

Adversity can't dull this diamond of a community

Only a few years ago when the economy was still expanding, we eagerly anticipated new residential and commercial developments in Charlotte County. The excitement was building as we looked forward to shopping for items that we typically find in other locales. As we revitalized post-2004, we took advantage of the opportunities at hand. As has been said many times over: "Oh, what a difference a day makes!" That was then and this is definitely a different now.

Tough economic times are challenging to individuals and



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organizations alike. Changing conditions test our vision and willingness to continue down the path we've set. Is what seemed reasonable five years ago still applicable today? Were we too ambitious then? Did we over- or underestimate our ability to achieve? It's easy to look into our rear-view mirror, but that's not going to lead us into the future.

While planning is a vital part of running an organization, whether private or public sector, it's times like these that can make us question ourselves. Do we stay the course or retrench? Achieving a balance of meeting today's short-term requirements while continuing the pursuit of the vision requires innovation, creativity, flexibility, conviction, and stamina.

Let me submit that there's another very bright side to this story. In some cases we might have been overly optimistic. However, as a whole, we framed a long-term vision and set a path in place to begin

the journey. Collaborative partnerships were formed and priorities were established. Foundations have been put in place for a transition that will last for generations to come. Many projects have been initiated that are transforming our community while celebrating our heritage and preserving our community's unique character. It's amazing to see how far we've come despite economic obstacles.

Examples abound that reinforce we're on the right path, including:

1. Charlotte Harbor Regatta Inc. was recently selected to host the 2012 Combined World

Disabled Sailing Championships.

2. In May, Punta Gorda was selected as Florida's Bicycle-Friendly Community of the Year by the Florida Bicycle Association.

3. The 2010 Florida Main Street Annual Conference will be held Sept. 15-17 at the Charlotte Harbor Event and Conference Center in Punta Gorda.

These are just a few of the recent rewards. Many more can be cited such as the Tampa Bay Rays Spring Training or the Charlotte Stone Crabs enjoying Charlotte County as a base of operation. People from all over the country

attend the Punta Gorda Chamber of Commerce's annual Wine and Jazz Festival.

As the process continues this diamond will only shine brighter! Charlotte County citizens working hand-in-hand with governmental partners will update plans and identify additional opportunities. Become a part of the transformation by participating in a community organization or governmental committee. It is extremely rewarding!

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