



CHARLOTTE COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Rear View Mirror - 2020 Annual Report



In the face of unprecedented challenges, the Charlotte County Chamber of Commerce successfully celebrated 95 years of fulfilling its mission of advancing the prosperity and general welfare of its business members and the community they serve.

Member Services Division



MISSION:

To provide information, services and educational programs for members on issues that affect business.



ACTIVITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- **ChamberMaster** - Completed a full conversion to the member-friendly ChamberMaster operating system.
- **CharlotteCountyChamber.org** - Designed and produced a new state-of-the art website allowing for user friendly member interaction.
- **Business Online eNewsletter** - Created and distributed more than 36,000 copies of the weekly e-newsletter to subscribers.
- **Weekly Newspaper Column** - A weekly column is published each Monday in the Charlotte Sun and is posted on the website as our Chamber Blog. It is full of current information and chamber fun.
- **2021 Community Guide and Business Directory** - Created and published the updated edition with more advertising sold than prior years due in part to adding a new shareable e-magazine format along with 10,000 glossy magazines.
- **WCCF Charlotte County Speaks Radio Show** - The events, programs, and services were promoted live each month on the air with Ken Lovejoy on the second Tuesday morning at 9 a.m.
- **9th Annual Hottest Business Day in Paradise Expo** - Planned and implemented the popular event with 107 booths and approximately 1,500 attendees.
- **Boost With Facebook Event** - Cohosted a standing-room-only training event for small businesses as the Facebook team traveled presenting the best tools and practices on the Facebook and Instagram platform.
- **Sustaining Partner Party at the Rays Game** - A special recognition party was held for our generous Sustaining Partners under the centerfield scoreboard at Charlotte Sports Park to watch the Tampa Bay Rays take on the Boston Red Sox.
- **New Teachers' Parade** - Developed and hosted a creative reverse parade along with 42 business sponsors to welcome the 90 new Charlotte County teachers on the first day of their orientation.
- **Third Wednesday Coffee Membership Meetings** - Conducted nine in-person monthly membership meetings and one Facebook Live event (800 views) to keep the membership connected and updated on all things chamber related.
- **New Member Orientation or Chamber 101** - Is conducted quarterly in January, April, July, and October on the third Wednesday of the month from 8:30 a.m. until 9:00 a.m. at the Charlotte Harbor Event and Conference Center. Learn everything you wanted to know about the Charlotte County Chamber of Commerce but were afraid to ask.
- **Networking at Noon Luncheons** - Hosted eight networking luncheons at various member restaurants with a total of almost 200 attendees.

Member Services Division (Continued)



- **Ribbon Cuttings** - Conducted 27 celebratory ribbon cuttings for business openings, relocations, and milestone anniversaries.
- **Lunch and Learn Presentations** - Conducted five Lunch and Learn presentations about pertinent topics for our members resulting in more than 200 attendees. Topics included Navigating the PPP Loan Process, Succeeding at any Goal, Re-Opening for Business, Financial Resources, and Marketing Strategies.
- **95th Annual Meeting** - Hosted a small luncheon (limited to 165 with a Facebook live stream) at the Charlotte Harbor Event and Conference Center for the annual membership meeting, installation of the 2020-2021 board of directors, and awards ceremonies including naming the 2020 Pacesetter Award winner.
- **Business Counseling** - Approximately 240 individuals received no cost, one-on-one, personalized business counseling via the Florida Gulf Coast University Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at our Port Charlotte location.
- **Business of the Year** - In unison all three Charlotte County chambers of commerce named each of its members as a 2020 Business of the Year. The logos of all three chambers were blended for this unique recognition of the local business community. "On behalf of our board of directors, I thank each and every chamber member for their ongoing tenacity and adaptability as we deal with this unprecedented global emergency," said Tony Smith with Ashley, Brown and Smith, CPAs, and current board president of Charlotte County Chamber of Commerce. "Our community is special, and the responsible efforts of all of our business members need to be recognized. Their perseverance through tough times has built this strong community."
- **Shop Charlotte Initiative** - Encouraged residents to Shop Charlotte during the holiday shopping season and throughout the year with advertisements, public service announcements, and on outdoor signage.
- **Collection Site** - Served as a collection site for Toys for Tots and Shoes for Kids
- **Inaugural Radio Controlled Christmas Parade** - With the 42nd Annual Charlotte County Chamber of Commerce Christmas Parade postponed until 2021, innovation took over and this fun event was launched.



Leadership Charlotte Division



MISSION:

To influence and foster a community environment that furthers the prosperity of the business community and the community at large.



ACTIVITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- **Leadership Charlotte Class of 2020** - The 31st class of the signature program raised funds to build a new press box at Charlotte County Carmelita Park in Punta Gorda.
- **Junior Leadership Charlotte Class of 2020** - The 28 high school juniors graduated and joined the ranks of their fellow JLC alumni. The goal is to encourage students to stay or return to Charlotte County to live, work and play after their post-secondary education.
- **Junior Leadership Charlotte Scholarship** - The annual college scholarship was awarded to a deserving JLC alumni recipient from the most recent Charlotte County graduates.



Government Affairs Division



MISSION:

To establish and maintain representation and information flow for Chamber members regarding governmental issues by proactive involvement in the governmental process.



ACTIVITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- **Board of County Commission Meetings** - Met one-on-one with the county commissioners every-other-month to discuss topics of importance to the business community.
- **One Percent Option Sales Tax Extension** - The recommendation of the committee was again followed as the board of directors voted to take a position in support of the One Percent Option Sales Tax Extension.
- **Candidate Questions** - Local candidates provided written answers to specific questions submitted by the Government Affairs Committee which were then posted on the chamber website.
- **Meet the Primary Election Candidates** - Hosted an interactive virtual event with local candidates for more the 50 members participating.

Covid-19 Global Pandemic



SPECIAL ACTIONS AND INVOLVEMENT

- Notified and reminded membership and community that the first priority of the Charlotte County Chamber of Commerce is to always maintain healthy protocols for our business community and the citizens they serve.
- Remained in contact with local, state, and national government officials.
- Remained in contact with the neighboring chambers of commerce, the Charlotte County Economic Development Office, the Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach Visitor & Convention Bureau, the Florida Chamber of Commerce, the Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association, and other business organizations to share information and resources.
- Beginning March 13 through May 31, 2020, provided daily updates to the membership via a concise email on a daily basis about issues including emergent announcements, business operations, loans, grants, and resources.
- Provided complimentary Business Information Memberships to all local businesses for the expanded dissemination of concise information.
- Developed, maintained, and promoted a listing of local business members which remained open and/or offered remote ordering, curbside service, and delivery which included 28 restaurants, 32 retail businesses, and 106 service businesses.
- Classified as an "Essential Business," the chamber office remained operational and staffed daily.
- Assisted with dissemination of the baseline "FGCU Coronavirus Economic Impact Survey" for Charlotte County businesses and the subsequent follow-up surveys to measure changes.
- Governmental, financial and health resource lists and information were maintained and disseminated regularly.
- Hosted three on-site blood drives.
- Partnered with Charlotte Behavioral Health Care to develop and offer a free Chamber Therapy Hotline and Chamber Virtual Support Group.
- Hosted five virtual seminars to provide information about pertinent issues.
- Served on the Charlotte County Recovery Working Group.
- Modified a template from the SBDC into a **COVID-19 Preparedness Business Plan** for all businesses to adapt and utilize.
- Arranged for the presentation of the Florida Health Department of Charlotte County Covid-19 certificate class verifying all requirements have been satisfied for the COVID-19 overview and best practices for businesses and organizations.
- Provided masks to businesses in need.
- Participated on the panel of the Florida Gulf Coast University "Open for Business- Coronavirus" Town Hall, a partner project with the Naples Daily News, Fort Myers News-Press, and WGCU Public Media.

Thank you, once again, to last year's Charlotte County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors!

President: Tony Smith, Ashley, Brown and Smith, CPAs

President-Elect: Justin Brand, Charlotte Community Foundation

Immediate Past President: Kathy Robinson, Centennial Bank

Treasurer: Colleen Wright, Olsen, Lynch and Wright, CPAs, PA

VP, Membership Services: Steve Lineberry, Premier Photographic Events

VP, Leadership Charlotte: Mike Martin, State Farm Insurance, Mike Martin Agency

Hector Flores, Charlotte County Administration

Dave Gammon, Charlotte County Office of Economic Development

Jason Green, Axis Infrastructure

Toby Lynn, The Mortgage Firm

Kim Maddy, Charlotte State Bank and Trust

Angie Matthiessen, United Way of Charlotte County

Bob Miller, Boyette and Miller Construction and Development, Inc.

Carla Nix, Nix and Associates Real Estate

David Oliver, McCrory Law Firm

James Parish, Charlotte County Airport Authority

Melissa Reichert, City of Punta Gorda

Ian Vincent, Charlotte County Public Schools

Bob White, Charlotte County Chamber of Commerce

