Beat: Travel

VISIT MYRTLE BEACH Expands AUTISM- AND SENSORY-FRIENDLY EFFORTS

WITH LAUNCH OF NEW PROGRAMS

PARIS - MYRTLE BEACH, 23.04.2022, 07:40 Time

USPA NEWS - Myrtle Beach and the communities along the 60 miles of coastline have been committed to creating an autism- and sensory-friendly destination since 2016. This year, Visit Myrtle Beach is making travel to The Beach even more accessible with the launch of several new initiatives. The expanded efforts include a children's book, an advisory panel led by experts as well as those with direct experience, and a sensory-friendly pledge for local businesses.

Myrtle Beach and the communities along the 60 miles of coastline have been committed to creating an autism- and sensory-friendly destination since 2016. This year, Visit Myrtle Beach is making travel to The Beach even more accessible with the launch of several new initiatives. The expanded efforts include a children's book, an advisory panel led by experts as well as those with direct experience, and a sensory-friendly pledge for local businesses.

Visit Myrtle Beach is taking steps to provide greater support and access to vacation experiences for all.

"In Myrtle Beach, we believe everyone belongs at The Beach – and we mean every body, every ability, every family, everyone. Even though we've been recognized as an autism-friendly destination for several years, we understand that we can and should do more to support accessible travel," said Stuart Butler, Chief Marketing Officer at Visit Myrtle Beach. "Families with children diagnosed with autism often feel vacations are out of their reach — and we want to change that. At Visit Myrtle Beach, we believe in the restorative and life-altering power of travel, so we are taking steps with these new initiatives to provide greater support and access to vacation experiences for all."

Though families often recognize and appreciate the value travel offers the entire family, many avoid traveling due to lack of services and added stress. According to a study by the International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards (IBCCES) and the Family Travel Association, only 13 percent of autism families surveyed take vacations. However, 93 percent indicated they would be more inclined to travel if autism services were available.

Visit Myrtle Beach is expanding the services available to autism families as part of their ongoing work with the Champion Autism Network (CAN) and through a new partnership with TravelAbility. The programs being launched this spring include:

- Sensory-friendly children's book

To encourage families with children on the autism spectrum to vacation together, Visit Myrtle Beach is partnering with beloved author and illustrator, Lynda Farrington Wilson, to develop a children's picture book. The book will be a fictional story that helps readers discover the joy and wonder in a family vacation despite the overlooked challenges of acclimating to new environment and experiences. The book is expected to be released later this year.

- The Beach is for everyBODY: Sensory-Friendly Pledge

In partnership with CAN and TravelAbility, Visit Myrtle Beach has launched a sensory-friendly pledge for local businesses. By signing The Beach is for everyBODY: Sensory-Friendly Pledge, each organization, as part of the greater business community, will commit to welcoming guests with autism and other neurodiverse disabilities through tangible and meaningful actions designed to support locals and visitors.

"At TravelAbility, our mission is to make travel more accessible to those who face physical and mental challenges by working with destinations to establish both in-market and online resources for visitors," said Jake Steinman, Founder and CEO of TravelAbility. "We're proud to partner with Visit Myrtle Beach and Champion Autism Network as they continue to lead the tourism industry in this effort and expand their work with the Sensory-Friendly Pledge, so that travelers on the autism spectrum can feel supported throughout their travel planning and vacation experience."

As part of the pledge, businesses will work to provide an inclusive space for visitors of all abilities; practice patience and problem-solving in all situations; and cultivate an environment of acceptance and helpfulness. Pledge participants are also encouraged to join Grand Stand businesses and organizations in the CAN Card program and provide CAN autism training to all of their employees to offer guests more specialized service.

The CAN Card is a simple and meaningful way for guests to identify their family as one that includes someone with autism, without needing to say a word. Participating restaurants, hotels and venues have been trained in the needs of individuals on the autism spectrum and to provide a special or expedited service. CAN Cards are free for autism families and are available at Visit Myrtle Beach's two visitors centers, located in Myrtle Beach International Airport and 1200 North Oak Street in Myrtle Beach. For more on The Beach is for everyBODY: Sensory-Friendly Pledge and CAN Card partners in Myrtle Beach, go to visitmyrtlebeach.com/plan/autism-friendly-vacations/.

"Creating an environment where families impacted by autism feel supported and without judgment is the mission of CAN. Our partnership with Visit Myrtle Beach and the breadth of programs we've initiated are designed to create an inclusive community by building a network of autism champions," said Becky Large, Executive Director of the Champion Autism Network.

- The Beach is for everyBODY: Sensory-Friendly Advisory Panel

To help guide future autism- and sensory-friendly programs and initiatives, Visit Myrtle Beach has also established a Sensory-Friendly Advisory Panel. The panel will include experts in the autism and sensory fields, and those with direct experience or an autism or related diagnosis. Members will help inform and improve Myrtle Beach's sensory-friendly programming by providing directional leadership and feedback on programs designed to increase the destination's accessibility. Visit Myrtle Beach is actively seeking members for the advisory panel and will begin hosting regular meetings this summer.

Travelers can also feel supported knowing Myrtle Beach has implemented a variety of community programs over the past six years in partnership with CAN beyond the CAN Card program, like Project Lifesaver, an effort to help protect visitors who may wanderoff, and The Myrtle Beach International Airport Quiet Room, which offers families a private space to soothe their child in the event of a sensory-overload situation.

For more information on Myrtle Beach's autism-friendly offerings and trip planning resources, please visit visitmyrtlebeach.com/plan/autism-friendly-vacations/.

Source: Visit Myrtle Beach

Ruby BIRD
http://www.portfolio.uspa24.com/
Yasmina BEDDOU
http://www.yasmina-beddou.uspa24.com/

Article online:
https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-20541/visit-myrtle-beach-expands-autism-and-sensory-friendly-efforts.html

Editorial office and responsibility:
V.i.S.d.P. & Sect. 6 MDStV (German Interstate Media Services Agreement): Ruby BIRD & Yasmina BEDDOU (Journalists/Directors)

Exemption from liability:
The publisher shall assume no liability for the accuracy or completeness of the published report and is merely providing space for the submission of and access to third-party content. Liability for the content of a report lies solely with the author of such report. Ruby

BIRD & Yasmina BEDDOU (Journalists/Directors)

Editorial program service of General News Agency:
UPA United Press Agency LTD
483 Green Lanes
UK, London N13NV 4BS
contact (at) unitedpressagency.com
Official Federal Reg. No. 7442619