), and [Facebook.com/ViajaStAugustine](https://www.facebook.com/ViajaStAugustine) and Twitter @FIHistoricCoast

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