

## **Get Up, Get Out, Get Active with Community Services**

By Mike Koenig

Community Services continues to deliver exceptional service to our residents and visitors through recreation and library programs, beautiful parks and education workshops through the UF/IFAS extension office of Charlotte County. Whether you're into soaking up sun by the pool, checking books off your summer reading list, paddleboarding, or maintaining your Florida Friendly Landscape, Community Services is offering something for everyone this spring and summer.

June 3 will kick off Summer Reading for Charlotte County Libraries. Get ready for take-off and soar into a reading adventure around the world. Libraries will be offering exciting activities for the whole family.

"The biggest bench-marker for me is seeing all the smiles when children and teens complete their reading challenges and celebrate their accomplishments with us. I know I've done my job, and they can return to school confident in their studies and ready to learn something new," said Children's Librarian Ashley Guerzo. Stop into your local library on June 3 to pick up your summer reading bags and begin your journey. Activities and offerings will vary between branches.

We know our community relies on Charlotte County libraries for more than books. The Port Charlotte Library will be offering meals at no charge for kids all summer in collaboration with the Charlotte County Public Schools Champs on Wheels program.

For information on library programs and events, visit [www.CharlotteCountyFL.gov/libraries](http://www.CharlotteCountyFL.gov/libraries).

Charlotte County Recreation & Pools has an abundance of ways that you can Get Up, Get Out and Get Active in Charlotte County. From Cardio on The Go and Flexibility and Strength class at South County Regional Park Recreation Center to the youth volleyball clinic at Harold Avenue Regional Park Recreation Center, there is something for all ages and interests. Swimming lessons will be offered at Centennial Park pool, South County Regional Park pool, and Ann & Chuck Dever Regional Park pool. The month of May is Mental Health Awareness Month and the Recreation division will be launching an activity calendar with ways to "Rec" the stigma around mental health.

The World's Largest Swim Lesson will take place at 10 a.m., Thursday, June 22 at Ann & Chuck Dever Regional Park pool, Centennial Park pool, and South County Regional Park pool. The World's Largest Swimming Lesson is a global life-saving event that brings together thousands of kids and adults on six continents to learn about water safety and drowning prevention.

For information on upcoming programs and events, visit [www.CharlotteCountyFL.gov/recreation](http://www.CharlotteCountyFL.gov/recreation).

If you're feeling adventurous, be sure to dive into the beauty of our Blueway Trails. Parks & Natural Resources have put together a Blueway Trails Guide for the canoe and kayak enthusiasts. The adventure continues within our parks where there are disc golf courses, nature trails, nature preserves, boat ramps, picnic shelters and more. To start planning your next adventure, visit [www.CharlotteCountyFL.gov/parks](http://www.CharlotteCountyFL.gov/parks).

Have you participated in a Parks That Teach free guided tour? Now is your chance. The last two Parks That Teach free guided walks of the season will be from 9:30-11 a.m., today and Wednesday, May 17. Walks begin and end in front of the Punta Gorda Charlotte Library, 301 Shreve St. The Master Gardeners conducting these tours have had specialized training regarding the flora along the pathways. Each is excited to share this special walking adventure with you.

Do you want to brush up on your Florida Friendly landscape skills? UF/IFAS Extension Charlotte County Florida-Friendly Landscaping program and Florida Sea Grant Charlotte County are teaming up to bring you Florida-Friendly from 9 a.m.-12 p.m., Friday, Aug. 25 at Centennial Park in Port Charlotte. Take a tour of our coastal ecosystem as we discuss environmentally friendly ways to live along the shoreline, the role of mangroves in our coastal environments and how to embrace them in your landscapes with special guest UF/IFAS Extension Agent Alyssa Vinson, and sustainable fishing techniques.

To keep up with Community Services, follow Charlotte County Parks & Recreation and Charlotte County Libraries & History on Facebook and @CharCoParks on Instagram.