

**Administrator's Update for 12/31/14**  
**By Ray Sandrock, County Administrator**

Charlotte County saw so many amazing happenings in 2014. Look back with me on a few of the many reasons why Charlotte County is a great place to live:

The Charlotte Sports Park had a great year, hosting the Tampa Bay Rays sixth year of spring training, Charlotte Stone Crabs regular season, the annual Snowbird Baseball Classic and many other events. The park itself won a major accolade thanks to the voting public: Port Charlotte and the Charlotte Sports Park were voted as "Best Spring Training City" for the USA Today and 10Best lists. Baseball fans, our county residents and visitors pulled together and we garnered more votes than any of the other 19 spring training cities selected to run for the award.

In March, Cheney Brothers held a groundbreaking ceremony at their new distribution center site near the Punta Gorda airport. The event was well attended, with the list including Governor Rick Scott and the CEO of Cheney Bros. Byron Russell. The distribution center will bring hundreds of new jobs to Charlotte County.

In April 11, 2014 the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) issued a Conceptual Approval Environmental Resource Permit for Murdock Village. This permit was sought by Charlotte County to further the marketability of the Murdock Village area. The permit is an assurance that for 20 years (the duration of the permit) the stormwater management design and environmental concepts will meet applicable rule criteria for issuance of further permits by SWFWMD for Murdock Village area projects.

The Cookie House received a historical marker this year at its current location in Cedar Point Environmental Park. Originally built in 1931 by the founder of the Bass Biological Laboratory, John Foster Bass, Jr., the building served as his personal office and laboratory. The Bass Biological Laboratory inspired the Cape Haze Marine Lab, which eventually moved to Sarasota and later became the renowned Mote Marine Laboratory. The special log construction of the Cookie House is rare—this is the only known example in Florida. Free historic tours are being scheduled for 2015, on Jan. 24, Feb. 21, and March 21. For information about the tours, contact the Historical Center at 941.629.PAST (7278).

2014 was the tenth anniversary of Hurricane Charley, a major influence on the entire county. Much was lost in that hurricane, yet the rebuilding provided some opportunities for improvements throughout Charlotte County. We were thankful this year to have a quiet hurricane season in the tropics.

The Board of County Commissioners now recognizes Combat Wounded Veterans at their monthly fourth-Tuesday board meetings—the intent is to recognize those Charlotte County individuals who, in the defense of their country, sustained injuries from combat and were awarded the Purple Heart. The first Charlotte County Combat Wounded Veteran Recognition award was given in June to Walter R. Levasseur MSG, US Army Retired for his service to our country and his Purple Heart honor. For nomination information call Charlotte County Veteran Services at 941.764.5579.

At the November general election, the voters approved a six-year extension to the one percent local option sales tax. The list of projects selected for these funds includes a veterans memorial park, school security improvements, and road and public safety projects. Visit [www.CharlotteCountyFL.gov](http://www.CharlotteCountyFL.gov) and click the "1% Local Option Sales Tax" link in the Hot Topics on the left.

More households can now watch our government access television station CC-TV, now available on both CenturyLink Prism TV and Comcast. CC-TV provides viewers with live broadcasts of meetings as well as previously recorded meetings and more. Find CC-TV on CenturyLink Prism TV channel 96 and on Comcast channel 20 (in some areas south of Punta Gorda the broadcast is on Comcast channel 97). The broadcast is also streamed live online and the schedule is posted weekly on the CC-TV web pages at [www.CharlotteCountyFL.gov](http://www.CharlotteCountyFL.gov). Call CC-TV at 941.623.1090 for more information.

The end of the year was capped with the approval of the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) by the Department of Interior through the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. The HCP was our final step in acquiring a 30-year permit that will allow for the streamlining of residential and commercial development and help owners of scrub-jay identified land to develop it without paying excessive fees.

### **Looking ahead – Edgewater Drive**

The Edgewater Drive “Phase Two” project will widen Edgewater Drive between Harbor and Midway Boulevards to a four-lane roadway designed to better serve the central portion of the county and accommodate traffic growth. This project includes replacing three bridges (at the West Spring Lake, East Spring Lake, and Sunrise Waterways) and extended road closures. Next month a public information meeting will be held on Jan. 27, 2015 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the Port Charlotte Beach Complex to talk about the project and associated road closures. Staff will be answering any questions the public may have.