

Our common goal continues to bring us together

Recently a friend told me of a nationally-televised show that was featuring what the citizens of Wilmington, Ohio were doing after a major employer left town, leaving the community economically devastated. Not only did this interest me to learn what other communities do in recovery, but I was also curious since I spent some of my early childhood years living there.

As I watched the program, the host singled out two young men sitting in the front row of the audience. The host asked why they were here in this town where opportunity was slim. They responded by



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saying how much they loved their town and that they were passionate about helping with its renaissance. It was pointed out that they held opposing political views and yet the young men said that it didn't matter. What was important to them was that, together, they were helping better their community.

I recognized that this is what has happened in Punta Gorda

and with Team Punta Gorda. We come from all walks of life and geographical locations, are young and old, are working and retired, with varied political beliefs. Yet, we come together for one common goal—making our community a better place to live, work, and play. What was initially the focus on disaster recovery has grown into a passionate journey.

It is interesting to me, that after all that has been done to rebuild our community from a natural disaster, no national media outlet has told our great story. Five years after Katrina, the negative news of what

remains to be done became an attention getter. Five years after Hurricane Charley, one couldn't tell that a natural disaster had ever occurred, a recovery of extraordinary proportions.

Thanks to our citizens and government coming together in a common goal, we remain a positive role model. After six years of existence, Team Punta Gorda is focused on a long list of 2010-11 priorities as described on our website at www.TeamPuntaGorda.org. It is rewarding that new volunteers continue to join us in this effort.

Team Punta Gorda is only one of many

groups who have united to help pursue our common goal. For example, the Punta Gorda Boaters' Alliance, led by Murray and Marilyn Thorndyraft, recently organized a beach revitalization project at Gilchrist Park to make the area more attractive to those who enjoy the park and to boaters anchored off shore who want to use the beach to land their dinghies.

Now Team Port Charlotte is forming to help with the medical arts district revitalization much as Team Punta Gorda has in the south Charlotte County area. To join the Port Charlotte citizens' effort, please contact

them at their new e-mail address Teamportcharlotte@gmail.com. To become more involved in Team Punta Gorda's happenings, check out our website or contact Team Punta Gorda at 637-Team or e-mail Team@TeamPuntaGorda.org. Sign up to receive our e-newsletter, Team Talk, right on our home page. We welcome your participation on one of our many committees.

Everyone at Team Punta Gorda wishes you and yours a healthy, happy, and prosperous 2011!

Nancy Prafke is CEO of Team Punta Gorda.