

Administrator's Update for 4/24/09
By Roger Baltz

On April 14, the Board of County Commissioners approved the inter-local agreement between North Port, Venice and Charlotte County allowing for all jurisdictions to share inspection and plans review staff. This will provide assistance during emergency events such as hurricanes. Our Building Construction Services (BCS) Department played a leading role in moving this concept and agreement forward.

Our Board of County Commission (BOCC) staff have continued to be heavily involved in preparing and presenting performance based budget data as part of our budget workshops which are now well underway. We are roughly half way through our workshops and have a goal of finding \$10 million in reductions from BOCC operations. Core services, staffing levels, and revenue producing ideas are among the topics which are under evaluation. We are well on our way to meeting our reduction goal. The budget workshops are public meetings and agendas and back up information are available on our County web site.

Our County Transit Division has four bus wrap advertisements in production at this time. These wraps will each bring in revenues at \$250 per bus per month. As part of our efforts to produce more revenues to assist in meeting our budget challenges this year we are exploring these types of actions.

Our 2009 sales tax projects are moving forward. We recently received proposals to design the sales tax sidewalks countywide. This project will consist of all aspects of the design, public meetings, bidding, acquisition of permits, and construction management for sidewalks.

The Florida Paddlers Association has volunteered to assist the County in cutting and piling Brazilian Pepper trees on Thornton Key Preserve. The preserve is one of the properties purchased with Conservation Charlotte funds. The Paddlers Association has "adopted" Thornton Key as their worksite and named themselves "The Friends of Thornton Key". The group arrived by boat toting lobbers, tree trimmers, gloves, and pruners and set to work immediately. The County's Aquatics crew used chainsaws to remove large Pepper-trees, and the group hauled and piled the debris.

The Punta Gorda Garden Club has finished installing new plant beds at the Punta Gorda Library. The Garden Club and the County signed a partnership agreement to use the volunteer services of the Club to plant and maintain the Library's landscape beds.

Our County Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources Department programmed our 45th Annual Easter Egg Hunt at the Charlotte Sports Park. Kids of all ages enjoyed an egg hunt, face painting and snow cones, as well as baseball

excitement from the Tampa Bay Rays and Charlotte Stone Crabs. Toys R Us sponsored the Golden Egg for each age group and the Charlotte County Sheriff's Department also participated with the Crash Test Dummies and McGruff the Crime Dog.

Our Parks, Recreation & Cultural Resources Department also received its first reimbursement check of \$36,125 from the Department of Environmental Protection for its participation in the Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program (FRDAP). The grant program is contributing \$200,000 toward improvements at Hathaway Park. The upgrades include construction of additional parking, an ADA accessible picnic pavilion, nature trails and open space for small festivals and outdoor events.

Push Cart food vendors are now located at Englewood Beach and Port Charlotte Beach Parks. The new program provides small businesses the opportunity to capitalize on two of Charlotte County's finest attractions during the tourist season and enhance our visitor's experience.

The Historic Charlotte County Courthouse rehabilitation project has won a 2009 Statewide Preservation Award from the Florida Trust for Historic Preservation. The nomination was submitted by the project architect Thomas Hammer of Rowe Architects in Tampa.

Charlotte County Emergency Management has begun its annual tour of Charlotte County schools, holding hour-long assemblies for all fourth graders to discuss family hurricane preparedness and planning for pets in emergencies.