

Charlotte County update for 10/19/16

Realtors grant to help build disc golf course

By Raymond Sandrock, Charlotte County administrator

The Punta Gorda-Port Charlotte-North Port Association of Realtors received a microgrant from the National Association of Realtors to help Community Services build a new disc golf course at the South County Regional Park. The \$1,500 grant from the National Association of Realtors is being matched by the PGPCNP Association of Realtors.

The Placemaking Micro-Grant is intended to fund "lighter quicker cheaper" projects that improve a neighborhood with small, inexpensive, incremental place-making projects which will help to make the neighborhood a better place to live, work and play. The addition of a disc golf course at South County Regional Park will provide an additional recreation activity to get up, get out, and get active in Charlotte County.

Video award

At the 52nd Annual Southeastern Outdoor Press Association conference Oct. 5-8 in Lakeland, the Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach Visitor & Convention Bureau received first place in the Excellence in Craft competition in Industry Public Relations Program category. The honor recognized the bureau's video highlighting the destination's nature-based activities.

Last month, the Florida Outdoor Writers Association awarded the same video the First Place Excellence in Craft Award in the Corporate/Tourism Promotion category. The video was edited, produced and published in 2015 by Director of Marketing Chip Futch, and was utilized in the VCB's 2016 marketing program to lure visitors to the community. It has been viewed more than 2.4 million times in various campaigns. The video contains segments filmed by Anton Fresco, David Sussman, Russ Weston, Alex Carabes, and Sean and Brooks Paxton.

Prior to the conference, the bureau hosted six outdoor communicators during educational visits with an emphasis on fishing out of Punta Gorda and Englewood Beach. The trip has already resulted in at least two published articles and the bureau is optimistic more positive editorial coverage will be generated as a result of the trips. During the SEOPA conference, Public Relations Manager Jennifer Huber was one of speakers during a panel discussing relationships between destination marketing organizations and the media.

Event recruitment

Tourism bureau staff also attended the Travel, Events, and Management in Sports Conference & Expo Sept. 27-29, 2016 in Atlantic City, which provided educational sessions as well as various networking opportunities. Staff met one on one with nearly two dozen event organizers to discuss the potential of Charlotte County hosting one or more of their events. Several strong leads were generated with a variety of organizations including Game Day USA, Savage Race, International Slow Pitch Softball, Powerman Duathlon, Red Frog Events, National Senior Games, Elite Tournaments, Sunshine State Games, Junior Sports Association and Archery Tag. The bureau is gathering information and evaluating the feasibility of hosting 10 different events discussed during these appointment sessions.

Workforce housing

Human Services Director Vikki Carpenter and Family Services Manager Lori North recently attended Developing Community Solutions — A Seminar on Affordable & Workforce Housing. The seminar was sponsored by Team Punta Gorda and the Bernice Russell Community Development Corporation. Attendees included key community leaders representing government, non-profit, businesses, housing developers and community advocates.

The guest speaker was Anthony Jones, CEO of the Bright Community Trust. Jones formerly worked for the Pinellas County Community Development Department. Jones provided the group with information on some successful strategies to enhance community housing. Seminar sponsors invited attendees to future task force meetings that will continue exploring and implementing strategies to increase affordable and workforce housing availability in Charlotte County.

Drone shots

CC-TV Television Production Specialist Todd Dunn has received his airman certificate from the Federal Aviation Administration. The FAA's certification program is among new regulations governing the commercial operation of drones. Dunn will use the drone to capture aerial footage for capital projects and event videos, public service announcements and promotional segments. We look forward to seeing eye-catching shots from around the county on CC-TV and our social media portals in the near future.

Speaking of CC-TV, Program Manager Elizabeth Billings and Communications Manager Brian Gleason will be staffing a booth at the Florida International Airshow Saturday at the Punta Gorda Airport to spread the word about CC-TV programming. Please stop by and say hi and learn about the county television station's content and the many ways to access it on demand on your web-enabled TV, computer, smartphone or tablet. Of course, you can also watch it the old-fashioned way, live on Comcast channel 20 or 97 or on CenturyLink Prism channel 96.

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