

## County Marks Progress on Sales Tax Projects

By Hector Flores

Tuesday was an exciting day to highlight progress on two important sales tax projects.

Commissioners held a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting prop at the Public Safety Complex on Airport Road. The prop has a 64-foot wingspan, an 11-foot-high passenger compartment and different types of doors and engines to provide training on the types of equipment firefighters are likely to encounter at a typical airport. The prop can simulate fuel spills, engine fires, brake and wheel fires, and fuselage fires. The \$9.6 million project was funded by state grants and the voter-approved 1% local option sales tax.

Public Safety Director Jason Fair told the nearly 100 people gathered for the ribbon-cutting that the simulator will not only allow county personnel to complete required Federal Aviation Administration training, fire departments from around the country and even some from overseas have already inquired about sending their personnel here to perform training.

Later in the day, commissioners held a groundbreaking ceremony to mark the start of construction on Phase 2 of the Family Services Center on Gibraltar Drive in Port Charlotte. The 18,500-square-foot facility will feature a permanent youth component with classrooms, multi-purpose rooms and a playground, a community garden, Human Services staff offices and county partner office space for the Gulf Coast Partnership, Healthy Start, Area Agency on Aging, Head Start and Children's Advocacy Center.

Human Services Director Carrie Walsh eloquently described the importance of the Family Services Center in her groundbreaking ceremony remarks.

"In many ways groundbreaking is the perfect word to describe this work and these ideas: collaborating together, leveraging our partnerships to better serve our most vulnerable," Walsh said. "The impact and value of this project is clear. Thousands of people are already better off because of this work. We have fed, counseled and cared for our community. We bring stability, we offer hope."

We hold these events to both celebrate the milestones they represent and to underscore our commitment to delivering on our promise to invest the sales tax money voters approved as fast as we can in the most fiscally responsible way possible.

**Debris collection**

Debris collection continues to be a top priority for the county. Our debris contractor, AshBritt, will pass a major recovery milestone today when it will collect its 2.5 millionth cubic yard of debris. We estimate the final debris tally will far exceed our earlier estimates and may take several more months.

To view a dashboard featuring a heat map of where debris has been collected, addresses of debris drop-off locations and information about applying for private road debris collection, visit [www.CharlotteCountyFL.gov/debris](http://www.CharlotteCountyFL.gov/debris).

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