

Charlotte County update for 9/21/16

## **Accreditation reinforces culture of professionalism**

By Raymond Sandrock, Charlotte County administrator

Charlotte 2-1-1, the county's information and referral system, recently received accreditation from the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems. The accreditation recognizes the quality of the services provided to Charlotte County residents. The service first earned accreditation in 2009.

AIRS is an international non-profit professional association with a membership of more than 1,200 public and private organizations that connect people with services. I&R organizations create and maintain databases of agencies and programs that offer services, and disseminate that information through a variety of channels to individuals. Charlotte 2-1-1 is one of only 140 organizations in the United States and Canada to have successfully attained AIRS Accreditation.

The accreditation program is a multi-phase process that assesses more than 200 components of a service's operation and includes an expert review of the agency's resource database and a "secret shopper" who monitors service delivery. The final step is a detailed onsite review.

Residents needing information and referral services can dial 2-1-1 or 941-205-2161.

We put an emphasis on our departments and divisions attaining certification or accreditation by professional associations. One of the county's strategic focus areas is efficient and effective government and to achieve accreditation, departments must meet a range of quantifiable criteria established as best practices by experts in each field.

Our Community Services Department is seeking accreditation from the Commission for Accreditation of Park & Recreation Agencies and the Office of Emergency Management is awaiting word from the Emergency Management Accreditation Program on its assessment of EOM's application and onsite review. The Public Works Department is working on its own accreditation through the American Public Works Association. I think the APWA's accreditation objectives clearly outline the benefits.

Accreditation:

- creates impetus for organization self-improvement and raises standards
- offers a voluntary evaluation and education program
- recognizes good performance and provides motivation to improve performance
- increases professionalism
- instills pride among agency staff, elected officials and the local community

We've seen all of the above with Charlotte 2-1-1 and the departments still seeking accreditation. Our goal is to reinforce a culture of professionalism and public service that is obvious every day to our residents and stakeholders.

## **Client survey**

The Human Services Department's Senior Services Division reported results from its annual client survey. Surveys were mailed to frail and homebound Charlotte County senior clients. More than 36 percent of recipients responded.

The survey requested feedback on three focus areas: customer service, value and change. The average approval rating was 89 percent for case management services and 91 percent for community resources. Of the services seniors received they valued homemaker services as the most important and case management second. Personal care and transportation tied for third. Companionship ranked fourth and specialized medical and consumable supplies took fifth place.

Clients also shared words of inspiration and confirmation that both senior services staff and community services support their sense of well-being and peace of mind, promote happiness in remaining in the community in their own home, promote a sense of safety and security, and assist them in remaining independent. The survey responses, along with the many handwritten comments, reaffirm that investments in our aging programs are making a real difference in the lives of many area elders in Charlotte County.

## **Media mentions**

Central Florida News 13 and Tampa Bay News 9 "Florida on a Tankful" TV reporter Scott Fais filmed two stories in Charlotte County on Sept. 13. One was about TEAM Punta Gorda's bicycle loaner program and Harborwalk Scoops & Bites being TripAdvisor's No. 1 ice cream shop in the country and the other is about fresh, locally sourced seafood at Peace River Seafood.

The first story aired over the weekend and the other will air soon on these 24-hour news stations which reach more than 2 million households in Tampa Bay and Central Florida. His trip was coordinated by the Charlotte Harbor Visitor & Convention Bureau. He has filmed several other segments over the last few years and this type of media coverage keeps Charlotte County visible in key feeder markets and encourages visits.

## **Groundbreaking**

County commissioners and Sheriff Bill Prummell commemorated the start of construction on the Charlotte County Sheriff's Office District 1 headquarters with a groundbreaking ceremony Tuesday at the Englewood site.

Funding for the 11,579-square-foot building is from the voter-approved 1-percent local option sales tax. The facility is scheduled to open in the fall of 2017.

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