

Our perseverance is setting a standard for others

The new Four Points by Sheraton is finally open. The incredible landscaping is an attention-getter in the quickly changing face of Punta Gorda's harbor. Team Punta Gorda enjoyed collaborating with developer José Suriol in support of this project. It is an example of what can grow from the combined efforts of a developer, citizens and government partners.

Lest we forget, this project began while we were coming together to overcome adversity brought on by Mother Nature. We continue to persevere through difficult economic times while remaining focused on our goal of improving our community and quality of life in Charlotte County. Our "can do" attitude is blazing a trail and making an impact beyond what you might imagine.

Last January I wrote about a FEMA conference call where Charlotte County, City of Punta Gorda and Team Punta Gorda representatives were asked to share our recovery story with the Texas coast that was devastated by Hurricane Ike. What an honor and incredible opportunity to help others. The story doesn't stop there.

Nancy Profke

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Just last week I learned from Mike Shafer, a FEMA consultant, that Chambers County, Texas was inspired by the lessons learned from Charlotte County. They saw how our local citizens helped formulate a solution that spurred recovery beyond the imaginable. Chambers County is making sure that their citizens play an important role in the development of their long-term recovery plan facilitated by FEMA.

You'll find a copy of this plan at co.chambers.tx.us. Shafer is also documenting Punta Gorda's and Charlotte County's recovery. It has become a case study in how to persevere and turn adversity into positive change.

I also hear frequent comments like "We wish we had an organization like Team Punta Gorda in..." (I'll let you fill in an area of Charlotte County.) It is a compliment to the dedicated citizens, business owners and governmental partners who work together focused on a common

vision. It is also a testament to our ability to work through differences of opinion with a spirit of respect and understanding. Sometimes we agree to disagree, however, we all remain focused on the mission. Yes, together we will achieve more.

Earlier this month I had the opportunity to spend time with members of the Urban Land Institute. ULI is considering using Team's success as a potential model to replicate in other areas of Charlotte County outside of Punta Gorda. It's proven that engaging citizens in the process of change is extremely beneficial to communities. While this is only in the discussion stage, citizens may send an e-mail to CitizenActionCharlotte@gmail.com to express an interest in being a part of a team in your area. Perhaps this is your chance to be a part of an endeavor as rewarding as Team's collaboration on the Four Points by Sheraton. If you want to join



Team Punta Gorda and/or volunteer, call us at 941-637-8326, e-mail us at team@teampuntagorda.org, or visit our Web site at www.teampuntagorda.org. Your contributions are also welcome.

Don't forget, the Hibiscus Bicycle Tour is coming up on June 20 in conjunction with the National Hibiscus Festival. Again this year, we're offering a 62-Mile (Metric Century) Ride and 30-Mile Ride for the avid cyclists. We've added a new 15-Mile Ride for the more casual rider like me (no-spandex and on my recumbent tricycle). The very popular City Manager's Ride is an opportunity to take a slower trip and learn about recent changes in Punta Gorda. Ride registration forms are available on the Team Punta Gorda Web site. All rides include lunch catered by Skyview Cafe, drink vouchers, goody bags, and more. Proceeds support Team's efforts to increase multi-use pathways supporting our healthy lifestyles and a "bicycle-friendly community."

And please, shop and dine locally. Our entire business community needs and deserves our support.