

## **Charlotte County appreciates its employees' service**

By Hector Flores

Charlotte County proudly observed Employee Appreciation Day on Friday. The more than 1,200 county employees who strive to deliver exceptional service every day are committed public servants and I am proud to be their colleague.

Of course, appreciation of our employees doesn't happen just once a year. We have numerous programs designed to convey our admiration for their service, commitment and professionalism throughout the year. Next week, we have a ceremony during Tuesday's County Commission meeting to present years of service awards to 46 employees who have worked for the county for five, 10, 15, 20, 25 and even 30 years. Their combined service to Charlotte County is a remarkable 430 years.

Administration also honors employees with its Exceptional Service Award, presented to staff whose work is recognized by customers and fellow employees. Hundreds of staff have received an ESA since it was created nearly three years ago as part of our revision of the commission's strategic focus areas. That effort included an update to the county's mission, vision and values statements. The ESAs reflect the new mission statement: Delivering Exceptional Service.

Our employee intranet site, Connect@Work, has a feature called Kudos Corner, where exceptional service is recognized directly by employees' peers and supervisors. I regularly visit Kudos Corner to read the comments. Here are a few recent ones.

"Carol Jo is to be commended on her knowledge and willingness to go above and beyond to help me, a senior citizen," wrote a patron about Library Technician Carol Barger.

"Shout out to Sean Hunt and Drew Buckner for going above and beyond. (I) wanted to thank them for coming in on a Sunday to paint the ceiling of the coaches shower in the minor (league) clubhouse," wrote a Community Services Project Coordinator Jeremy Wilkerson about his staff, who reworked their schedules to accommodate the Tampa Bay Rays' minor league coaches.

I know Jeremy is a frequent flyer to Kudos Corner, on both the giving and receiving ends. He and his colleagues, John Whitney and Mike Cunningham, received kudos this week from Recreation Supervisor Jill Boyd for their efforts to prepare Charlotte Sports Park for spring training.

Real Estate Services Manager Stephen Kipa shared a compliment submitted by a resident about his colleague Senior Real Estate Specialist Jeannine Fullerton: "Thank you so much for your help. I truly wish everyone shared your dedication and professionalism; you have been great to work with."

Last month, a grateful resident cited Fire & EMS staff for their treatment of his wife on an emergency medical services call: "My wife became very ill while at home and neither of us were comfortable trying to get her to our vehicle and to the hospital. Shortly after dialing 911, the team ... was at our house and evaluating the situation. The crews' caring and professional attitude put both my wife and myself at ease during this stressful time. They worked seamlessly together and had her on the way to the hospital in no time. I would like to recognize them for their excellent work and compassion."

The gratitude expressed to Lieutenant Felix Hernandez, Firefighter/EMT Michael Garrity, Firefighter/EMT Nicholas Bost, Firefighter/EMT Anthony Cardona, and Firemedic Caleb Van Helden in that letter makes me so proud of them. There's a reason our emergency services routinely get ratings in the high 90s in our biennial citizen surveys.

It's often noted that local government is best suited to meet the needs of its citizens because it is closest to them. My leadership team and I continuously stress the importance of service because it is the reason we're here. On Employee Appreciation Day, I shared with all my colleagues my gratitude for their service and pride in all they have accomplished on behalf of our citizens.

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