

## Community volunteers help bring about change

**I**t's hard to believe I've been a community volunteer since relocating here over six years ago. Fortunately, this area is loaded with talented people who share their skills and abilities to help our slice of paradise achieve new heights. Some are retired, some are working professionals, and some are youth learning the value of community service. Some are transplants and some were born and raised here. We all serve in a variety of capacities with a myriad of organizations. We all feel a great sense of gratification by giving back to this community we all call home.

Did you know that at the 2011 Annual Business Meeting of the Florida City & County Management Association, the City of Punta Gorda received an Award for Program Excellence for its "Results Through Collaboration:



Nancy Prafke

The Power of Partnerships" presentation? Congratulations! This depicted the City's efforts to rebuild after Hurricane Charley through an impressive array of partnerships among the public, private and nonprofits sectors of the community. This presentation, which can be viewed on the City's website at [www.pgorda.us](http://www.pgorda.us) under Reports, was given at the TEAM Punta Gorda Annual Meeting, November 2010, and before community groups.

Recently someone told me that we "community volunteers" are just a "bunch of busy bodies." As you might imagine, my initial reaction was not a

pleasant one. However, after thinking about it I thought "Yes, that is what we are! We are very busy and our community shows the fruits of our labors." Community volunteers in Charlotte County participate in a variety of City and County boards and committees, civic organizations and businesses. The active citizenry makes a difference in our quality of life.

What if there had been no busy bodies? What if no one cared to work to make our community a better place to live, work and play? For example, imagine:

- No Citizens' Master Plan to provide a vision of what we wanted our community to become as we revitalized post-Hurricane Charley.

- The Charlotte Harbor Event and Conference Center might look more like the original neo-classic box design suitable for an industrial park rather than in

the midst of a city and gracing a harbor.

- The old "Professional Building," a typical glass-walled office building, in central Punta Gorda rebuilt instead of the eclectic design of the Sunloft Center that embraces the look of the former Princess Hotel that once graced that location.

- No one caring about developing pedestrian and bicycle paths and an enhanced Harborwalk.

- Without embracing new urbanism, the Herald Court Center might look like a true parking garage with colors that detract from the surrounding buildings.

- No Artisans' Atelier at the Herald Court Center and Free Bicycle Loaner Program in Punta Gorda.

- No community participation in beautification projects including laying bricks and funding planting and maintaining trees,

palms, and other landscape materials.

- No historic preservation projects including the new Youth Activity Museum project led by the Punta Gorda Historical Society (call 941-639-1887 to donate and for details).

- No events held on an almost weekly basis that feature a variety of interests from music and arts to bicycle rides and bring thousands of people into our community who frequent our shops, restaurant, and other venues.

Once you see the City's presentation as referenced above you'll understand the value that "busy bodies" bring to our community. There are a myriad of examples of the contributions our community volunteers bring to our City and County. I'm proud to be one and invite you to join me as a "busy body" if you're not already lending a hand. Become a TEAM

Punta Gorda volunteer! From office volunteers to committee members, we'll find a rewarding opportunity just for you. Contact us at [team@teampunta.org](mailto:team@teampunta.org) or 941-637-TEAM. We're also on Facebook. Keep tabs on TEAM Punta Gorda through TEAM Talk, our monthly e-newsletter, by signing up on our website at [www.teampuntagorda.org](http://www.teampuntagorda.org).

Have you purchased your commemorative paver to put you, your family, pet, or organization into the permanent history of our community? Get your order form now from our website and you'll join many others who already have a paver in place at the interactive fountain at Laisley Park. Commemorative pavers help fund TEAM Punta Gorda beautification initiatives.

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