

Administrator's Update for 10/28/15

## **Cheney Brothers opening a county milestone**

By Ray Sandrock, Charlotte County administrator

Gov. Rick Scott attended Thursday's opening of the \$40 million Cheney Brothers Distribution Center in Charlotte County. The ceremony featured county commissioners, Punta Gorda City Council members, state legislators, local business leaders, and Cheney Brothers executives and distribution center employees.

Cheney Brothers CEO Byron Russell told the hundreds of attendees he was "honored and humbled" for his company to join the Charlotte County community. Russell cited the assistance of local businessmen Chris Evans, who called Russell when he learned of the company's plans for a new distribution center, and Bruce Lashley, who facilitated tours and meetings between Cheney executives and local officials.

The 345,000-square-foot facility already employs 350 workers, with long-term plans for up to 900. Charlotte County sold the Cheney site – which had been used for temporary housing after Hurricane Charley— to the company for \$2.5 million, arranged state grants for infrastructure and shepherded the complex project through zoning and permitting.

The opening of the distribution center gives the county a high-profile economic development win and should prompt more companies to look at Charlotte County when considering expanding or relocating their businesses. We welcome Cheney Brothers and wish the company and its new employees the best of luck.

### **F18 Americas**

Nearly 60 sailors from Canada, Argentina, the Netherlands and a half-dozen U.S. states competed last week in the 2015 Zhib F18 Americas Championship based at Port Charlotte Beach Park. Charlotte County co-sponsored the event with organizer Charlotte Harbor Regatta, a non-for-profit organization. In addition to the community services department hosting the event at the beach, the utility department supplied bottled water for the sailors and volunteers, the Fire/EMS department used it as a live training exercise and the Charlotte Harbor Visitor and Convention Bureau provided direct grant funding and helped arrange a Florida Sports Foundation grant for the regatta.

The VCB collected survey information from competitors, most of whom were in the county for more than a week, to determine the economic impact of the event. The bureau also arranged for visiting photojournalists to view the event and will track coverage of it in national and international media.

### **Tourism conference**

Charlotte County continues to be a popular destination for outdoor enthusiasts and to keep the destination fresh in the minds of outdoor writers, photographers and broadcast journalists, VCB staff

attended the Southeastern Outdoor Press Association Annual Conference in Eufaula, Ala. Oct. 13-17. The conference will return to Florida in 2016 and in order to generate excitement for conference attendees to visit the Sunshine State, the visitor bureau partnered with the Beaches of Fort Myers and Sanibel and Central Florida, location of next year's conference, to make a strong presence throughout the conference. This included exhibiting together during the tourism showcase, sponsoring a post-dinner event, and producing an interactive display. The display was a large container of sand with mementos representing the three Florida destinations. When someone picked out an item, they had to guess how it related to Florida. This interaction encouraged dialogue about the destinations. Items representing Charlotte County were a scrubby sponge cut out in the letter "J" (for scrub jays), crimson drums (for red drum, aka redfish), a Matchbox Corvette (for Muscle Car City), a toy ATV (representing Florida Tracks and Trails) and a tube of toothpaste (for fossilized sharks teeth).

### **Cemetery protection**

The Charlotte County Historical Center recently held a cemetery resource protection training workshop to educate citizens on how to protect and use cemeteries as cultural resources. A Florida Public Archaeology Network representative demonstrated the proper care and cleaning of historic headstones at Indian Spring Cemetery.

To learn more about the county's historic cemeteries, including a walking tour of Indian Spring Cemetery scheduled for Dec. 2, call the historical center at 941.629.7278 or go to [www.CharlotteCountyFL.gov](http://www.CharlotteCountyFL.gov) and click "Community Services."

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