



MISSION OF THE CITRUS COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE: The Citrus County Chamber of Commerce is an organization of businesses unified in efforts to advance the economic growth of the region, promote the interests of the business community, provide key leadership on key commerce issues and preserve the county's quality of life.

Promotional information provided by the Citrus County Chamber of Commerce.

Chamber Connection

915 N. Suncoast Blvd., Crystal River · 352-795-3149 · 212 W. Main St., Inverness · 352-726-2801

Sweet Traditions Return:



39th Annual Floral City Strawberry Festival Approaches

Get ready for a berry bustin' good time as the 39th Annual Floral City Strawberry Festival, presented by Coast to Coast Heating & Air and produced by the Citrus County Chamber of Commerce, returns to beautiful Floral Park on Saturday and Sunday, March 7 and 8, 2026. From fresh strawberries and shortcake to live music, pageants, pie eating contests, and family fun, this beloved Citrus County tradition offers something for everyone.

The Floral City Strawberry Festival is a celebration of local agriculture and hometown pride, featuring fresh strawberries grown just down the road at Ferris Groves. Festivalgoers can enjoy delicious strawberry shortcake throughout the weekend, along with flats and half flats of whole, fresh berries available for purchase to take home and enjoy long after the festival ends.

Saturday morning will begin with the Posting of the Colors, the Pledge of Allegiance, and the National Anthem, setting the tone for a full weekend of entertainment on the Main Stage. Live music will fill the park both days, with performances by Rekindled Bits of Grass, The Rick Lynn Band, Money for Nothin', and The Honey Badgers, bringing a mix of bluegrass, classic rock, and crowd favorite hits to Floral City.

Staying true to its very berry roots, the festival will once again feature the popular Strawberry Princess Pageants and Pie Eating Contests. Saturday morning, cheer on all of

this year's Strawberry Princesses as participants take the stage to strut their stuff and build important public speaking skills and self-confidence or sign up for free to compete in the always entertaining pie eating contests. Contests will be held both Saturday and Sunday, with registration beginning at 10 a.m. each day at the Chamber Information Tent located near the strawberry shortcake tent.

Festival guests are also invited to step back in time with

a visit to the Historic Duval Metz House, the oldest documented home still standing in Citrus County.

The home will be open on Saturday ONLY, March 7, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., with complimentary shuttle service transporting visitors from the festival grounds to downtown Floral City. Guests are encouraged to explore the Avenue of the Oaks, charming local shops, and the heart of Old Florida before returning to the festival.

Families will find plenty to enjoy throughout the park, including a lively Kids Zone featuring inflatables, balloon pop games, knockerball, face painting, and more! Returning favorites include The World Famous Undeclared National Champion Professional Soccer Dog Team, the Soccer Collies, offering interactive activities for guests of all ages throughout the day. Children can enjoy StoryWalk Citrus, presented by Citrus Libraries, encouraging reading and movement in a fun outdoor setting.

Additionally, on Saturday, Citrus County Fire Rescue will also be on site with their Fire Safety House, a hands on mobile classroom designed to teach fire and emergency preparedness for all ages.

Visitors can round out their festival experience by browsing hundreds of arts and craft vendors, enjoying festival food favorites, or relaxing in the hospitality areas near the main stage.

Festival hours are Saturday, March 7, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sunday, March 8, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission is \$5 for adults, while children 12 and under are free.

Free parking and shuttle service will be available both days from the Citrus County Auditorium in Inverness, with shuttles running continuously throughout the day.

For complete festival details, schedules, and updates, visit www.GoStrawberryFest.com or search for Floral City Strawberry Festival on Facebook.

Chamber Member Spotlight:

Tampa General Hospital Crystal River: Caring for Citrus

The Citrus County Chamber of Commerce is proud to recognize Tampa General Hospital Crystal River, a vital healthcare provider serving Citrus County and surrounding communities with compassionate care, skilled providers, and expanded access to services close to home.

Formerly known as Bravera Health Seven Rivers, Tampa General Hospital Crystal River was purchased by Tampa General Hospital in December 2023.

Now part of TGH North and the Tampa General Hospital health system, the Crystal River hospital brings expanded resources and additional support to our region while continuing to provide the trusted, local care Citrus County families rely on.

Located at 6201 N Suncoast Blvd in Crystal River, Tampa General Hospital Crystal River plays a vital role in



meeting the healthcare needs of our community, offering both emergency services and ongoing medical care for patients of all ages.

Tampa General Hospital Crystal River provides a wide range of services designed to meet the everyday healthcare needs of local residents while also offering access to advanced care and specialized support.

These services include:

- Emergency services
- Diagnostic imaging and testing
- Inpatient and outpatient care
- Rehabilitation and therapy services
- Surgical services and medical procedures

As Citrus County continues to grow, having access to strong, reliable healthcare services close to home remains critical, and Tampa

General Hospital Crystal River continues to be a trusted provider for our residents.

More than a healthcare provider, Tampa General Hospital Crystal River is a true community partner.

In addition to being a continued supporter of the Citrus County Chamber of Commerce and our efforts to champion local businesses and community initiatives, TGH Crystal River is also investing directly in the future of our local workforce.

Last fall, Tampa General Hospital made a \$300,000 investment in the Citrus County School District to support the Academy of Health Careers at Crystal River High School and the Citrus County Education Foundation, helping provide students with hands on learning opportunities, expanded resources, and exposure to real world healthcare careers.

For the past few years, TGH

Crystal River has also proudly hosted our annual Big BAM Mixer for Business Appreciation Month, creating an exceptional environment where Chamber members can network, strengthen connections, and celebrate the progress happening across Citrus County.

We are also proud to highlight that our 2026 Chamber Board Chair, Marci Holder, serves as the Vice President and Chief Nursing Officer at Tampa General Hospital Crystal River. Her leadership and commitment to both healthcare excellence and community involvement reflect the dedication TGH Crystal River brings to Citrus County every day.

To learn more about Tampa General Hospital Crystal River and the services available to our community, please visit: <https://www.tghnorth.org/locations/tampa-general-hospital-crystal-river>.

March Chamber Mixer: Community Connections Take Center Stage

Step right up and join the Citrus County Chamber of Commerce for its March Chamber Mixer, an engaging evening focused on connection, conversation, and community. Taking place Thursday, March 19, from 5:00 PM to 7:00 PM at the Realtors Association of Citrus County in Lecanto, this carnival themed mixer is co-hosted by Suncoast Business Masters.

The event will feature a Suncoast Business Masters Member Expo with interactive exhibitor tables, games, refreshments, and prizes throughout the evening. Attendees are encouraged to visit each table, connect with fellow members, and participate in the SBM Bingo game. Completed cards will be entered into a drawing for a \$250 donation to a local non-profit organization of the winner's choice, turning friendly competition into a meaningful community impact.

The event will be held at the Realtors Association of Citrus County, located at 714 S Scarboro Avenue in Lecanto. Chamber members are invited to attend and enjoy an evening where business relationships grow, community connections strengthen, and a little carnival flair brings it all together.

MORE UPCOMING CHAMBER EVENTS

- 02/22 CCBA Annual Jim Blackshear Memorial Golf Outing; Twisted Oaks Golf Course
- 03/06 - 03/22 CCBA Citrus Showcase of Homes; www.CitrusCountyShowcaseofHomes.com
- 03/13 March Chamber Luncheon; 11:30am - 1:00pm; Citrus Hills Golf & Country Club, Sponsor: Seven Rivers Christian School, Speaker: TBA

Chamber Legacy Members

The Chamber recognizes our Legacy Partners that have made a special investment in the Chamber to support the programs and mission of the Chamber. For information on becoming a Legacy Partner, please contact the Chamber by emailing Corinne@CitrusCountyChamber.com.