

FOCUS on FILM

Newsletter of the Palm Beach County Film and Television Commission | October 2026



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FROM DIRECTOR TO DEPUTY: AJ JORDAT'S NEXT ACT AT THE FTC

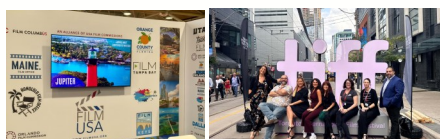


The Palm Beach County Film & Television Commission (FTC) has promoted longtime **Director of Operations Alberto "AJ" Jordat** to **Deputy Film Commissioner**. Promoted by **Film Commissioner Michelle Hillery** with the support of the **FTC's Board of Directors**, Jordat assumes the new title after more than a decade with the organization. "Over the years, AJ has become an invaluable partner in nearly every aspect of our operation," said Hillery. "He understands our industry, our County and, most importantly, how to bring people together to get things done. I know he shares our commitment to serving our clients in the film and television industry and supporting the continued growth of Palm Beach County as a premier destination for production." Jordat joined the FTC in 2015 and has helped oversee a period of significant industry growth, including four consecutive record-breaking years of tracked production spend from 2022 through 2025. His responsibilities have expanded beyond production operations and permitting to include industry development, legislative advocacy, programming and strategy for **The Palm Beaches TV**, and development of a new local incentive program. "AJ has always had the drive to push things across the finish line," said former **Film Commissioner Chuck Elder**, who hired Jordat. "Over time, I came to have confidence that no matter how difficult the challenge, he would find a way forward." Looking ahead to his new role, Jordat says he is grateful for the people who helped him reach this point, "especially **FTC board member Penelope Douglas**, who first introduced me to the organization; **Chuck**, for believing in me; **Michelle**, for trusting me; and our staff, whose work makes everything we accomplish possible," said Jordat. "I'm excited about what we're continuing to build together and what comes next."



TIFF CONNECTIONS, LASTING IMPACT

The **Palm Beach County Film & Television Commission (FTC)** connected with industry leaders at the **Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF)** Sept. 11–16, where **Deputy Film Commissioner Alberto "A.J." Jordat** promoted the County's filming locations and production resources. The FTC also partnered with FilmUSA at the Market to connect with filmmakers, producers and international industry professionals. Jordat reconnected with producer **Brian Yang** and the team behind *Drifter* (2026), whose relationship with the FTC began when they filmed *Snakehead* (2021) to **Palm Beach County**. "Relationships are at the heart of this industry," said Jordat. "Reconnecting with their team shows how connections can last well beyond a single production." The Commission also co-sponsored **Film Florida's** industry reception, connecting with Canadian production professionals and keeping The Palm Beaches top of mind for future productions.



WHERE FILM & TOURISM CONNECT

Last month, **Palm Beach County** welcomed film, television and tourism professionals to **West Palm Beach** for a week of industry collaboration during **Film Florida's Quarterly Meeting** and the **2026 Florida Governor's Conference on Tourism**. Film Florida's Sept. 8–9 meetings brought industry leaders together to discuss the state's film and television industry. The **Palm Beach County Film & Television Commission (FTC)** also attended the Governor's Conference, connecting with tourism professionals to explore emerging trends and opportunities. The week included Film Florida's "**Industry Connections**" reception at **Ian Jacob's The Space WPB**, hosted in partnership with **Talent Direct Agency** and the FTC. "Bringing these events to Palm Beach County creates valuable opportunities to connect our film and tourism industries, strengthen relationships and showcase the resources that make our destination unique," said **Film Commissioner Michelle Hillery**.





BOB VILA DIGS THE PALM BEACHES

Television icon **Bob Vila**, best known for his decades on *This Old House*, traded power tools for flower petals when **MSP Communications** brought a production to **Mounts Botanical Garden** in **West Palm Beach**. Filmed for **UnitedHealthcare's Renew Magazine**, the feature follows Vila as he reflects on his lifelong passion for gardening, preservation and connecting with nature as he approaches his 80th birthday. A longtime Palm Beach resident, Vila found a fitting backdrop at Mounts Botanical Garden. The **Palm Beach County Film & Television Commission** helped facilitate a film permit with **Driven Films**, ensuring the shoot could move forward. "They were quick to jump in and help when we realized we needed a last minute permit," said **Bret Ryan**, Creative Director at **The Agency @ MSP**. "And the staff at Mounts Botanical Garden were wonderful to work with and their garden photographed absolutely beautifully."



Images by Mary Beth Koeth / Renew Magazine

STROLLING INTO THE SPOTLIGHT

Agent B Productions brought baby gear brand **Joie Baby** to **Palm Beach County** for a lifestyle photoshoot showcasing its strollers, car seats and family-friendly accessories. With permitting assistance from the **Palm Beach County Film & Television Commission**, the crew captured families exploring **CityPlace**, **Clematis Street**, the **West Palm Beach Brightline Station** and **President Donald J. Trump International Airport**, along with a private **Boca Raton** residence. The campaign highlighted Joie Baby's mission to make everyday adventures and family travel easier and more enjoyable. **Beth Alonso** praised the FTC's assistance with permitting, locations and local crew, calling it "one of the best times, on location, experiences" and recommending Palm Beach County for future photoshoots. From downtown streets to airport terminals, the campaign showcased the diverse settings and production-friendly support available throughout **The Palm Beaches**.



PICTURE-PERFECT PALM BEACH PAR 3

World-traveling golf course photographer **Jason Brown** of **Focus Fairways** recently brought his lens to **Palm Beach County** for a multi-day shoot at the iconic **Palm Beach Par 3 Golf Course**. Nestled between the **Atlantic Ocean** and **Intracoastal Waterway**, the course provided a spectacular backdrop for ground and aerial photography. Permitted by the FTC, Brown captured the early morning fairways, sparkling blue waters and late afternoon changing coastal light that make this location so distinctive. "I've been fortunate to travel across three continents photographing some remarkable properties, and **Palm Beach Par 3** is certainly one that stands apart," said Brown. From sweeping aerial views to golden-hour landscapes, the shoot highlights why **Florida's Golf Capital®** offers picture-perfect settings for photography and production, both on and off the course.



ALIX EARLE'S PALM BEACHES CLOSE-UP

Social media personality **Alix Earle** and her family bring **Palm Beach County** into the spotlight in **Netflix's** new series, **Earle Meets World**, in episode 5 titled "Beef, in Wellington". The show follows the Earle family as they share their lives, travel and embark on new adventures. In one episode, the family heads to **Wellington International** to support little sister, **Penelope** at her horse competition, showcasing the destination's world-renowned equestrian community. **The Palm Beaches** also make an appearance through local favorites **Pop Up Bagels** and **Pura Vida**, featured at the family's home, along with a family outing to **Lake Worth Beach**. The **Palm Beach County Film & Television Commission** captured the production through its **Shot No Permit (SNP)** reporting, which tracks filming activity that does not require a permit. From equestrian sports to beachside family time, the episode showcases the experiences that make **The Palm Beaches** a memorable destination.



AMAZING AMERICA BRINGS THE FONTANA FAMILY TO THE PALM BEACHES

Sinclair Broadcast Group returns to **Palm Beach County** with **Amazing Itineraries: The Fontana Family**, a new travel special approved through the **FTC's Sponsorship & Development Program**. Co-sponsored with **Discover The Palm Beaches**, the special builds on the award-winning success of **Let's Eat: A Culinary Tour Through The Palm Beaches**. Emmy Award-winning host **Cameron Fontana**, his wife **Katie** and children **Chanel** and **Rush** explored local favorites including **Jupiter Donuts**, **Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse & Museum**, **Loggerhead Marinelife Center** and **Shark Wake Park**. With the FTC's one-stop permitting assistance, the family also enjoyed snorkeling and kayaking at **Peanut Island**. "The warmth of the Florida sun is matched by the warmth of a great community," said **Nickolas James**, VP Digital Programming at **Sinclair**. The special will air across Sinclair's affiliate networks before streaming on **ThePalmBeaches.TV** later this year, inspiring future family adventures in **The Palm Beaches**.

SINCLAIR
BROADCAST GROUP





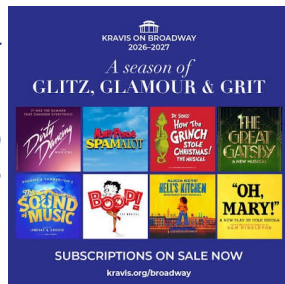
HAIL MARY SCORES NATIONAL SPOTLIGHT

A dramatic, last-second touchdown captured by **ESPN West Palm** earned the No. 1 spot on **ESPN SportsCenter's** Top 10 Plays, putting **Palm Beach County** high school football in the national spotlight. With **Royal Palm Beach High School** leading **Pahokee High School** 14–10 in the final seconds, Pahokee faced a do-or-die moment from its own 25-yard line. A perfectly executed halfback pass sent the ball soaring downfield, where a receiver made the catch and raced into the end zone for the game-winning touchdown. The unforgettable play was captured during ESPN West Palm's weekly High School GameDay broadcast, with play-by-play announcer **Mike Rizzo** and commentator **Jimmie Bell** calling the action. From Friday night lights to national television, the local broadcast showcased Palm Beach County's student-athletes and the production team bringing their biggest moments to the screen.



BROADWAY IS BACK IN THE PALM BEACHES

The curtain is rising on another star-studded season at the **Kravis Center for the Performing Arts** in **West Palm Beach**. The **2026–2027 Kravis On Broadway** series brings eight productions to **Dreyfoos Hall**, beginning with **Dirty Dancing: The Musical** Oct. 28–Nov. 1. The lineup continues with **Monty Python's Spamalot**, **Dr. Seuss' How the Grinch Stole Christmas! The Musical**, **The Great Gatsby**, **The Sound of Music**, **BOOP! The Musical**, **Alicia Keys' Hell's Kitchen** and **Oh, Mary!**. Additional Broadway favorites include **The Bodyguard**, **SIX**, **Kinky Boots** and **Jersey Boys**. Before Broadway takes the stage, the Kravis Center will kick off the season with its free fourth annual **Block Party** on Oct. 17 from 12pm–8pm, featuring live performances, workshops and activities for all ages. From Broadway blockbusters to community celebrations, the Kravis Center is setting the stage for an exciting season in **The Palm Beaches**.



HOUSTON, WE HAVE AN EXPERIENCE

The Moonwalkers: A Journey with Tom Hanks brings the wonder of **NASA's Apollo** missions to **South Florida PBS** in **Boynton Beach** through a spectacular 360° immersive experience. Narrated by **Tom Hanks**, the experience combines cinematic storytelling, restored NASA footage and immersive sound to transport visitors from the launch of the Saturn V rocket to humanity's historic first steps on the Moon. Guests can also stand beside a life-size replica of the Eagle lunar lander, step inside a 360° dome and interact with a holographic astronaut while learning about spaceflight and life in orbit. The 55-minute presentation is part of a larger exhibition experience lasting approximately 70 to 90 minutes and welcoming visitors of all ages. Reserve your tickets and take a journey beyond Earth without leaving **The Palm Beaches**.



SUBTROPIC FILM FESTIVAL EXPANDS

The **Subtropic Film Festival** returns November 6–8, bringing three days of independent film, creativity and community to **West Palm Beach** and, for the first time, **Lake Worth Beach**. This year's theme, **"Between Two Waters,"** explores the contrasts of **South Florida**, where ocean meets **Everglades**, paradise intersects with ecological reality and culture continues to evolve. Opening Night returns to the **Norton Museum of Art** on November 6, followed by a celebration at **Studio 1608**. Weekend programming continues at **Afflux Studios** at **G-Star**, while the festival's expansion into **Lake Worth Beach** includes screenings at the **Lake Worth Playhouse** and additional community events. Festival tickets and passes are available now, including a \$30 Weekend Pass featuring two days of screenings, workshops, panels and parties. Check out the full lineup on their [website](https://www.subtropicfilmfestival.com).



A TASTE OF WHAT'S COOKING IN THE PALM BEACHES

Taste the Palm Beaches serves up a flavorful journey through **Palm Beach County**, celebrating the restaurants, chefs and culinary experiences shaping the destination's dining scene. Narrated by **Kitty Lundan**, the series explores waterfront seafood, brunch, global flavors, steakhouses and chef-driven dining. Featured restaurants include **Red Phoenix**, **Lucky Shuck**, **Ona Coastal Cuisine** and **Banana Boat**, along with Palm Beach County's only **Michelin-starred** restaurant, **Emelina**. Steak lovers can discover **Flagler Steakhouse**, **Steak Shop by Ranchers Reserve**, **Fern** and **Jupiter Grill**, while brunch takes the spotlight at **Buccaneer Waterfront Bar and Grill**, **Lynora's**, **Topside at the Beacon** and **Fantasy Island**. Sweet stops include **Gary Rack's Farmhouse Kitchen**, **Sweet Nutrition**, **Blackbird Modern Asian** and **Cafe Sweets**. From coastal favorites to creative cuisine, **Taste the Palm Beaches** showcases the flavors that make **The Palm Beaches** a destination worth tasting. Watch anytime on [ThePalmBeaches.TV](https://www.thepalmbeaches.tv).





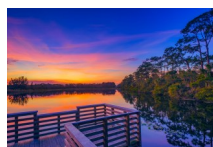
FILM FLASHBACK: EMPIRE OF THE ANTS (1977)

Long before today's productions discovered **Palm Beach County**, giant ants were already taking over the scenery. The 1977 science-fiction horror film *Empire of the Ants*, starring **Joan Collins** and **Robert Lansing**, brought its larger-than-life creatures here. Filming included **Juno Beach**, the western communities and the **Loxahatchee River**, along with a local sugar refinery and the **Juno Beach Pier**, where the ants staged one of the film's memorable marches. The production also demonstrated how natural and conservation areas could serve as distinctive filming locations when access was carefully coordinated. Made for a reported \$500,000, the creature feature went on to earn approximately \$2.5 million worldwide. Nearly 50 years later, Palm Beach County's landscapes remain part of the film's quirky cult legacy and another memorable chapter in the destination's production history.



LOCATION SPOTLIGHT: FALL VIBES, FLORIDA STYLE!

Think fall in Florida means palm trees and perpetual summer? Productions can find unexpected autumn textures, colors and settings, from bronze cypress trees and working farms to pumpkins, hayrides and fields of sunflowers.



At **Cypress Creek Natural Area**, pond cypress can take on warm bronze and orange tones as their feathery foliage changes with the season. Wetlands, hammocks and native landscapes create a natural autumn backdrop that feels worlds away from the typical South Florida scenery.

For a more traditional harvest setting, **Bedner's Farm Fresh Market** in Boynton Beach offers pumpkins, corn mazes, hayrides and sunflowers. The working farm provides seasonal details and plenty of visual texture for photo and video productions.



At **Mandalay Farm** in Jupiter, a variety of animals and picturesque settings offer another way to bring a rural fall atmosphere to the frame. The farm provides a versatile backdrop for productions looking for something beyond beaches and palm trees.

And when the sun starts to set, The Palm Beaches deliver a little seasonal magic of their own, with warm oranges, pinks and golds filling the sky.

[Find more film friendly spots in the FTC's location database.](#)

STUDENT SHOWCASE OF FILMS 2027 ENTRIES ARE NOW OPEN!

The [32nd annual Palm Beaches Student Showcase of Films \(SSOF\)](#) officially opened for entries on **Thursday, October 1, 2026**. Florida's largest statewide student film competition and awards show invites Florida high school and college students to share their work and compete for scholarships, and awards across 12 different categories. This year's theme, "**Sound & Vision**," celebrates the elements audiences may not always notice, but always feel. From music and dialogue to sound design, silence, and visual storytelling, students are invited to explore how these creative choices bring stories to life.

SSOF is free to enter and features categories including, **College and High School Feature/Short, Documentary, Music Video, Animation, Environmental PSA, Commercial PSA, Screenwriting, Poster Design, the Palm Beach County Tourism PSA, and the Burt Reynolds Scholarship** (for PBC high school seniors). The SSOF also honors an educator who has made an impact through the **Teacher of the Year** award. The deadline for all entries is **Monday, February 1, 2027**. Please note that the Burt Reynolds Scholarship is a two-step application process and submissions to the **Poster Design** category must be mailed to the Film Commission at 2195 Southern Blvd. Suite 520, WPB, FL 33406. For all the details, visit pbfilm.com/ssof.



Contributors: Afya Greene, Angie Crocitto, Alberto Jordat, Ben Beeler, Diana Vrolijk, Josh Hyber, Kelly King, Matt Mazzamro, and Whitney Woznick
To have your production included in this newsletter, please email marketing@pbfilm.com or call 561.233.1000



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