

Ribbon-cutting marks Family Services Center opening

By Hector Flores

The Charlotte County Commission commemorated the opening of the Human Services Department's Family Services Center with a ribbon-cutting ceremony Thursday at the facility on Gibraltar Street in Port Charlotte.

The building is Phase 1 of the complex, which was funded by the 1% local option sales tax approved by voters in November 2014. Phase 2, which will be funded by the sales tax extension approved by voters in November 2020, is in the design phase and will be located adjacent to the first phase.

The first phase of the center houses county partner agencies, including The Boys & Girls Club of Charlotte County, Charlotte Behavioral Health Care, Charlotte County Sheriff's Office, Department of Health, Drug Free Charlotte County, Jewish Family and Children's Service and the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services. The Human's Services Department's 211 call center is also operated there.

Phase 2 will house the Area Agency on Aging, Healthy Start, the Gulf Coast Partnership, Lutheran Services of Florida, United Way of Charlotte County and Valerie's House.

Human Services Director Carrie Walsh told the gathering the center was "made possible by our community and leaders declaring their unwavering commitment to this vision. These new facilities are a bold reflection of that commitment. The Family Services Center is a collaboration among government and non-profit agencies working together to strengthen the fabric of our community by empowering people to help themselves and each other."

Commissioner Joe Tiseo said, "Our policies impact not just the financial condition of the county, but more importantly, we can act to improve on the human condition. The Family Services Center represents the ability of our community to find the resources they need, not to become dependent, but to become self-sufficient. It's been a long journey to see the tangible results of the project voted on by the taxpayers and delivered here today."

Commission Chairman Bill Truex said, "It's not just a coincidence that we're doing this the day before Thanksgiving. We have so much to be grateful for in our community. Human capital is a big asset for this community. And this facility and all those that are going to bring services to it will bring that level of human capital up and help them find that personal experience that will make them a better person and give them more pride."

To view a video and photos of the ceremony, visit the county Facebook page at www.facebook.com/CharlotteCountyFlorida.

For information about the Family Services Center, visit www.CharlotteCountyFL.gov/departments/human-services.

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