

Administrator's Update for 10/30/09
By Roger Baltz

Our Charlotte County Public Safety 211 has achieved accreditation with the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems (AIRS). AIRS accreditation assesses the ability of an Information and Referral program, such as Charlotte 211, to demonstrate full compliance with identified standards. The accreditation process considers more than 200 distinct operational components and includes a detailed onsite review. AIRS accreditation is considered a benchmark for excellence for Information and Referral programs by both national and state entities.

Commissioner Duffy, Assistant Administrator Kelly Shoemaker, Assistant Administrator Ray Sandrock, representatives from the City of Punta Gorda, and I attended the reopening of the renovated Punta Gorda Library. Speakers at the ceremony included Commissioner Adam Cummings, Library Supervisor Roxane Bennett, Hank Bauman of the Friends of the Punta Gorda Library organization and John Jackson, Director of Charlotte County Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources. The extensive renovations include a new, more efficient circulation area, new shelving, and new carpeting. The renovations are a culmination of earlier improvements which began in Jan. 2008, and were paid for in part by a significant contribution from the Friends of the Punta Gorda Library organization.

The Charlotte County Industrial Development Authority (IDA) held its annual meetings and elected new officers: Lane Diedrick, Chair; Todd Rebol, Vice Chair; Rob Humpel, Secretary; Cathy Sanders, Assistant Secretary/Treasurer. Other items discussed at this meeting included the recovery bond application process and new incentives.

County Housing Manager Bob Hebert met with Engineer/Architect and Facilities staff to finalize plan changes to the Still Water Home (formerly known as Restoration Roads), a project that is funded through the Hurricane Housing Recovery Program. Plans should be completed and ready for bid spec development in the next two weeks. Talks continue with potential partners for the operations of the facility once it has been completed.

Some 475 rain barrels have been purchased by residents over the last twelve months through our Charlotte County Extension Services' Florida Yards and Neighborhoods Rain Barrel Program. Estimating that each barrel is filled at least once, rain barrel program participants have saved Charlotte County and surrounding areas a minimum of 26,125 gallons of water. Without using rain barrels, those gallons of water would previously have come from potable or irrigation sources, and would have fed into surrounding waterways as storm water runoff. Rain barrels can be used to water landscape plants, clean yard tools, fill bird baths and water features, and keep compost piles moist.

The pre-construction meeting was held for Bid #09-309, Englewood Library Renovation/Repair. This is to secure the services of a Contractor to furnish all materials, labor, equipment, and incidentals required to successfully complete the remediation/waterproofing renovation of the Charlotte County Englewood Library.

Our Tourism Office hosted the inaugural organizational meeting of the Charlotte Harbor Hospitality Association. Representatives from a variety of lodging facilities elected officers and moved to legally formalize the association. The group's purpose is to stimulate the lodging industry in order to provide support and assistance to the tourism industry.

Tourism staff also attended the Travel, Events and Management in Sports (TEAMS) Conference & Expo Oct. 13-16 in New Orleans, La. Staff met one-on-one with more than 20 sports event owners including representatives of youth basketball, soccer, baseball, karate and canoe and kayaking. These sessions generate leads for future business and provide a valuable opportunity to create or maintain relationships with key decision makers as well as raise awareness of Charlotte County as a sporting venue.

Our new Integrated Voice Response system was implemented in September and we are seeing a number of our utility customers paying their bills by phone with the automated system. This new facet of our billing system allows our customers to pay their bill over the phone 24/7, just like the EZ Pay web-based system introduced a few years ago

The Charlotte County-Punta Gorda Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) staff completed the scope of services to undertake the MPO's 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). When approval is received, the MPO's consultant will begin updating the LRTP, which will identify the area's transportation needs and develop a prioritized plan to address them.