

# TOURISM

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swing after fixing up the storm damage. Another indicator of the strength of this year's tourist season: More than 1 million passengers traveled through Southwest Florida International Airport during March - making it the busiest month ever in the airport's 23-year-history. It was the eighth straight month of record-breaking traffic and only the second time that monthly traffic at the airport has surpassed the 1 million-passenger mark - March 2005 was the first. "This was the busiest first quarter that Southwest Florida International Airport has ever had," said Robert Ball, executive director of the Lee County Port Authority. "March is always the busiest month for

### Bed Tax Information

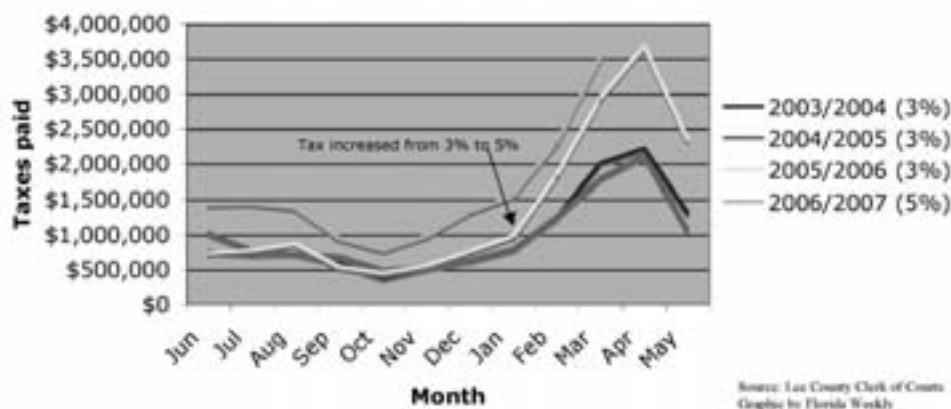
The Tourist Development Council/Visitor & Convention Bureau is funded by a 5 percent tourist tax collected on accommodations rented for less than six months. The funding is allocated in the following manner:

- >>**53.6 percent** - advertising and promotion (VCB Operations)
- >>**33.0 percent** - provides funding for beach/shoreline related improvements
- >>**13.4 percent** - provides debt service payment on the Lee County Sports Complex and promotion of not-for-profit attractions

—Source: Lee County VCB

the airport, but this year was phenomenal with 1,081,425 passengers." ■

Lee County tourist development tax



## Local child care agency passed over for SWF contract

Child Care of Southwest Florida, Inc., learned last week that it will no longer be the central agency for disbursing \$37 million in financial assistance to families needing child care. The non-profit agency, which has had the contract for child care services in Lee, Collier, Glades and Hendry counties since 1972, was not selected by the Early Learning Coalition to provide child care services under a three-year contract. Instead, the coalition awarded the contract to Community Coordinated Care for Children of Central Florida. A total of four for-profit and non-profit organizations applied for the contract. All but Child Care of Southwest Florida are from areas outside Southwest Florida. The contract is the major source of funding for Child Care of Southwest Florida, Inc., which has provided child care services throughout Southwest Florida for the past 40 years. "We will have no choice but to eliminate many, many jobs that support the con-

tract," said William A. Robinson, chairman of the Board of Directors of Child Care of Southwest Florida, Inc. Under the terms of the contract, the agency that is selected will administer financial assistance to low-income families that cannot afford child care, provide a free resource and referral service for parents searching for child care, and register children for the state's Voluntary PreKindergarten program, among other activities. The agency currently employs about 70 administrative people in the central office, although Robinson said 70 to 80 percent of the jobs will be eliminated. "The good news is that our business model plan for the future is bright," Robinson said. For more information about services offered by Child Care of Southwest Florida, Inc., call (239) 278-1002 in Lee County, (239) 643-3908 in Collier County, (863) 675-8383 in Hendry and Glades counties or by visiting [www.ccsfwf.org](http://www.ccsfwf.org). ■

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