

Vision, action cycle into incredible combination

It's not uncommon for citizens to offer armchair quarterback comments on just about any issue or newsworthy item. Discussion and debate are healthy and help bring out creative solutions to many problems. Whether it's a letter to the editor or listening to an analyst on the radio or television, we're continuously exposed to people offering opinions.

Then there's also the citizen or citizen groups that not only have an idea but also take action and lead in the development of a solution. The upcoming Charlotte Harbor Regatta is an example of a citizen with a vision of what could be and then proceeded to form an organization that will pull off its first-ever event February 4-7 right here on Charlotte Harbor. It will be fun to watch this new event grow over the years to come and witness what will unfold.

This is also how Team Punta Gorda was founded. Many of our committees also developed by putting ideas into action. The former Hibiscus Bicycle

Nancy Profke

Profke is CEO of Team Punta Gorda. Readers may reach her at team@teampuntagorda.org.



.....
Tour began because the citizens on our Spokes and Trails Committee saw the need to raise the profile of bicycling in the community. Hosting a bicycling event will help promote active lifestyles and prove our community's interest in becoming a "Bicycle-Friendly Community" as designated by the League of American Bicyclists.

What began with a few eager volunteers figuring out how to host a Saturday-morning bicycle event attracted its first out-of-state riders last year. In fact, of 152 riders, 45 percent of the riders were from outside of Charlotte County representing 14 Southwest Florida cities and nine Florida cities outside of our

southwest region.

After attending a bicycle event in another Florida city that attracts nearly 1,000 riders, our volunteers are making a quantum leap for 2010. Our eager volunteers recruited additional Planning Committee members now numbering nearly two dozen. The Charlotte County Visitor's Bureau and City of Punta Gorda have also joined the team. Plans are being made to turn a Saturday morning ride into a multi-day, family-friendly bicycling event that offers something for everyone. The ride has been moved to the first weekend in May and has been renamed "Pedal and Play in Paradise." The excitement about this event is building.

Our expanded vision is to literally bring hundreds of bicyclists and their families to our area for a long weekend. We want these visitors to enjoy all

that our area has to offer: stay in our hotels, dine in the huge variety of restaurants, shop in our stores, visit many local attractions, enjoy the beauty of Charlotte Harbor, and soak up the wonders of this very special place. All local businesses are invited to participate. Sponsor opportunities are also available.

With a can-do attitude, our citizens will make this happen. Why not join Team in the 2010 Pedal and Play in Paradise event as a volunteer, business participant, or sponsor? For more information contact TEAM at team@teampuntagorda.org or 941-637-TEAM. There will be more Pedal and Play in Paradise information on TEAM's Web site in the near future (www.teampuntagorda.org). Team is honored to have been selected as the Punta Gorda Chamber of Commerce 2009 Non-Profit Business of the Year.