

Charlotte County update for 4/13/16

## **2-1-1 upgrade improves link to health, human services**

By Ray Sandrock, Charlotte County Administrator

Charlotte 2-1-1, the toll-free community services information line, implemented a major upgrade from Iris 4.0 software to Community Information Software. This project is a partnership between the county and the Charlotte County Homeless Coalition, which serves as the community administrator for CIS. Funding was provided by the Homeless Coalition and the state Department of Children and Families.

2-1-1 is an easy-to-remember phone number that connects people in need with health and human services. This toll-free, confidential, 24-hour service also provides a vital link for individuals seeking to volunteer, identifies community resources and assists the Emergency Operation Center during times of emergency or disaster.

“Charlotte 2-1-1 is a vital communications channel that will help county residents seeking assistance to quickly connect with community services,” said 2-1-1 Supervisor, Dr. Faezeh Andrews.

2-1-1 specialists provide information and make referrals to appropriate agencies and organizations. Needs of the callers are documented to reflect community needs. With the new CIS, when a homeless caller contacts 2-1-1, the specialist is able to determine if the Homeless Coalition has an available bed and, if not, make contact on behalf of the caller and place the caller on the waiting list for the next available bed.

Residents using other cellular service providers or calling from outside Charlotte County can reach Charlotte 2-1-1's 24/7 call center by dialing 941-205-2161.

## **Energy assistance**

The Charlotte County Human Services Department has begun taking applications for the 2016 Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) which started April 1, 2016. This federally funded grant of \$373,601 is expected to assist approximately 987 low-income households with their home energy bills over the next year. There is no county match requirement for this program and households must be at or below 150 percent of the federal poverty income guidelines. Family Services staff also met with the FPL consumer services manager to discuss LIHEAP and the Care to Share programs.

## **Utilities expansion**

Commissioners received a presentation from Charlotte County Utilities Department Director Gary Hubbard on Phase 2 of the Charlotte Harbor Water Quality Initiative, which will extend potable water service to 585 properties and sewer service to 3,343 properties in the neighborhoods around the Ackerman and Countryman waterways in Port Charlotte. The board

approved the award of design services for the expansion in February and will vote on the establishment of a municipal benefit services unit in September.

The Utilities Department has scheduled informational meetings for property owners and residents living in the area. Two meetings are scheduled for April 26 at Community Life Church Center Fellowship Hall Building at 19048 Edgewater Drive. The first meeting starts at 3 p.m. and the second at 5:30 p.m. The department will play host to another meeting at 2 p.m., May 3 at its East Port Environmental Campus at 25550 Harborview Road.

For information, call 941.764.4300, Ext. 3 or email [engineering.coordinator@charlottecountyfl.gov](mailto:engineering.coordinator@charlottecountyfl.gov).

### **Fun Day Sunday**

I joined hundreds of residents and visitors who enjoyed Fun Day Sunday at the newly renamed Promenades at Parkside on Sunday. County staff from the Economic Development Office, Community Services, Public Works and Public Information Office partnered with Team Parkside and the mall's new owners to present a day of music, food, arts and games.

"Pop-up" stores, galleries and restaurants occupied the vacant units and sidewalks of the mall, which will be undergoing an extension renovation. Many thanks to the sponsors who funded the event and to all the volunteers who helped make it such a wonderful community experience.

### **Babcock Ranch**

Community Development Department and Public Information Office staff met with Kitson-Babcock executives to tour construction work under way on Phase 1 of the Babcock Ranch development. Staff discussed zoning, permitting and concurrency issues related to the 18,000-acre project in southeastern Charlotte County.

Construction crews are currently dredging lakes, building roads and preparing home sites and commercial lots. Contractors expect to begin building homes, an amenity center and retail and office buildings later this year.

Florida Power & Light contractors are erecting substations and solar panels for the 74.5-megawatt photovoltaic solar farm that will power the new community. Construction is also ongoing on a water and wastewater treatment plant that will provide utility services.

Community Development Director Claire Jubb told Kitson-Babcock executives, she and her staff would continue to work closely with the developer and its contractors. The department will conduct monthly meetings to iron out issues that arise as the development progresses.

*Ray Sandrock is the Charlotte County administrator. Readers may reach him at [Raymond.Sandrock@CharlotteCountyFL.gov](mailto:Raymond.Sandrock@CharlotteCountyFL.gov).*