

Administrator's Update for 2/29/12
By Ray Sandrock, County Administrator

In addition to major league spring training, collegiate baseball is here with the Fourth Annual Snowbird Baseball Classic. Thirteen division I and nineteen division III colleges will be participating in the tournament which runs through March 17. Play will be on three Charlotte County baseball fields: Charlotte High School, North Charlotte Regional Park and South County Regional Park. Two special doubleheaders will be held at the Charlotte Sports Park. Our Charlotte County tourism bureau reports that last year's tournament generated approximately \$3.8 million in direct expenditures for Charlotte County. For more info on the games visit www.snowbirdbaseball.com.

Broadband initiative

Last week the Suncoast Technology Forum, a technology organization that works within Charlotte, Manatee and Sarasota counties, held their monthly meeting for the first time ever in Charlotte County. Over sixty people from area technology businesses and educational institutions attended the luncheon meeting. An overview of Charlotte County's proposed broadband initiative was presented by John Honker, president of Magellan Advisors and Ray Desjardins, senior division manager for Charlotte County information technology. Charlotte County is currently evaluating the opportunities that a community broadband network would present to the area, through strategic investments in fiberoptic infrastructure. This network would serve the local business community with advanced fiber-based broadband services at competitive prices. The County would not sell services directly, but rather utilize its extensive County-owned fiber-optic network to enable local telecommunications providers to extend their reach and deliver new fiber-rich services, in a model known as "open-access." The network would also provide a significant economic development tool to attract new business and develop new industry sectors within the County. The Parkside district is currently slated as a proposed pilot area for the project.

The county is currently seeking input from local businesses to gain a more thorough understanding of broadband access, availability and speeds. This input will provide important information for the broadband planning processes, which will allow us to better serve the needs of the community. The brief online survey can be completed at the following web address:
www.charlottefl.com/broadbandsurvey.

Sportsmanship recognized

The youth basketball leagues at the Harold Avenue Recreation Center in Port Charlotte recently completed the winter season with the second round playoffs and championship games last week. Three division teams walked away with championship trophies. For the first time in league history a new award was presented to the teams and coaches that demonstrated the best overall sportsmanship throughout the season. Sportsmanship is an essential component of team sports and encourages maturity and respect, which fosters positive skills for handling difficult situations in daily life. The awards drew many surprised faces as the young players walked away with larger trophies than those given out for winning the divisional championships.

Emergency Drill

Last week the Department of Homeland Security conducted an exercise at the Charlotte County Emergency Operations Center (EOC). Representatives from Charlotte County and City of Punta Gorda departments, as well as agencies outside county and city government participated in the exercise. These departments and agencies would be called upon to staff the EOC during an emergency of significant impact on the County that requires an immediate and effective response to serve our residents and visitors. The exercise tested the ability of the EOC to effectively gather and distribute important information, secure resources both locally and from outside the county, and support our first responders. Although important lessons are learned during every exercise and training event, evaluators were impressed with our readiness and gave high praise for how well we worked together and with other entities. It was noted that our performance exceeded those in many of the other exercises they have conducted. Participants and evaluators alike agreed that Charlotte County is well-trained and ready to address the many issues that arise during a disaster.