Thank You!

As I’m sitting here in my office, searching for words of wisdom for this article, an overabundance of thanks and appreciation came to mind. It has been an amazing and positive transition over the past couple of years here at the Charlotte County Chamber of Commerce. Our day-to-day activity seems to be never ending, like in many other businesses. In all successful businesses/organizations, it takes a village to achieve accomplished goals and key initiatives.

First and foremost, I’d like to convey my thanks and eternal appreciation to our 1000 plus membership. From our members who have joined us this month to our members that have been with us for 50 plus years. Their continued commitment, engagement and support is second to none! To our Sustaining Partners, they are an intricate part of our fiber with their elevated commitment not only our organization, but to the greater good to our community.

To our dedicated Board of Directors, it is truly an understatement to be extremely fortunate to have their leadership, guidance, and direction. They are available to me at a moment’s notice to ensure the Charlotte County Chamber of Commerce is strategically positioned to be the leading business membership organization in the region. Last but certainly not least, my dedicated staff rocks the house! Special thanks to Ruth Uzonyi, Finance Director – Janet Caffee, Information & Customer Service Manager – Jami Joannes, Director of Business Development.

It is with a very heart-felt “Thank you” to you all!

Bob White
Executive Director
Steve Lineberry

President's Note

Joining the Charlotte County Chamber of Commerce Adds Value

The Charlotte County Chamber of Commerce provides its members with a wide range of networking activities each month. Ribbon cuttings and networking luncheons are just a few opportunities available to a member at a nominal or no additional cost. Since becoming a Charlotte County Chamber of Commerce member 12 years ago and attending dozens of networking events, I have had the opportunity to meet new Chamber members and find many of the clients that each member is looking for to help grow their business - the “Lifetime Customer.” A “Lifetime Customer” is important because it allows you to maximize the value of every customer relationship. This means that you’re providing a better customer experience that keeps clients around for longer, which can also help improve the quality of your products and services. And it begins with networking.

Each Monday morning the Charlotte County Chamber of Commerce’s “Business Online” hits your email box and provides a wealth of information on upcoming Chamber events, ribbon cuttings, luncheons, and what is happening with our members. It is a valuable resource. And most importantly, it gives you the details on the upcoming Chamber events that provide an opportunity to network and find that “Lifetime Customer” who will add to your bottom line for years to come! I am looking forward to seeing you at our next Chamber event!

Stephen Lineberry is the 2022/2023 board president of the Charlotte County Chamber of Commerce. He is the owner of Premier Photographic Events, LLC.

Email: president@charlottecountychamber.org

Have you created a login yet to your member portal?

It’s easy. Go to CharlotteCountyChamber.org. At the top of the page click on the login symbol. Use your email address as your user name, above the Sign In button, click on No login created? Sign up now. That will prompt you to create a password.

The member portal (MIC) allows you to update your business description and keywords, post jobs, hot deals, member to member deals and post events at no cost to you. You may register for events, make payments, memorize credit card information, update staff and more!

Remember that old WYSIWYG - What you see is what you get. View your member profile to ensure it is still accurate, and login to see how you may make it better.
Here at the Chamber, there are multiple marketing opportunities for our members to take advantage of, such as:

1. Business On Line – send 90 words or less weekly to BOL@charlottecountychamber.org for our email blast sent to over 3000+ subscribers every Monday morning
2. Attend a monthly networking event
3. Place an Ad in our upcoming Community Guide -
4. Become a Sustaining Partner of the Chamber -

The Charlotte County Chamber is the most reasonably priced marketing tool in your tool belt. Utilizing your Chamber membership will help you & your business to be known in our community. In turn, your business will increase as your business relationships grow.

The Junior Leadership Charlotte program is in the home stretch for the class of 2023 with their graduation set for Thursday, April 20. Graduating are: Cole Beiner, Sophia Bender, Nadine Cardoso, Luna Del Pino, Brooke Eyster, Janel Gutierrez, Lianna Hamsher, Audrey Harvick, Benjamin Hooker, Carter Jackson, Rose Jean, John Kamberg, Carl Linder, Caroline Massie, Melanie Maugeri, Sierra Mulinix, Amelie Olarte, Leonardo Pires Trent, Lily Raider, Alyssa Ross, Ariana Sierra, Hunter Sifrit, Martina Soares, Jade Storey, Jaylyn Tibbs, Mickinley Tingler, Kayla Truong, Leyla Voltaire, Ashley Wasson, and Grace White.

Scholarship Awarded

Each year the Charlotte Chamber Community Foundation, which is the 501(c)(3) nonprofit arm of the Charlotte County Chamber of Commerce, is proud to present a scholarship to a student who graduated from the Junior Leadership Charlotte program in the prior year as they are preparing to enter college.

We want to congratulate Syskya Larouche our $1,000 scholarship recipient. She graduated from the Junior Leadership Charlotte Class of 2022 and plans to attend college in the fall.

Applications for the JLC Class of 2024 will be available in the High Schools and on our website CharlotteCountyChamber.org about the 2nd week of the new school year.
Hurricane Ian has taken a drastic toll on many members of our community. Leadership Charlotte '23 believes it is vital to support our seniors through these tough times with added support to our area nonprofits. The Leadership Charlotte Class of 2023 is fundraising to help Charlotte County after the storm. Through their events they will benefit these nonprofits, Meals on Wheels, Drug Free Charlotte County, Douglas T. Jacobson Veterans, Junior Leadership Charlotte, and the Leadership Charlotte Fund.

Our next event will be held on Saturday June 3, 2023 at The Charlotte Harbor Event & Conference Center. We are looking for sponsors, raffle & silent auction items, and our Leadership Charlotte Alumni & residents of SWFL to attend the Shagadelic Shindig fundraising event. For more information go to our website at www.CharlotteCountyChamber.org and click on the event in the June calendar.

Serving in Charlotte County is a rewarding and unique experience that can't be found anywhere else. We call it 'patrolling in paradise', because of the endless beauty of our geography and our incredibly low crime rate. The Charlotte County Sheriff's Office has been serving this county for over 100 years now, and all throughout our history, deputies have said that even though our population continues to grow, our community somehow becomes closer. We are blessed to serve here, where the members of our community support what we do and appreciate the efforts of the men and women of the agency.

It's no secret that Southwest Florida is the place to be, which is why more and more people are making this their forever home. We continue to adapt in order to provide the highest level of service for our citizens, which now includes the construction of a fifth district office in Babcock Ranch.

I am proud of the proactive approaches this agency takes to protect our county through intelligence-led policing, community programs, crime prevention efforts, specialized training, and using the latest technology and equipment to get the job done safely and efficiently.

Our deputies, corrections officers, and civilian staff are the backbone of those efforts, and we are always seeking the best people to join this family. We offer a great benefits package, competitive salary, supportive work environment, and the best people to serve and to serve beside. We work hard to keep pace with the growing population and ensure Charlotte County's continued security. If you or a family member is interested in serving, give us a call.

As Sheriff, it is my honor to lead the men and women of the Office through this growth. My promise to Charlotte County is that the CCSO will remain committed to our core values of Integrity, Professionalism, and Trust in order to keep Charlotte County the best and safest place to live, work, and play.

Be strong. Be safe. And never quit!

-Sheriff Bill Prummell
Chamber Community Connection

Each year in tandem with the budget development, a strategic plan is created to direct city resources to achieve our vision of preserving our small-town character while promoting diversity, economic development, and sustainability. Based on input received from residents City Council has established five strategic priorities: financial/economic sustainability, infrastructure sustainability, partnerships communication and collaboration, strategic communications positioning, and quality of life.

To achieve financial and economic stability, the City Council has set the following goals:

- Continue best management practices in financial planning and appropriate reserves policies to reach the national standard of 16.7% by increasing reserves by 0.5% or more per year.
- Identify sustainable spending policies and appropriate technologies to support business operations through operational audits and investments in new technology that connect the city with the community.
- Strengthen and diversify the city’s tax base to increase the commercial base through annexation by annexing a minimum of three properties per year over the next five years.
- Support Charlotte County efforts to facilitate and nurture high-priority economic development projects through monthly one on one meetings with Council and City Manager.
- Ensure the competitiveness of Punta Gorda’s business climate through continuous participation in the Economic Development Partnership, Punta Gorda and Charlotte County Chambers of Commerce and conducting studies as needed.
- Enhance workforce development and diversity of city staff through intentional succession planning and investment in employee training programs.
- Encourage strategic commercial development by implementing new Land Development Regulations and Codes.

As we continue to work through the fiscal year 2024 strategic planning process, we encourage feedback and new ideas from residents. Input can be sent to the citymgr@cityofpuntagordafl.com

USPCA Regional K9 Trials

In March, the United States Police Canine Association held their Regional K9 Trials in Coconut Creek, Florida. The Punta Gorda Police Department was represented by Officer Jessie Richards and his partner, K9 Sasha. We are proud to announce that they received multiple awards during this week-long competition. They took home 3rd place in the Outdoor Narcotics Detection division, 8th place overall in Narcotics Detection, and 3rd place in the Two-Person Narcotics Detection division. In addition, they bought home the Case of the Quarter Award for a track they conducted in 2022 that located a missing child.

We are proud of this team and glad they are here serving this community! Congratulations to Officer Richards and K9 Sasha!
Our county teams continue to focus on making progress on our Hurricane Ian recovery efforts and also implementing the strategic goals set forth by our Board of County Commissioners (BCC). We're working on delivering various capital projects, meeting expected levels of service and proper staffing resources that will improve quality of life for the community and have a positive impact of our local businesses. The BCC has reiterated the importance of addressing areas of housing, water quality and strengthening our overall resiliency. Even as we are prepped and ready for the upcoming June 1 hurricane season, our approach to resiliency is not just related to storm & disaster response, but to overall operational and community-engaged resiliency.

What's in store for our organization in the coming months.. Through April & May, we will have a few more Focus Area workshops with the BCC. We will be working with all county departments, elected officials, non-profits and other supporting agencies on next fiscal year's work plans & budgets for Administration to review. Late June & July includes some public hearings and we'll fine tune the budget as we'll get property value data around July 1. In September, we'll present the final proposed Oct 1, 2023 budget to the BCC for approval.

Now more than ever, it’s so important to stay coordinated and support each other as a community. In late March, the County BCC and the City of Punta Gorda Council held a Joint Meeting to discuss topics that included economic and tourism development, road, facility and utility infrastructure, annexation and marine projects. Even as the city and county are still recovering from Hurricane Ian, I know all involved appreciated being part of a forward-looking discussion about our shared future.

Administration and all of our county staff are dedicated to keep working with all of our community & business partners to advance our common goals. At the simplest level, we commit to continued support of our local businesses and restaurants, through the busy and slower phases of our visitor and business seasons.

The EDO is working with the Charlotte Community Foundation and Bob Meeder, founder of Pittsburgh Gateways and the Energy Innovation Center (EIC), on obtaining a $500,000 planning grant to bring an Innovation Center to Charlotte County. The EIC is very impressive. On the site of a long-closed trade school built in the 1930’s, EIC converted the 7 acre site with approx. 180,000 sf of building space into a living lab as trades can train on open fixtures throughout facility. The center houses 45 tenants plus 4 universities including Pitt and PSU. We envision a future Charlotte County facility partnering with local businesses and helping grow future businesses.

On the subject of grants, Kay Tracy and I attended a Regional Recovery Workshop in Fort Myers with representatives from federal and state agencies looking to place funds to help communities recover after Hurricane Ian. We presented 7 county projects and received positive feedback on several.

Every year a major commercial real estate brokerage company (LSI) hosts their annual Market Trends event to review and predict real estate trends. Charlotte County was shown as star in Southwest Florida as Lee and Collier Counties are starting to see a little market correction while Charlotte County continues to blast forward. In terms of residential communities, Charlotte County has 3 of top 4 fastest selling communities – Babcock Ranch #1, WestPort #3, and Heritage Landing #4. The commercial market was also on fire as all three markets – retail, industrial and office – showed increased occupancy and increased rental rates.

The county's Bayshore public parking lot is under construction near the western entrance to Sunseeker and should be completed early summer. While Sunseeker continues to acquire property as they have now acquired 9 acres across 41 from the resort. They don’t have any immediate plans, but as with everything associated with Sunseeker, it should be amazing.
Through the first 4 months of Fiscal Year 2023 Tourist Development Tax (TDT) collections are up 3.8% compared to the same timeframe for 2022. This is particularly impressive given the fact that nearly 25% of our hotel lodging inventory is still not operational following Hurricane Ian as well as several Charlotte County sports venues which has required us to cancel over a dozen events since the storm. While we know that many rooms were being utilized by recovery workers during this period, we’ve also continued to see significant demand in the leisure travel market.

Also, we recently received our visitor tracking research report for the first quarter of this fiscal year (Oct.-Dec. 2022) and following are results of some key performance indicators:

- # of visitors: 330,500 (13.8% increase)
- Total economic impact: $290,872,900 (20.7% increase)
- The average travel party staying in paid accommodations spent an average of $3,420 in our destination
- Lodging room nights: 322,500 (14.5% increase)
- Visitors average length of stay: 6.8 nights
- 98% of visitors were satisfied or very satisfied with their stay with 89% definitely planning to return

Obviously our marketing efforts are conducted with the goal of achieving the increases listed above. The majority of these efforts drive prospects to our website to inspire and hopefully convert those individual users to actual visitors. We rolled out a fully redesigned website in Jan. 2022 and through the first twelve months we have seen a 20% increase in user sessions, a 23% increase in page views and a 12% increase in session duration; all positive indicators that we expect are helping lead to increased visitation.

While approximately 15 sporting events had to be cancelled following the hurricane, we were able to start bringing some of them back in late December including the Collegiate Swimming Winter Training where the Centennial Park aquatic facility was able to host 4 teams between mid-December and mid-January. In addition, the APP Pickleball Punta Gorda Open returned Jan. 11-15 where over 750 athletes participated generating over $3.2 million in total economic impact and over 3,000 hotel room nights. Also, the Charlotte County Community Services Department worked hard to get the fields back to a safe operational status in order for the Snowbird Baseball Classic to return in 2023. This year’s edition featured 26 NCAA Division I and III schools during the four week event.

Lastly, the Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach Visitor & Convention Bureau would like to welcome Lois Croft as our new Public Relations Manager. Lois, who previously served as the regional director for the Southwest Florida chapters of the Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association, will be focusing a significant amount of her efforts on recruiting travel journalists, influencers and other media to the destination to educate them on what Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach has to offer prospective vacationers to our area.
Charlotte County Public Schools Superintendent Search

Charlotte County Public Schools is currently engaged in a pivotal search for its next superintendent, following the retirement announcement of Steve Dionisio, who served the district with distinction for 33 years. The school board is committed to finding a candidate who can effectively lead the district into a successful future, ensuring the continued growth and development of the schools and the community they serve.

In pursuit of a transparent and comprehensive selection process, the school board has partnered with the Florida School Board Association to discover the most qualified candidates from local, state, and national areas. This collaboration ensures that the chosen superintendent will have a proven record of leadership, innovation, and the ability to work effectively with the school board, staff, and community.

The job posting was open from February 17th to March 31st, receiving over 20 applications. The community is encouraged to review all applicant materials on the school district website at YourCharlotteSchools.net under the 'Superintendent Search' tab. The school board will advance the search by selecting semi-finalists, who will provide video and written responses to five key questions, also accessible for community review.

On April 25th, during the school board workshop, the board will narrow the selection down to a group of finalists, who will be invited for in-person interviews on May 4th and 5th. We are thrilled to invite the community to view in the in-person interviews on May 4th at the district office that will be held during the day as well as the evening ‘Meet and Greet’ where the community can interact with and ask questions of the finalists. More information including times and location address can be found on the district website.

The school board will select the next superintendent at the May 9th, school board meeting with a projected start date of mid-June. The school board aims to find a highly qualified and dedicated leader who will work tirelessly to ensure the continued growth, development, and achievement of the schools and their students.

CEO JAMES W. PARISH, P.E.
Progress at PGD continues with strong visitor traffic for the first quarter of 2023. Passengers are enjoying the new charger-equipped seating at the Bailey Terminal, which is also more aesthetically pleasing, sturdy and comfortable.

Airport management also continues to make strides in improving the flow of auto traffic at the airport’s main entrance, with the new turn lane off northbound Piper Road expected to be completed in April. This improvement is designed to speed up the drop-off and pick-up process, especially in the afternoons when both are happening simultaneously. We’ve also added two new shuttle buses to our fleet to help with the efficient transport of passenger to and from the long-term parking lots.

Behind the scenes, the Airport Authority Board is about to select a Design/Build partner for the Bailey Terminal Expansion. Please stay tuned, as we will engage the public to help us prioritize the most important aspects of the expansion.

Beyond the Bailey Terminal, construction continues on post-Hurricane repairs and new hangars for our private and business tenants. We also plan to launch a new website “look and feel” in April, which will continue to house important information about our projects, opportunities and activities. Remember to sign up for our monthly e-newsletter, the PGD BUZZ at www.FlyPGD.com/buzz and follow us on Facebook for on-the-fly updates.
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12th Annual Integrity Golf Classic
Benefiting The Junior Leadership Charlotte Program

Bar Sponsor $1000
foursome, logo on banner, bring popup tent - 1 available

Eagle Sponsor $650
foursome, logo on banner & hole sign

Birdie Sponsor $450
foursome & logo on banner

Par Sponsor $350
foursome & business name on banner

Hole Sponsor $200
run a game, hole sign & popup tent

Hole Sign $100
hole sign

$75.00 per player

Includes: one round with cart, breakfast, buffet lunch, 2 beverage tickets, raffle entry & prizes

Saturday, May 27, 2023
St. Andrews South Golf Club
1901 Deborah Dr., Punta Gorda

For info: 941-627-2222 JJoannes@charlottecountychamber.org

*Hole in One Sponsor
Title Sponsor
Putting Contest Sponsor

*1st Hole in One wins
12th Annual Integrity Golf Classic
Benefiting The Junior Leadership Charlotte Program

Prizes: 1st, 2nd & 3rd Place

$75.00 per player
Includes: one round with cart, breakfast, buffet lunch, 2 beverage tickets, raffle entry & cash prizes

Player #1 __________________________
Phone: ____________________________
Email: ____________________________

Player #2 __________________________
Phone: ____________________________
Email: ____________________________

Player #3 __________________________
Phone: ____________________________
Email: ____________________________

Player #4 __________________________
Phone: ____________________________
Email: ____________________________

Name on Card: ____________________________
Credit Card: ____________________________
Expiration Date: ___________ CVV: ___________
Amount: ____________________________
Billing Address: ____________________________
City, State & Zip: ____________________________
Email & Phone: ____________________________

Payment due with entry

Make Checks Payable to:
Charlotte Chamber Community Foundation
2702 Tamiami Trail, Port Charlotte, FL. 33952
Leadership Charlotte Class of 2023 presents

**Shaaderic Shindig**

**June 3, 2023 - Charlotte Harbor Event & Conference Center**

Hurricane Ian has taken a drastic toll on many members of our community. We believe it is vital to support the seniors through several of our area nonprofits.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GoldMember</th>
<th>MOJO</th>
<th>Mr. Bigglesworth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>$5,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>$2,500</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,500</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Tickets (2 tables of 8)</td>
<td>12 Tickets (1.5 tables of 8)</td>
<td>8 Tickets (1 table of 8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onstage presentation</td>
<td>DJ Recognition</td>
<td>Logo on Promos &amp; Program Ad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DJ Recognition</td>
<td>Logo on Promos &amp; Program Ad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logo on Promos &amp; Program Ad</td>
<td>$400 Casino Fun Money</td>
<td>$300 Casino Fun Money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$500 Casino Fun Money</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yeah Baby, Yeah!</th>
<th>Foxy Cleopatra</th>
<th>Mini Me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>$750</strong></td>
<td><strong>$500</strong></td>
<td><strong>$250</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Tickets (1/2 table of 8)</td>
<td>2 Tickets</td>
<td>1 Ticket</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logo on Promos &amp; Program Ad</td>
<td>Recognition in Program</td>
<td>Recognition in Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$200 Casino Fun Money</td>
<td>$100 Casino Fun Money</td>
<td>$100 Casino Fun Money</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We are supporting:

Meals on Wheels, Drug Free Charlotte County, Douglas T. Jacobson Veterans, Leadership Charlotte Endowment Fund and Junior Leadership Charlotte
Casino DANCING DJ
Photo Booth BUFFET DINNER
RAFFLES SILENT AUCTION

JUNE 3 6-11 p.m.

$100 per ticket
Purchase tickets by scanning the QR code or by visiting www.tinyurl.com/ShagSignUp

Charlotte Harbor Event & Conference Center
75 Taylor St., Punta Gorda, FL 33950
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SAVE THE DATE
Country for a Cause
featuring
The BoogieMen
Sat. 30 Sept. 2023 6:00 P.M.
Charlotte Harbor Event Center

Please Join Us
September 30, 2023 at 6:00 P.M.
Charlotte Harbor Event and Conference Center
75 Taylor Street, Punta Gorda
for an evening of dinner and dancing with the
The BoogieMen

Tickets: $125 each
Silent Auction - Raffles - Cash Bar
For more information and
Sponsorship opportunities
call Barbara 941-368-8863 or
email bwastart@volunteercare.org
https://volunteercare.org/country-for-a-cause-2023/

The Virginia B. Andes Volunteer Community Clinic is a private 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization. The organization is registered with the state of Florida Registration number. A copy of the official registration and financial information may be obtained from the Division of Consumer Services by calling 800-435-7352 within the state. Registration does not imply endorsement, approval, or recommendation by state.