

# Charlotte County Weekly Department Highlights

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## Community Services

### Harold Avenue Recreation Center

Harold Avenue Youth Basketball League is on Christmas Break this week! Our Facility will be holding Youth and Adult open gyms for Basketball and Volleyball while we're on break. Harold Avenue has the privilege of being open on Christmas Eve to support and encourage healthy lifestyles in our community. We will be open from 9am-3:30 pm offering Table Tennis and Pickleball to our patrons. We will also be open on December 26th with Youth and Adult open gyms so people can burn off some of those Holiday calories!

### Port Charlotte Beach Recreation Center and Pool

Saturday was an all-day wedding with 125 guests. The wedding ceremony was held outside on the deck; cocktail party to follow in our Room A, then the big dinner and reception held in Room B.

For the week of 12/16 to 12/22, Port Charlotte Beach Pool had 94 paid admissions, was visited by 49 pass holders and had 103 water aerobics participants.

### South County Regional Park Pool

For the week of 12/16 through 12/23, South County Regional Park Pool had 74 paid admissions, was visited by 56 pass holders and had 37 water aerobics participants.

## Extension Services

- Newspaper Article for Dec. 14 – "Wild dates in Charlotte County"
- Babcock NOPC - P&Z Conference Room – Dec. 14
- Staff Christmas Lunch – Dec. 15
- "Common Holiday Plant Care" – Punta Gorda Isles Civic Association – Dec. 15
- GI-BMP Training – Dec. 16
- Friends for Extension Annual Meeting – Dec. 17
- UF/IFAS Self-Evaluations due – Dec. 18

## Natural Resources

The ongoing exotic treatment work continued this week. Approximately 10 acres of cogon grass was treated on Shell Creek Preserve. The incursion of cogon grass at Shell Creek has been ongoing since 2008. Cogon grass was originally brought to the state as a bank stabilizer and functions well in that capacity due to prolific growth and reproduction. Unfortunately without natural controls it can dominate our native plant communities and be quite costly to treat.

The effort to permit the next phase of the Blueway Trails system continues. Staff has already received approval from DEP and is currently communicating with US Coast Guard and Army Corps of Engineers for final approval and permitting. The Blueway Trails system is a wide ranging network of kayak and canoe trails along our coastal waterways. This trail not only provides an excellent opportunity to exercise and enjoy our beautiful native coastal communities but also offers ample opportunity for everyone to enjoy a wide variety of our bird population, migratory and resident.

## Parks

- Supported new floor installation at Englewood Beach with \$800 and 8 man hours
- Updated & visually verified County asset list for Park division
- Mowed weeds, grass & bushes along Hathaway Parks horse trails
- Submitted purchase requisitions for all trees to be trimmed at 34 parks, approximately \$70,000

## **Human Services**

The Senior Services Division staff received a total of 136 gifts to distribute to local seniors in Charlotte County this holiday season. 80 gifts were received from the NBC-2 Giving Tree, 32 from the "Women on Mission," and 24 from OCEAN (Our Charlotte Elder Affairs Network). All gifts have been delivered before Christmas to brighten the holidays of many seniors without the support of family or friends in the area.

David Rockow, Assistant Veteran Services Officer, dressed up as Santa Claus and participated in the American Legion Riders Christmas present delivery. He delivered Christmas cheer to 7 families who would otherwise go without presents for the holidays.

Terry Keene, Assistant Veteran Services Officer in the Englewood area, was contacted by the caretaker of a senior female Veteran. The Veteran had fallen several times and needed a specific type of walker for stability. After contact with several helping organizations a walker was located and delivered to the 101 year old Navy Veteran of WWII.

## **Tourism**

Little Gasparilla Island will shine in the national spotlight again when HGTV's Island Life airs a second episode featuring the Southwest Florida barrier island and Realtor Sue Paskert of Palermo Real Estate Professionals. The initial episode, aired on Dec. 20. The second episode will air on New Year's Day at 7:30 p.m. and is about a single mom and her twin daughters moving from Lakeland to the island.

<http://www.hgtv.com/shows/island-life>

An HGTV crew spent two weeks in July on Little Gasparilla Island shooting two episodes for the popular series. They worked with Realtor Sue Paskert, Palermo Real Estate Professionals, featured in both episodes. The Charlotte County Film Office assisted the show producer with providing film footage of the area and local contacts. The crew of eight spent two weeks at Hideaway Bay Beach Condominiums on Little Gasparilla Island.

In the television industry, reality TV has a number of sub-categories. For example, shows about buying beachfront property, or living on an island, are in a category called fantasy destination programming.

About the series, HGTV says "Most people only fantasize about living on an island, but we'll prove that an Island Life is possible for anyone. Tropical dreamers will be shown island properties that fit into any budget, from ultra-affordable to totally outrageous. We'll follow everyday families in search of their own slice of paradise, and prove that fantasy can be reality."