

OPINION

Team Punta Gorda is a diverse group of boosters

As I talk to people around our community, it is amazing the number of times I have heard one of two statements, "Isn't Team Punta Gorda an organization within the Punta Gorda Isles Civic Association?" or "I'd join Team Punta Gorda but I don't live in the city." Let's dispel these myths and tell you all about who these Team Punta Gorda volunteers are, these people who willingly and enthusiastically serve our community and are working on some very exciting projects.

With more than 2,000 supporters signed up, we are a very diverse group. We pride ourselves on being inclusive. We welcome everyone and we mean everyone. Team Punta Gorda volunteers are working people, retired people, people from all age groups (we're definitely not all seniors), men and women.

Geographically, our volunteers come



Nancy Prafke

Prafke is CEO of Team Punta Gorda, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. For more information, visit our Web site or call 941-637-8326.

from every part of Punta Gorda including Trabue Woods, the historic district, Burnt Store Meadows, Burnt Store Isles and Punta Gorda Isles. Outside of Punta Gorda and within Charlotte County, our members include citizens residing in Charlotte Park, Charlotte Harbor, Deep Creek, Burnt Store Lakes, Port Charlotte, and Englewood. Outside of Charlotte County, members come from North Port, Burnt Store Marina, Cape Coral, Fort Myers, Estero, Naples, Miami and many other cities around the state of

Florida. Some of our supporters are part-time residents who summer in locales continents away.

Every time I meet a supporter from outside of Punta Gorda, I ask what inspired him or her to join Team Punta Gorda. The responses include:

- Liking what the city of Punta Gorda is doing to recover from Hurricane Charley and the excitement around the city's rebirth.
- Feeling a vested interest in seeing the revitalization of Punta Gorda succeed. We know that the successful revitalization of Punta Gorda will have a ripple effect throughout Charlotte County and beyond.
- We wish we had a group like Team in our community.

With the exciting projects Team has under way in 2008 we have attracted many participants who want to be a part of bringing dreams to reality. Our

Rails-to-Trails project has attracted many bike enthusiasts, City and county staff, and people from the health care community. The local arts community is involved in our Artisan's Village initiative. Our higher education committees believe Punta Gorda's future will be significantly enhanced by the presence of additional higher education facilities. The maritime team includes new members who support optimizing the contribution of our harbor and river to Punta Gorda's and Charlotte County's quality of life and its economy.

We'll share more about these projects in future communications. In the meantime, why not join us (membership is free, though donations are encouraged) or become a Team Punta Gorda volunteer. To learn more, go to our Web site at www.teampuntagorda.org or call us at 941-637-8326.