

Charlotte County update for 1/8/20

County Centennial commemoration planning

By Ray Sandrock, Charlotte County administrator

While Charlotte County's Centennial is still more than a year away, planning for commemorative events is well underway. In fact, last year, the County Commission approved the renaming of North Charlotte Regional Park to Centennial Park and when development plans are submitted later this year West Port in Murdock Village will propose renaming O'Donnell Boulevard to Centennial Boulevard.

Charlotte County was created on April 23, 1921, when DeSoto County was divided into five counties, Charlotte, Hardee, Highlands, Glades and DeSoto. In addition to events planned for the Centennial weekend, the county will be organizing activities with a Centennial theme throughout the year to raise awareness and appreciation of our history. We've talked to our school district colleagues about organizing art contests and helping to create Centennial curriculum so our students can learn about their county's founding and growth.

Last October, we held the latest in a series of outreach meetings with the public to provide information about our Centennial planning and ways we can partner with individuals, organizations, government agencies and businesses. The next planning meeting is scheduled for 5:30 p.m., Jan. 30 at Mid-County Regional Library, 2050 Forrest Nelson Blvd., in Port Charlotte. The meeting is open to the public.

We launched a Centennial website, www.CharlotteCounty100.com, and have a Facebook page set up, www.facebook.com/CharlotteCounty100. The website serves as a source of historical information about the county and features a central calendar of events submitted by entities organizing commemorations. People can also sign up to receive emails about the Centennial.

In the first Census after the county was created, its population was just over 4,000 people. By 2021, it's likely to exceed 190,000. Like the Spanish explorers who arrived here in the 1500s, our history has been one of people discovering Charlotte County. Many who find it wind up making it their home. Decade after decade has seen new communities spring up from paper plans and a few fade away, remembered only by their names.

Those of us here now have the opportunity to celebrate that history and a responsibility to honor the hardships and sacrifices of those who came before us. I invite you to join us in doing so by attending a Centennial planning meeting (if not this one, then the next) and adding your vision for what the celebration should include. Centennials happen only once. Let's make ours special.

Ray Sandrock is the Charlotte County administrator. Readers may reach him at Raymond.Sandrock@CharlotteCountyFL.gov.