

## Communicating county information is critical to all

Hector Flores

Communicating information about county business, policies, services and facilities to residents, stakeholders and employees is a critical part of managing our organization. The importance of reliable and accurate communication was underscored last year when we created a new department from the former Public Information Office to align its mission with the County Commission's strategic plan update to increase focus on communication.

The Communications Department uses numerous tools to reach as many people as possible. The strategy is to reach people how they want to be reached. Our primary tool is the county website, [www.CharlotteCountyFL.gov](http://www.CharlotteCountyFL.gov). The website gets nearly six million visits annually by users looking for information about evacuation zones and routes, utility bills, building permits and meeting information. Users can also interact directly with county staff via a website link to our county app and track the progress of their report or inquiry.

The county has its own local government channel, CC-TV. It is available on Comcast channel 20. We recently made it available via the Roku streaming service. Viewers can watch commission meetings and workshops live or access past meetings via the CC-TV webpage. CC-TV also streams commission meetings on our Facebook and YouTube pages.

Speaking of Facebook and YouTube, the third method of reaching people we use is social media. In addition to those two platforms, the county has Instagram, LinkedIn and NextDoor accounts. Individual departments also operate pages catering to patrons of their services. Across all platforms, site administrators post more than 8,000 times annually, reaching nearly 50,000 followers. Videos on all platforms are viewed more than nine million times.

The county also subscribes to services residents can sign up for to receive information about events, meetings, the status of projects and road conditions, mosquito control operations and more. Staying informed is never more important than in the runup and aftermath of tropical weather. We call our emergency notification service Alert Charlotte. You can sign up to receive phone or text messages about storm watches and warnings, evacuation orders, service disruptions, etc. After a storm passes, we use a program we call CharCoCares. Text CHARCOCARES to 888-777 to receive text updates about local recovery events, area resources, opportunities and more.

We recently adopted a new cell phone app that allows users to access the website, watch CC-TV, view our social media menu, find career opportunities, reserve a ride on Charlotte County Transit or report and issue or ask a question. Download the app on your mobile device and create an account. Simply search for Charlotte County on the Android Play Store or the Apple App Store.

Another way we reach people is at in-person events, such as the recent airshow. We actually had a half-dozen departments staff tents last year, sharing information and getting feedback.

One encounter with our CC-TV program manager led to a follow-up outreach opportunity at the resident's neighborhood organization meeting. We're going to make a big push this coming year to schedule more outreach appearances. We can make subject matter experts available to meeting organizers on a variety of county topics. To learn more or to schedule an appearance, email Communications Director Brian Gleason at [Brian.Gleason@CharlotteCountyFL.gov](mailto:Brian.Gleason@CharlotteCountyFL.gov).

*Readers may reach Charlotte County Administrator Hector Flores at [Hector.Flores@CharlotteCountyFL.gov](mailto:Hector.Flores@CharlotteCountyFL.gov).*