

Administrator's Update for 11/23/11
By Ray Sandrock, County Administrator

Twelve years ago I was searching for a new location for my family to settle and call home. We were moving from Pittsburgh Pennsylvania after selling the family business. I was looking at a few select areas in the south east region. One of areas was Punta Gorda in Charlotte County, Florida. As it turned out Charlotte County was the spot of choice. One of the deciding factors was that Money magazine had rated this area as the best small cities to live in the south. I was very intrigued by this great rating and wanted to know more. As I researched I found out that safety, a great school system and basic quality of life were some of the highlights.

Twelve years later I am very thankful for our move to Charlotte County. I watched and participated as this community completed a miraculous recovery from Hurricane Charley. This is a true testimony to the fortitude of the citizens of Charlotte County. Our community sustained over \$150 million dollars in debris and government building damage.

Since 2008 we have experienced declining property values of approximately 50 percent, which has challenged us all. For the county, the impact has been a reduction in property revenues of over \$100 million dollars from 2008 to 2011. The citizens of Charlotte County, through public meetings and surveys, helped focus where our limited revenues should be directed. We again have weathered a different type of storm.

While we still have some financial challenges ahead, I believe we have positioned ourselves well.

Over the past couple of years the focus has been on bringing new jobs to the county. Private and public parties formed a working group to identify and bring to the table a new and enhanced incentive toolbox to entice new employers to our area. The citizens of Charlotte County spoke loudly by passing the ballot that gave commissioners the power to exempt ad valorem taxes. That was a smart decision, and we can now watch it pay off.

These are all the reasons why Charlotte County received such high marks twelve years ago and why we continue to be recognized today. More recently we have been recognized by Sail Magazine as "One of the 10 Best Places to Sail," "America's Best Healthy Places to Retire" by the U.S News and World Report, Money magazine recognizes Charlotte County as the "Best Place to Retire" as well as the "Best Place to live in the South."

While we are still in difficult economic times, we have a lot to be positive about and I am so very thankful to a part of Charlotte County Government, but more importantly to be your neighbor in this great community.