



The Journey to Becoming America's First Autism Certified City



VISIT  MESA
CITY LIMITLESS®

The Story

To call this first-of-its-kind initiative a “marketing campaign” would be a gross understatement. This initiative had much higher aspirations to serve the underrepresented and relied on the collective efforts of countless City entities to make it possible. While the idea to better accommodate our nation’s ASD travelers originated in and was spearheaded by Visit Mesa, Mesa’s DMO, the campaign relied on the hard work and collaboration of multiple municipal departments, local businesses and residents, even the mayor himself. Becoming America’s First Autism Certified City was a journey of reflection that shined a light upon the underlying qualities that distinguish Mesa as a destination and challenged our city to define itself in new ways. This bold initiative is a proud expression of the inclusiveness and openness that are inherent to Mesa and demonstrates the powerful impact (and results) of an entire city coming together to make all visitors feel welcome.

The Sad Truth about Autism and Travel

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) affects a significant number of people and is at a 600 percent increase year after year, according to the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention. Research shows that one in 54 people today are on the spectrum, and boys are still four times as likely to be diagnosed as girls, holding steady from previous reports.

Travel can be worrisome to ASD families.

“As an autism mom, I’m always looking for opportunities to travel with my family. It’s really difficult to find a place that’s going to be accommodating to my son with autism, and the rest of us frankly.”

THIBAUT FAMILY

The Why

Visit Mesa would be the catalyst in bringing awareness and comfort to ASD travelers around the country. By gaining recognition as the first “Autism Certified City,” Visit Mesa could tap into a market with 32 million annual travelers who spend more than \$262 billion on autism-related services in the U.S. each year, according to International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards (IBCCES). What began as a local hospitality campaign quickly evolved into a community-wide initiative as public and private agencies embraced the efforts of Visit Mesa and united with them to become autism-certified places of business.

The Strategy

Visit Mesa started with an inside-out approach. First, the organization focused on getting everyone on its own staff and Board to become autism certified. Then they worked on getting as many hospitality partners in Mesa through the autism certification training. Travel partners were just the beginning, though. Following Visit Mesa's lead, the Mesa Chamber of Commerce's staff and Board completed the IBCCES training. Mesa Parks and Recreation Department trained approximately 500 employees, and 1,200-plus Mesa Police Department, public safety and law enforcement officers were committed to autism certification training. Soon, a greater part of the community was engaged and Visit Mesa was deemed the first destination marketing organization to become a "Certified Autism Center" in the country.

Visit Mesa is a small destination marketing office with minimal budgets and had to be strategic and efficient with how they developed and marketed this first-ever initiative. The messaging had to be impactful and succinct. The story had to be authentic. The partnerships had to be strategic. And the communication channels had to be hyper relevant.

IBCCES and Autism Certification



The International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards (IBCCES) is a globally recognized certification program established to set the industry standards and create a worldwide community of trained and knowledgeable professionals. IBCCES identified a need for standardization within healthcare, education, and corporate environments to meet the growing needs of those with cognitive disorders. IBCCES assembled a board of thought leaders and experts in these fields to address the growing international need and created a series of certification programs in autism, ADHD, sensory disorders, dementia, mental health, dyslexia, and other cognitive disorders and special needs.

The Road to Citywide Autism-Certification



IBCCES adheres to international standards for boards that grant professional credentials. The IBCCES certification procedures and content undergo various reviews and validation, pursuant to the professions that are eligible for certification, as well as standards established by content experts in the field. In order to receive citywide IBCCES official certification – an accomplishment that had never been attempted or achieved – Visit Mesa was required to register a minimum of fifty-eight Mesa partner businesses for IBCCES autism training. In order to receive certification, each business partner was required to have at least 80% of their front-facing or guest-facing staff go through the IBCCES program. Needless to say, the commitment was huge and required both a financial investment and time investment for each participant.

The Tactics

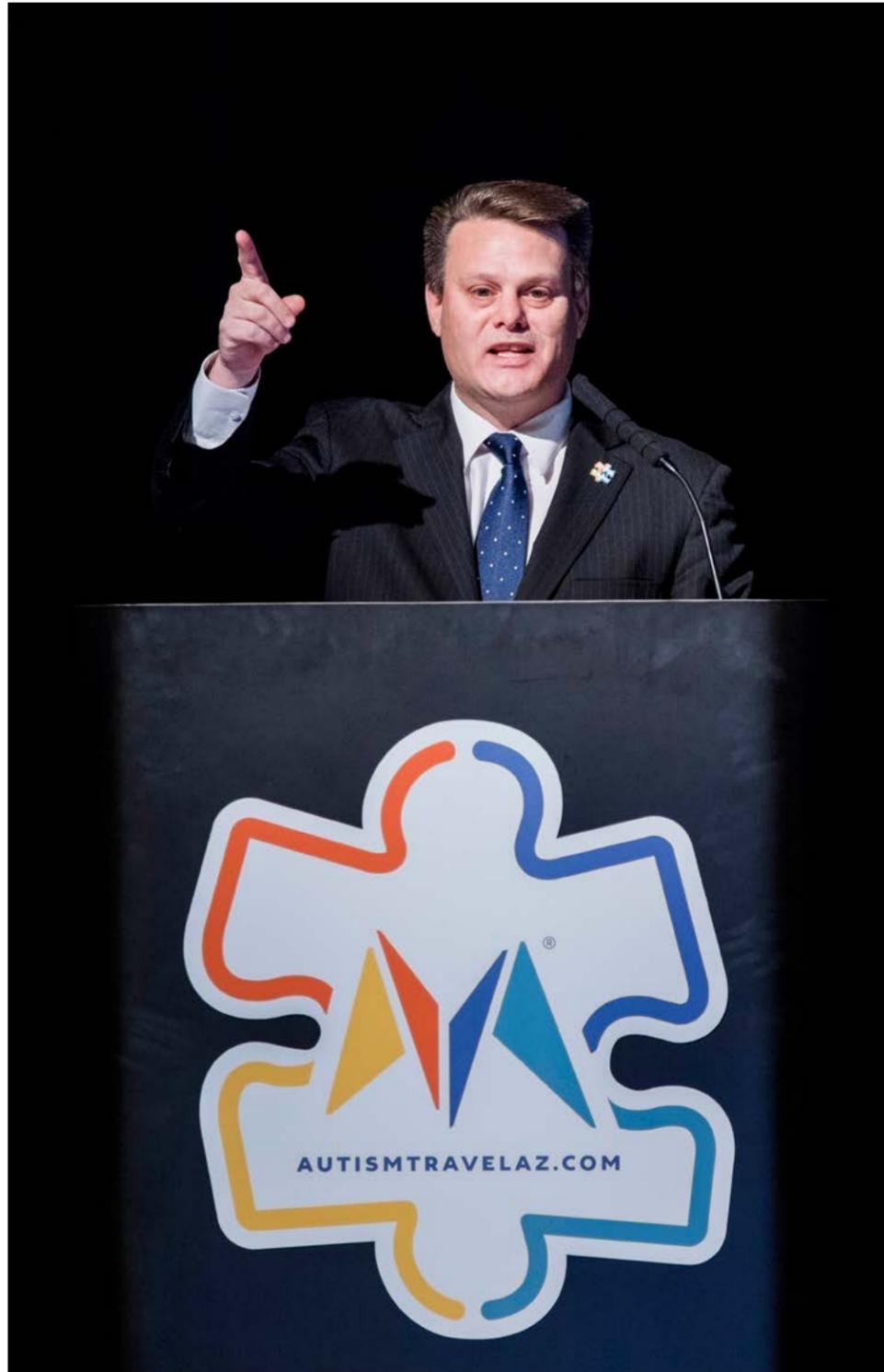
VISIT MESA AUTISM CERTIFIED LOGO:

To give the campaign its own identity, a logo was developed to represent the existing Visit Mesa brand that incorporated a well-recognized, autism relevant icon.



ANNOUNCEMENT SUMMITS:

Visit Mesa kicked off the campaign with a community summit in April 2019 that included guest speakers, educational presentations, Q&A with a panel of experts. In November 2019, a formal event was held including a presentation from the Mayor announcing Visit Mesa as the country's first Autism Certified City.



A SAMPLING OF THE MESA COMMUNITY PARTNERS WHO BECAME AUTISM-CERTIFIED:



A SAMPLING OF THE MESA VISITOR INDUSTRY PARTNERS WHO BECAME AUTISM-CERTIFIED:



AUTISM CERTIFIED TRAVEL PLANNING WEBSITE PORTAL:

In addition to establishing a unique URL, www.AutismTravelAz.com, an entire section of Visit Mesa's website was dedicated to providing information about autism-related travel to help ease the minds of families while planning their trips and visiting Mesa. The portal includes a downloadable autism travel guide and certified sensory guides, listings and links to autism-certified hotels, restaurants, attractions and transportation services, community resources and a comprehensive FAQ.

☰ 🔍 🌞 92°

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CITY LIMITLESS®

**A destination mindful
of all your senses.**

[BOOK A ROOM](#)

AUTISM TRAVEL GUIDE CERTIFIED SENSORY GUIDES LODGING DINING ATTRACTIONS TRANSPORTATION SERVICES COMMUNITY RESOURCES FREQUENTLY-ASKED QUESTIONS ASD GEOCACHING TOUR IN THE NEWS

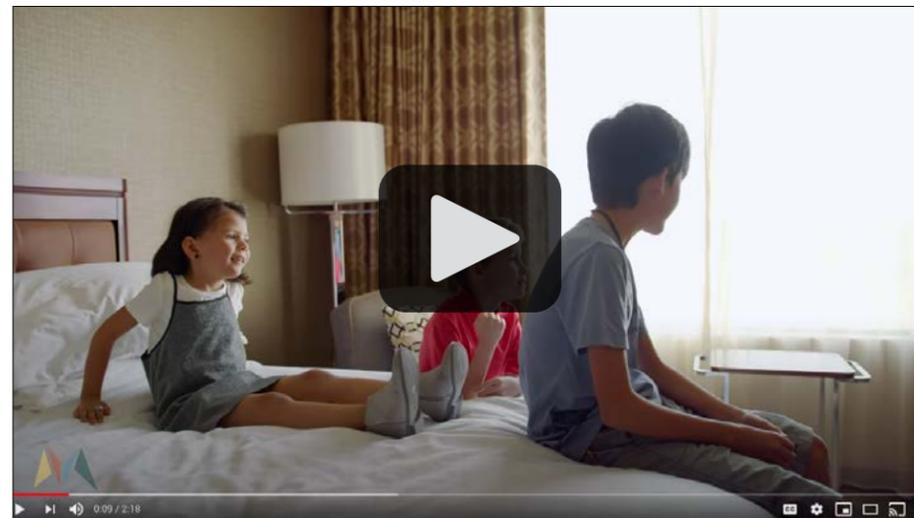
HOSTED TOUR FOR AUTISM FAMILY FROM NEW YORK:

In an effort to capture authentic reactions from an out-of-state family traveling with children on the spectrum, Visit Mesa hosted the Thibault Family from Rochester, NY to come and audit the destination. Their first-hand experiences were captured on film and photography and developed into our campaign assets.



CAMPAIGN VIDEOS:

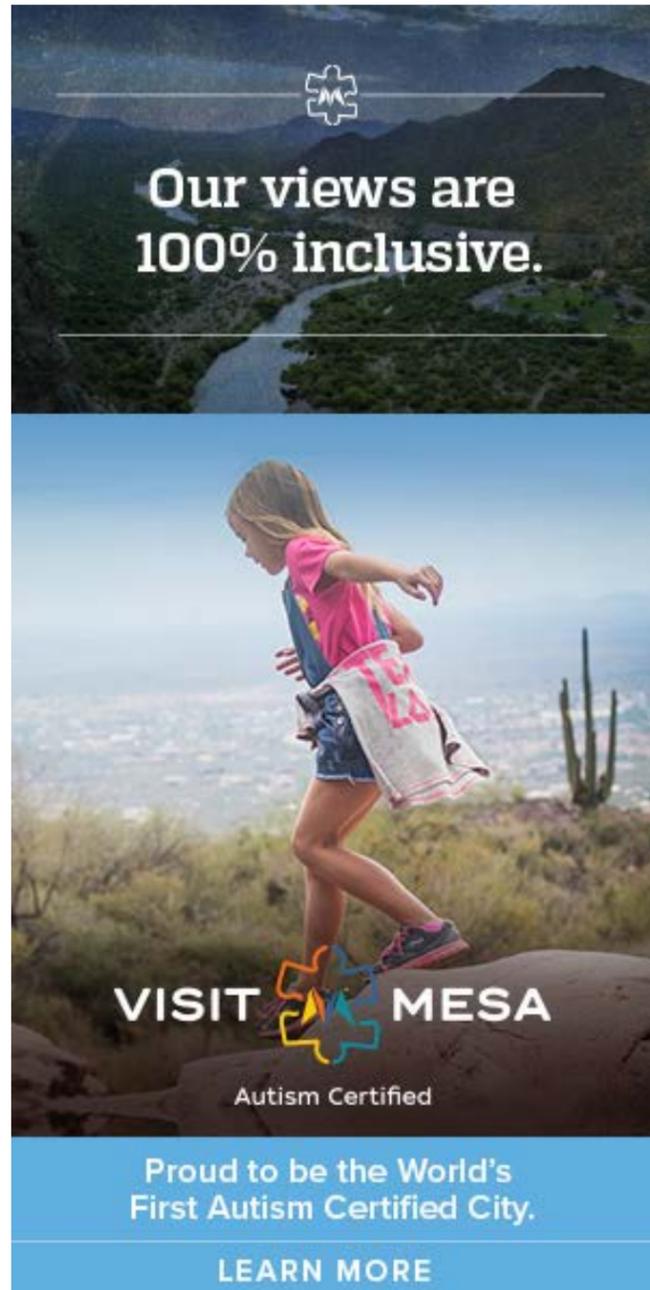
To help engage different target audiences through story, Visit Mesa created multiple videos explaining the initiative and the positive impact it had on the ASD community and the city.



Click images to watch videos.

GOOGLE DISPLAY ADS:

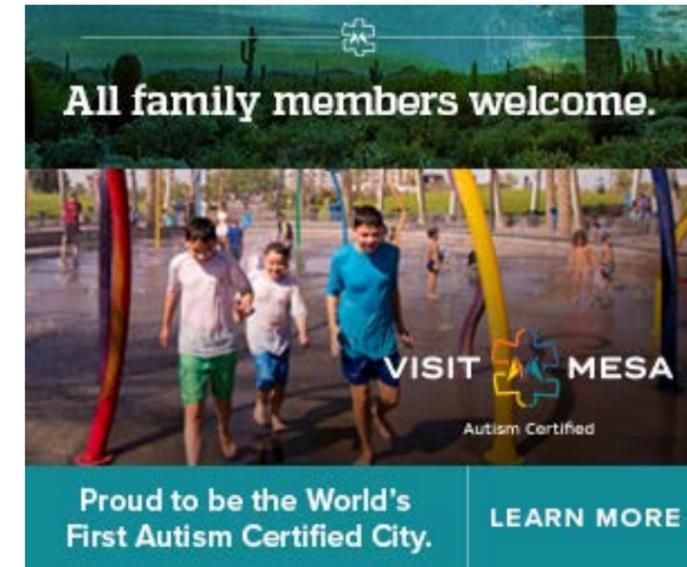
Various display ads were created to generate awareness and drive clicks for the campaign - targeting families by geography, demographics, behaviors, interests and keywords.



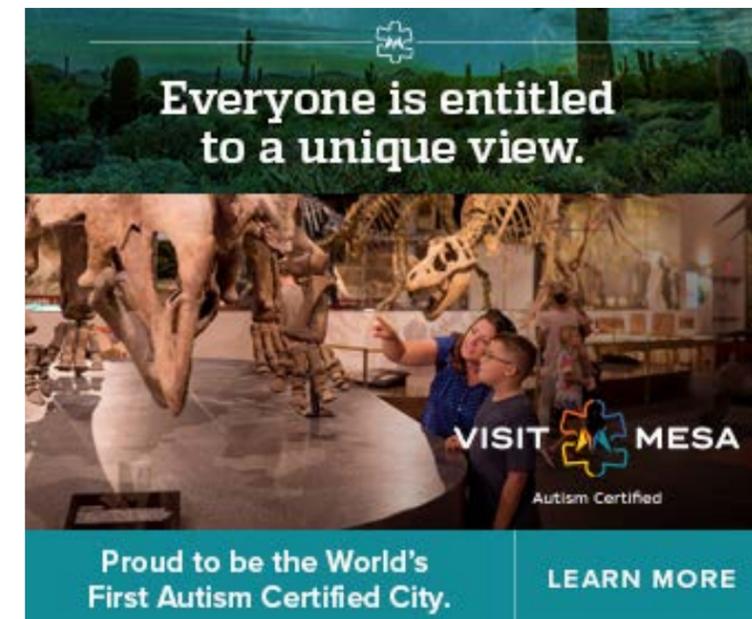
300 X 600



160 X 600



300 X 250



336 X 280

GOOGLE DISPLAY ADS



970 X 90



728 X 90



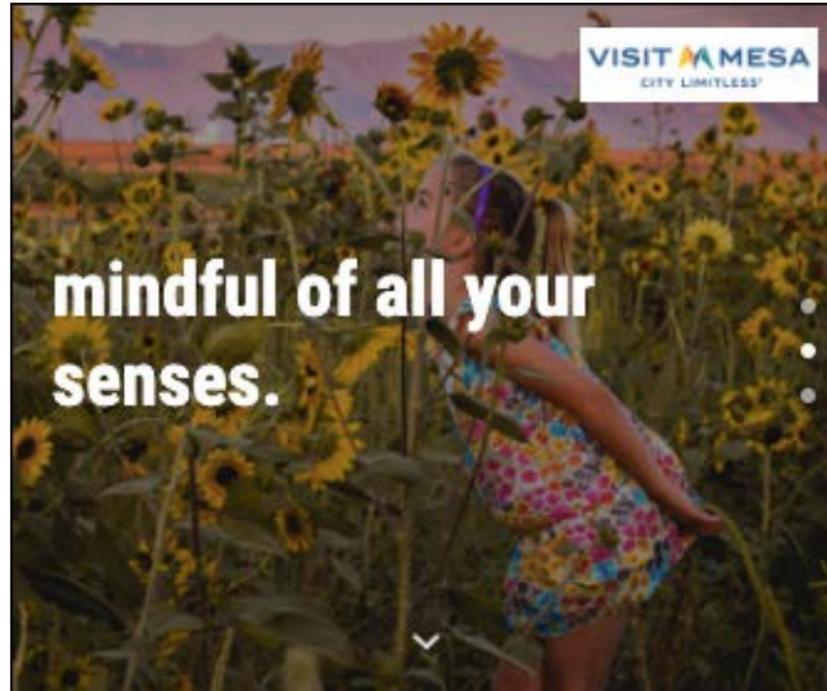
468 X 60



320 X 50

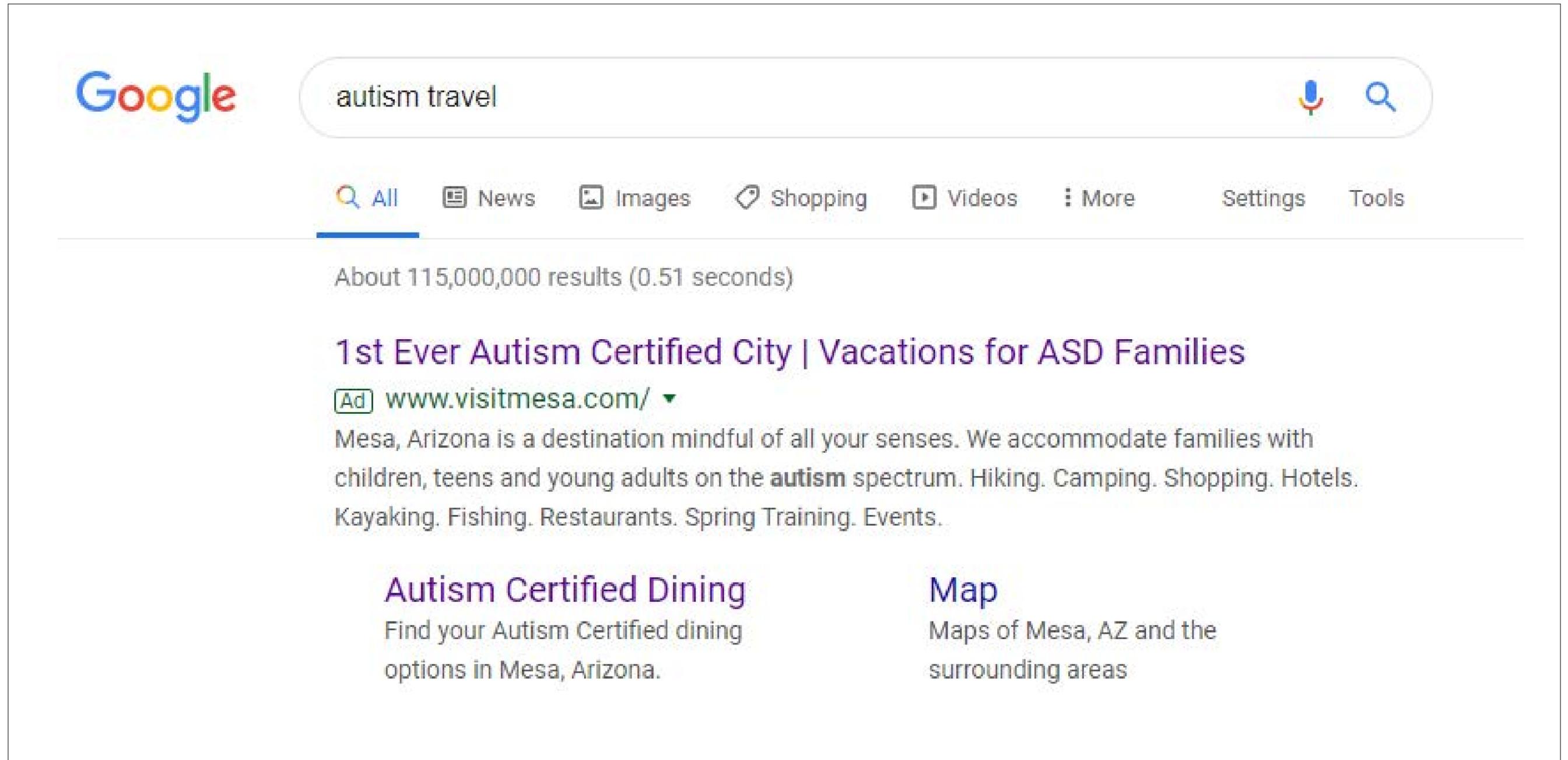
GOOGLE ANIMATED CUE CARD ADS:

Google DV360 allowed the creation of automatically generated animated ads to bring extra attention to the campaign, utilizing the same targeting as the display campaign.



GOOGLE PAID SEARCH:

Keyword targeting was used as an in-bound marketing tactic to reach families showing any interest in travel and autism.



The image shows a Google search interface. The search bar contains the text "autism travel". Below the search bar, there are navigation links for "All", "News", "Images", "Shopping", "Videos", "More", "Settings", and "Tools". The search results show "About 115,000,000 results (0.51 seconds)". The first result is a paid search advertisement for "1st Ever Autism Certified City | Vacations for ASD Families" from the website "www.visitmesa.com/". The ad text describes Mesa, Arizona as a destination mindful of all senses, accommodating families with children, teens, and young adults on the autism spectrum. Below the ad, there are two additional links: "Autism Certified Dining" and "Map".

Google

autism travel

All News Images Shopping Videos More Settings Tools

About 115,000,000 results (0.51 seconds)

1st Ever Autism Certified City | Vacations for ASD Families

Ad www.visitmesa.com/

Mesa, Arizona is a destination mindful of all your senses. We accommodate families with children, teens and young adults on the **autism** spectrum. Hiking. Camping. Shopping. Hotels. Kayaking. Fishing. Restaurants. Spring Training. Events.

Autism Certified Dining
Find your Autism Certified dining options in Mesa, Arizona.

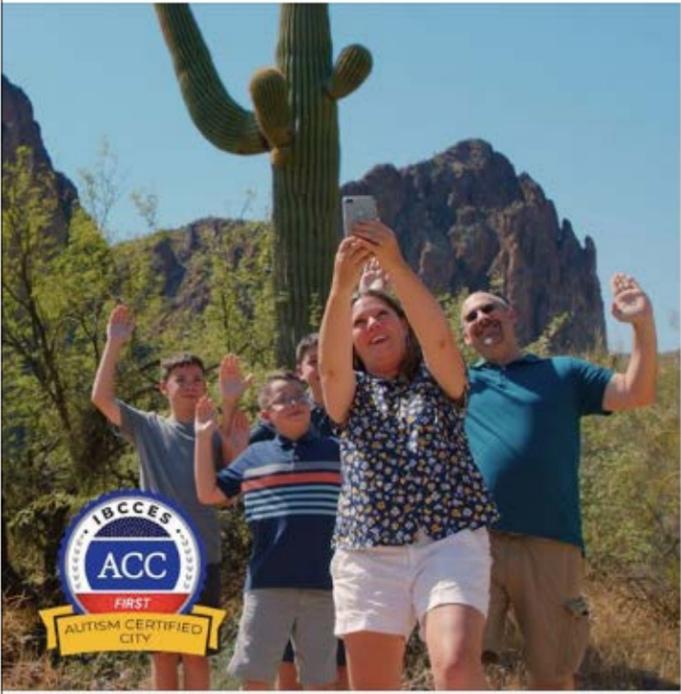
Map
Maps of Mesa, AZ and the surrounding areas

FACEBOOK / INSTAGRAM:

Knowing social media was a community-driven platform and a digital environment for autism parents to seek out and discuss relevant topics, Facebook ads were created to drive engagement.

 Visit Mesa
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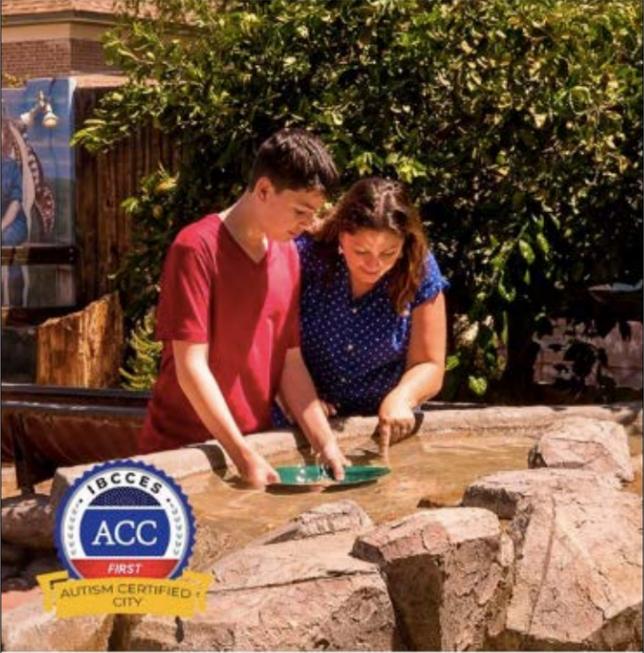
In Mesa, Arizona, our views are 100% inclusive, and we're building a community specifically for individuals with autism and their families.



AUTISMTRAVELAZ.COM
World's First Autism Certified City
Mesa provides the ASD community with a safe... [Learn More](#)

 Visit Mesa
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As the First Autism Certified City in the World, we embrace all perspectives. And we have numerous Certified Autism Centers, including hotels, family attractions, restaurants, parks and outdoor activities, to ensure the best travel experience for your family.



AUTISMTRAVELAZ.COM
World's First Autism Certified City
Mesa provides the ASD community with a safe... [Learn More](#)

 Visit Mesa
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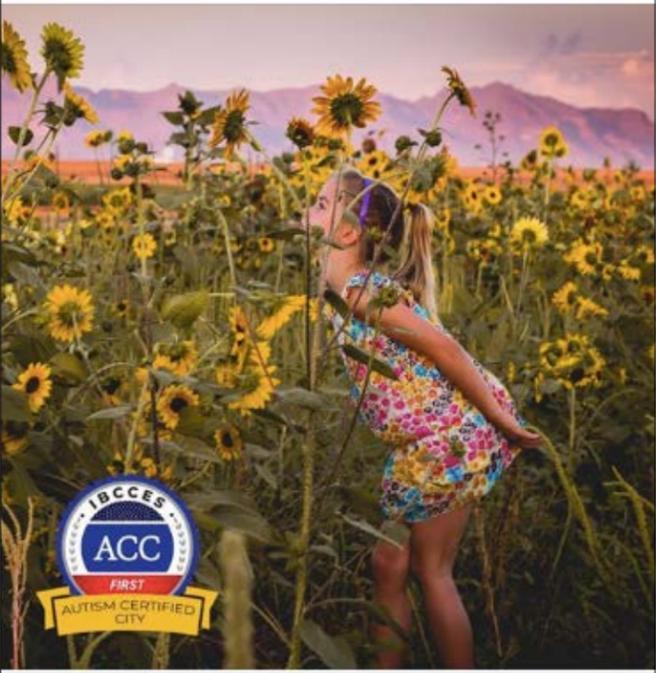
We provide extra training so you feel extra comfortable. As the First Autism Certified City in the World, we accommodate families with children, teens and young adults on the autism spectrum.



AUTISMTRAVELAZ.COM
World's First Autism Certified City
Mesa provides the ASD community with a safe... [Learn More](#)

 Visit Mesa
Sponsored · 

Mesa, Arizona is a destination mindful of all your senses. As the First Autism Certified City in the World, we make travel planning easy for families on the autism spectrum.



AUTISMTRAVELAZ.COM
World's First Autism Certified City
Mesa provides the ASD community with a safe... [Learn More](#)

PRINT:

Print ads were placed in national and international publications focused on autism-related topics, reaching a captive audience.



**A destination mindful
of all your senses.**

Proud to be the Country's First Autism Certified City.



 To book your next meeting in the only Certified Autism City in the country, contact David Kolozar, Director, National Sales at 480.682.3664 or david@visitmesa.com

VISIT MESA
AutismTravelAZ.com



**Everyone is entitled
to a unique view.**

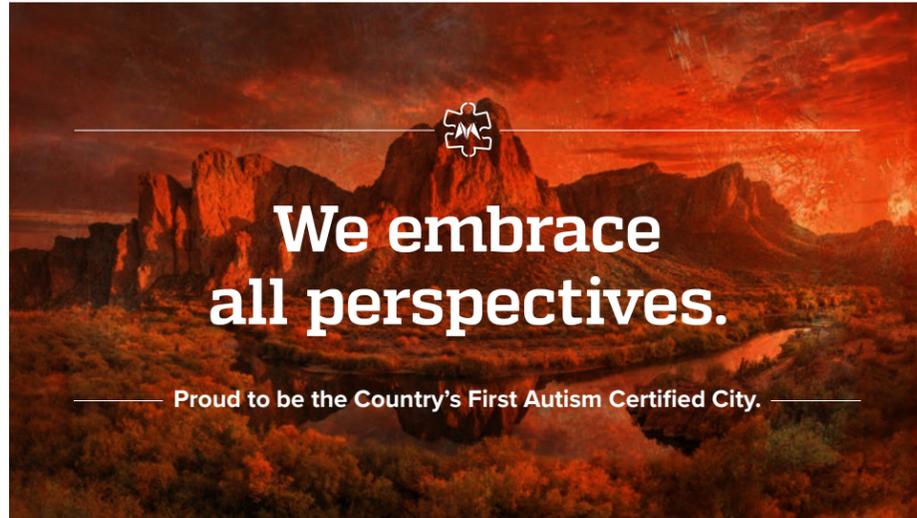
Proud to be the Country's First Autism Certified City.



 To book your next meeting in the only Certified Autism City in the country, contact David Kolozar, Director, National Sales at 480.682.3664 or david@visitmesa.com

VISIT MESA
AutismTravelAZ.com

PRINT:



AUTISM TRAVEL GUIDE - PRINTED/DIGITAL:

A custom travel planning resource for visitors with sensory and cognitive disorders including Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).



VISIT MESA
AUTISM TRAVEL

A travel planning resource for visitors with sensory and cognitive disorders including Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

IBCCES ACC FIRST AUTISM CERTIFIED CITY



VISIT MESA'S JOURNEY

A LETTER FROM OUR CEO

One of Visit Mesa's most ambitious efforts to date has been the journey toward becoming the first-ever Autism Certified City in the country. Since we started this journey, we immediately began to raise the profile of Mesa, Arizona and the many businesses that we have shepherded to earning their Certified Autism Center (CAC) status. On a global stage, this is big news for us and for you as our welcome visitor. We hope you will see and feel the dedication behind earning this new Class A designation throughout your stay. It has been overwhelming to witness the support for this initiative as we watched all the best facets of our community come together to support the ASD community here in Mesa.

It's not an understatement to say that millions of travelers are impacted by autism. In 2018, the Centers for Disease Control determined that approximately 1 in 59 children is diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). With a 600% increase in autism diagnoses in the U.S., this is the fastest growing developmental disorder in the world. Visit Mesa's progressive march to becoming the first Autism Certified City will inject a new source of visitor activity to our region as we actively serve up a destination that is ready to welcome the ASD community to unforgettable experiences throughout our city.

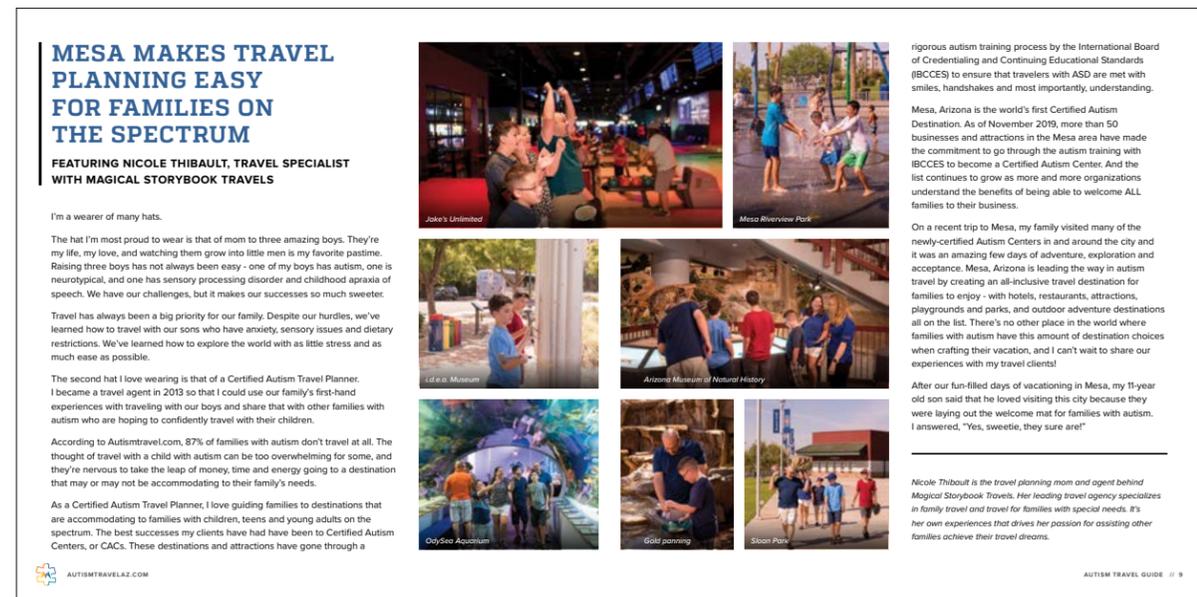
This movement is motivated by my own journey as a father to a son on the spectrum. When we received our diagnosis, our world was rocked. Travel is integral to our life and I've always felt this was a terrific opportunity to educate the hospitality industry and drive our destination toward inclusivity. I know families will feel comfortable coming to Mesa knowing our hotel staff is trained, our museum staff is trained and that we offer great sensory awareness as a destination.

All City of Mesa Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities, all City of Mesa museums, the Mesa Police and Fire Departments, the Mesa Chamber of Commerce, numerous health and wellness services, non-profits and other resources have become Autism Certified. This is on top of the many Autism Certified hotels, attractions and restaurants ready to roll out the welcome mat for you and your family. Visit Mesa is committed to your needs and ready to welcome you to City Limitless!

Sincerely,

 Marc J. Garcia
 President and CEO
 Visit Mesa

AUTISM TRAVEL GUIDE // 5



MESA MAKES TRAVEL PLANNING EASY FOR FAMILIES ON THE SPECTRUM

FEATURING NICOLE THIBAUT, TRAVEL SPECIALIST WITH MAGICAL STORYBOOK TRAVELS

I'm a wearer of many hats.

The hat I'm most proud to wear is that of mom to three amazing boys. They're my life, my love, and watching them grow into little men is my favorite pastime. Raising three boys has not always been easy - one of my boys has autism, one is neurotypical, and one has sensory processing disorder and childhood apraxia of speech. We have our challenges, but it makes our successes so much sweeter.

Travel has always been a big priority for our family. Despite our hurdles, we've learned how to travel with our sons who have anxiety, sensory issues and dietary restrictions. We've learned how to explore the world with as little stress and as much ease as possible.

The second hat I love wearing is that of a Certified Autism Travel Planner. I became a travel agent in 2013 so that I could use our family's first-hand experiences with traveling with our boys and share that with other families with autism who are hoping to confidently travel with their children.

According to Autismtravel.com, 87% of families with autism don't travel at all. The thought of travel with a child with autism can be too overwhelming for some, and they're nervous to take the leap of money, time and energy going to a destination that may or may not be accommodating to their family's needs.

As a Certified Autism Travel Planner, I love guiding families to destinations that are accommodating to families with children, teens and young adults on the spectrum. The best successes my clients have had have been to Certified Autism Centers, or CACs. These destinations and attractions have gone through a rigorous autism training process by the International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Educational Standards (IBCCES) to ensure that travelers with ASD are met with smiles, handshakes and most importantly, understanding.

Mesa, Arizona is the world's first Certified Autism Destination. As of November 2019, more than 50 businesses and attractions in the Mesa area have made the commitment to go through the autism training with IBCCES to become a Certified Autism Center. And the list continues to grow as more and more organizations understand the benefits of being able to welcome ALL families to their business.

On a recent trip to Mesa, my family visited many of the newly-certified Autism Centers in and around the city and it was an amazing few days of adventure, exploration and acceptance. Mesa, Arizona is leading the way in autism travel by creating an all-inclusive travel destination for families to enjoy - with hotels, restaurants, attractions, playgrounds and parks, and outdoor adventure destinations all on the list. There's no other place in the world where families with autism have this amount of destination choices when crafting their vacation, and I can't wait to share our experiences with my travel clients!

After our fun-filled days of vacationing in Mesa, my 11-year old son said that he loved visiting this city because they were laying out the welcome mat for families with autism. I answered, "Yes, sweetie, they sure are!"

Nicole Thibault is the travel planning mom and agent behind Magical Storybook Travels. Her leading travel agency specializes in family travel and travel for families with special needs. It's her own experiences that drives her passion for assisting other families achieve their travel dreams.

AUTISM TRAVELAZ.COM

AUTISM TRAVEL GUIDE // 9

AUTISM TRAVEL GEOTOUR:

To further engage ASD families while in market, Visit Mesa created a hide-and-seek style game that included a collection of geocaches anchored at many of Mesa's participating Certified Autism Centers and city parks.



Home > Geocaching

Geocaching in Mesa, Arizona!

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VISIT MESA HAS PARTNERED WITH THE EXPERTS AT GEOCACHING HQ TO BRING VISITORS AN INCREDIBLE HIDE-AND-SEEK TRAVEL QUEST THROUGHOUT CITY LIMITLESS®

Visit Mesa's Autism Travel GeoTour is a strategic collection of geocaches anchored at many of Mesa's participating Certified Autism Centers and city parks – these hidden finds will get the whole family hunting and gathering for fun! All ages and all lifestyles from outdoor adventurers to tech-lovers will enjoy the thrill of searching for geocaches on this custom family-friendly tour.

What is geocaching?

Geocaching is an outdoor treasure hunting game where players use a mobile app or dedicated GPS device to find cleverly hidden containers called geocaches. Today, there are more than 3 million geocaches in over 190 countries.



Get treasure hunting throughout Mesa in three easy steps!

1- To access on mobile, download the [free Geocaching® app](#) available in your app store

2- Log in or Sign up and search for the **Visit Mesa Autism Travel GeoTour** and view the current

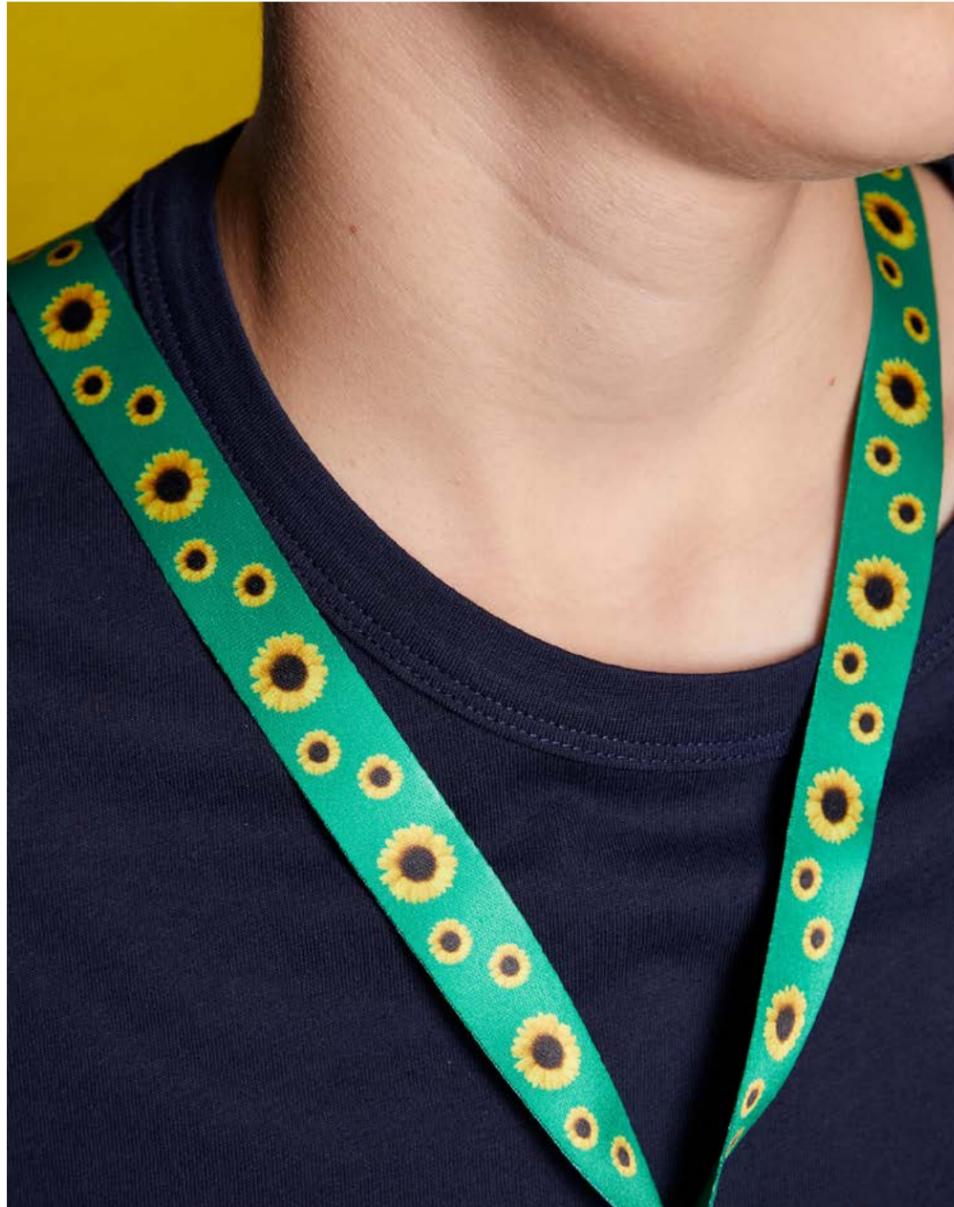
COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP WITH STATE FORTY EIGHT:

A strategic partnership was developed with well-known Arizona's most well-known apparel brand, State Forty Eight, to help generate awareness and encourage word of mouth on a grass roots level.



HIDDEN DISABILITIES SUNFLOWER PROGRAM - ADOPTED MAY 2021:

Visit Mesa is the first Arizona Visitor Center to offer the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower complimentary lanyards and bracelets, a program lauded for supporting travelers with various needs as a way for them to secure additional support they may require while traveling. Several Mesa hotels, museums and attractions are joining this initiative.



EARNED MEDIA:

Mesa was featured in American Way with targeted distribution during Autism Awareness Month (April 2020 AND REPRINTED April 2021).

 **American Way** 
Celebrated Living | **Nexos**

TRAVEL CULTURE FOOD & DRINK ENTERTAINMENT DESTINATIONS [EN / ES / PT](#) 

MESA, ARIZONA IS THE FIRST AUTISM-CERTIFIED DESTINATION IN THE U.S.

For parents raising a child with autism, travel can be a barrier.

WORDS Lisa Kadane
April 2020

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EARNED MEDIA:

Boston Globe Feature (May 2021)

The Boston Globe

TRENDING: MASS. COVID CHARTS | BIDEN'S NEXT 100 DAYS | VAN GOGH EXHIBITS | COPLEY SQUARE | NFL DRAFT | ON THE STREET | VACCINE NEWS & RESOURCES

TRAVEL

Traveling with an autistic child is hopefully becoming less restrictive and stressful

An increasing number of destinations are seeking autism-friendly certification and training staff to help families.

By **Danielle Braff** Globe correspondent. Updated April 29, 2021, 12:00 p.m.



EARNED MEDIA:

A SPECTRUM OF KINDNESS

MESA, ARIZONA, IS THE WORLD'S FIRST AUTISM CERTIFIED CITY

By Kate Wallace

Visitors to Mesa, Arizona, have always been able to count on warm sunny days and a vibrant community ready to welcome them with open arms. Now, families traveling with children, teens and young adults on the autism spectrum have a new slate of experiences designed exclusively for them.

Mesa was named the first-ever Autism Certified City designated by the International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards (IBCCES), raising the profile of the sunbelt destination to millions of individuals with autism and millions of annual travelers impacted by the sensory disorder. The nearly year-long effort behind the autism designation was launched by Visit Mesa, the regional destination marketing organization for the city, which encouraged businesses to participate in specialized autism training geared toward executives and front-facing hospitality and service staff to better recognize Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and service the needs of ASD travelers from the planning stages of a vacation to when they arrive in the destination, and throughout their stay.

Mesa museums, including the Arizona Museum of Natural History, i.d.e.a. Museum and the Mesa Arts Center, are all operating as Certified Autism Centers, as well as several hotels, restaurants and attractions that earned this distinction. More than 500 Mesa Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities employees and 1,200-plus Mesa Police Department public safety and law enforcement officers along with the Mesa Fire Department will undergo autism certification training. To date, nearly 4,000 community members have completed or committed to the autism certification — and that number is growing!

Mesa's new Autism Travel Guide lists the Certified Autism Centers including attractions like Odyssey Aquarium, Escape Rooms Mesa, Sloan Park — Chicago Cubs Spring Training, Arizona Goat Yoga and Riverbound Sports Paddle Co., to name a few. In addition, visitors can download the new GeoTour and plan for a fun and creative treasure hunt across the city.

"Visit Mesa is a national change agent in the travel industry. We've always been entrepreneurial and innovative in the ways we respond to the needs of our regional visitors. Autism trainings and certifications are the latest example," said Marc Garcia, President & CEO of Visit Mesa. "Our goal is to ensure individuals with autism and their families enjoy their perfect vacation in Mesa, Arizona. As a parent of a child diagnosed on the spectrum, this type of inclusivity reflects who we are in Mesa, and it's the right thing to do." AutismTravelAz.com

DESTINATION • PHOENIX/MESA RECREATION • 51

The New York Times

UPDATE

Rolling Out the Welcome Mat for Travelers With Autism

A growing number of theme parks, hotels and special attractions are introducing autism training and sensory guides.

THE WESTERN JOURNAL

Lifestyle

LIFESTYLE NEWS

The First-Ever Autism Certified City in the World Can Be Found in Arizona

"With Visit Mesa leading the charge, Mesa, Ariz., is rolling out the welcome mat for individuals on the autism spectrum," Mayor John Giles said in a news release. (Visit Mesa)

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OCTOBER 2019, TRAILBLAZERS / OCTOBER 2, 2019

THROUGH THEIR EYES

MATADOR network

NEWS

Visit Mesa becomes the country's first autism-certified destination marketing organization

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Destinations

Visit Mesa Makes History With Autism Efforts

Visit Mesa is the first DMO to receive official designation as a "Certified Autism Center."

By Bethany Bradsher July 23, 2019 3 mins read

Not long ago, the leaders at Visit Mesa didn't know if a tourism bureau could become fully certified for visitors on the autism spectrum. Now, Visit Mesa is the first DMO to receive official designation as a "Certified Autism Center."

THE TRAVEL VERTICAL

How Mesa, Arizona Became the World's First Autism Certified City

December 3, 2019 by Laurie Jo Miller Farr — Leave a Comment

On Nov. 18, 2019, The Travel Vertical reported that Mesa, Arizona qualified as the first-ever autism certified destination (yes, the entire city!) via The International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards (IBCCES).

The city-wide effort involving training of 4,000 people so far was spearheaded by Visit Mesa and its CEO, Marc Garcia with the support of the Mesa Chamber of Commerce and Mayor John Giles.

CrowdRiff

Platform Industries Company Resources

Topic Industry Role Resource Type Product Updates

Home » CrowdRiff Blog » How Mesa, Arizona Became the First Autism Certified City in the United States

How Mesa, Arizona Became the First Autism Certified City in the United States

Maggie Bremard November 28, 2019

PHOENIX BUSINESS JOURNAL

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Executive Inc: How Visit Mesa CEO Marc Garcia put his city on the national map (Video)

WE TAKE CARE OF POLITICS AND YOU CAN TAKE CARE OF BUSINESS JOIN US!

WESTJET MAGAZINE

CANADA UNITED STATES EUROPE CARIBBEAN MEXICO CONTESTS MORE

ALTIMA FRIENDLY

2

WHERE TO STAY: The staff at the Sheraton Mesa Hotel at Wingfield West—located within walking distance of Sloan Park (opposite training site of the Chicago Cubs)—are trained to take care of families with children on the spectrum, including placing them on lower and quieter floors, arranging respite care and catering to dietary requests.

WHAT TO DO: Make your way over to nearby Scottsdale and visit the giant, two-level Odyssey Aquarium. The fun and educational spot has more than 4,000 animals from 370 different species, and has 70 engaging and interactive exhibits. There is also a special quiet room where people can take a peaceful break.

WHERE TO EAT: Jaleo Unlimited is an indoor amusement park featuring bowling, arcade games, rides and a kid-friendly buffet with gluten-free options that is free with admission. Jaleo is a Certified Autism Center, which means it has its own sensory guide that helps determine the impact an activity might have on each sense.

MARCH 2020 | WESTJETMAGAZINE.COM

EARNED MEDIA:

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Mesa becomes the first ever Autism certified city

IBCCES ACC FIRST AUTISM CERTIFIED CITY

The first-ever Autism Certified City in the world is right here in Arizona!

The training is geared towards executives, front-facing hospitality and service staff to better recognize Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Author: Aaron Kurtz
 Published: 6:16 PM MST November 18, 2019
 Updated: 7:40 PM MST November 18, 2019

MESA, Ariz. — The City of Mesa is now designated by the International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards as an Autism-friendly city.

Nearly 60 businesses and organizations in Mesa and the surrounding area completed [autism certification training](#) and are now each deemed a Certified Autism Center by IBCCES.

East Valley Tribune Search...

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Mesa is nation's first autism certified city

By Jordan Houston, Tribune Staff Writer Nov 26, 2019

Mesa Mayor John Giles, left, and Visit Mesa CEO Maro Garcia celebrate Mesa, Ariz. being named the first-ever Autism Certified City in the U.S., raising the profile of the city to millions of individuals with autism.

Rick D'Elar/Special to the Tribune

Mesa is officially the first Autism Certified City in the country with close to 4,000 stakeholders in healthcare, education, hospitality and government trained to better serve people with the sensory disorder.

Trending

- 1 New East Mesa RV resort aims for friendly feel
- 2 Downtown Mesa's revolution in full throttle
- 3 Alice Cooper funding Mesa teen performance center
- 4 Mesa hits reset on historic preservation
- 5 'Unforgettable moment': Trenton McLaughlin hits game-winner on night Kobe Bryant honored

azfoothills RESTAURANTS BEST OF AZ FACE OF FOOTHILLS BLOGS EVENTS WEDDINGS MORE

URBAN OUTFITTERS THE BOO SHOP

Az Insider: Mesa Celebrates Becoming First Autism Certified City

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Dr. Kerry Wagner, an award-winning professional speaker, best-selling author and autism consultant to the upcoming HBO series, 'The Fencer,' served as the event's keynote speaker, presenting a talk called, 'Dusting Autism from Invisibility to Professional Spotlight.'

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Above: Mesa, Ariz. is the first-ever Autism Certified City in the U.S. The Thibault family (shown above) from New York visited Mesa to audit businesses and organizations that underwent autism training.
 BUSINESS NEWS | 19 Nov. 2019 | AZ BUSINESS MAGAZINE

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Mesa becomes 1st autism-certified city in United States

BY KTVR.COM | NOVEMBER 23, 2019 AT 4:05 PM
 UPDATED: NOVEMBER 26, 2019 AT 12:19 PM

Mesa, Arizona's First Autism Certified City

AS AN AUTISM MOM I'M ALWAYS LOOKING FOR

PHOENIX — An East Valley city has become the first in the United States to become autism certified.

Mesa was awarded the designation by the International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards, the city announced Monday in a [press release](#).

The year-long initiative, spearheaded by Visit Mesa, came to fruition after about 60 businesses and organizations in the city completed [autism certification training](#).

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LET'S GO PLACES **LOVES TO TALK TECH.** COROLLA

Mesa makes history with autism certification

PHOTO: KTVR.COM | NOV 23, 2019 | UPDATED: 7:23 PM NOV 28, 2019

MESA CITY PLAZA **OSCARS** **Let's Go Places** **LOVES TO TALK TECH.** COROLLA

MESA, AZ — Mesa leaders are making a big announcement Monday morning regarding autism certification.

Visit Mesa recently became the country's first-ever destination marketing organization to get autism certification. The International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards (IBCCES) awarded the certification. The board makes sure agencies are addressing the needs of people with cognitive disorders.

Discover these 10 surprising and delightful things to do around Mesa, Arizona

JENNIFER ALLFORD Updated: September 24, 2019

PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

The Results

Digital Campaign Paid Media Results

(NOVEMBER 2019 - MARCH 2020)

21,137,189

TOTAL
IMPRESSIONS

132,848

TOTAL CLICKS

0.63%

AVERAGE CTR

16,333,597

TOTAL VIDEO
VIEWS

77.27%

AVG VTR
(VIEWS/IMP)

5,591

TOTAL SOCIAL
ENGAGEMENT NUMBERS

01:30

HIGHEST AVERAGE SESSION
DURATION ON WEBSITE FROM ADS



Overall Campaign Earned Media Results

**335 articles reaching 190 Million impressions
(print and online) and valued at \$643,852**

To date, 65 organizations within the hospitality industry, City of Mesa and regional communities have committed to Autism Certification, representing nearly 4,500 employees completing certification and more organizations looking to join the movement. In addition, two conferences have been booked in Mesa as a direct result of the initiative, each resulting in 100+ on-peak room-night bookings.





————— **Learn more at [AutismTravelAZ.com](https://www.AutismTravelAZ.com)** —————