

County hosts Leadership Charlotte Government Day

By Hector Flores

We were pleased to partner with the City of Punta Gorda to host Government Day for the members of the Leadership Charlotte Class of 2023-24 on Thursday. Class members toured the Emergency Operations Center and got an up-close look at the Airplane Rescue and Fire Fighting prop on the Public Safety Campus.

Out in the campus parking lot, Public Works staff paraded their impressive fleet of specialized equipment used to maintain roads, waterways, swales and rights of way. The class learned about mosquito control efforts and got to meet some of our sentinel chicks awaiting deployment to new homes where they will be tested regularly for mosquito-borne viruses.

Before touring the newly expanded Family Services Center, our Human Services Department director conducted a budget exercise using a box of candy as money. Class members had to allocate pieces of candy to basic costs of living, such as housing, food, transportation, clothing, childcare, etc. The exercise demonstrated how quickly the money runs out for many families in our community and the importance of social service programs administered by the county.

Our Utilities director and public relations manager discussed the various services and operations of the department, including potable water and reclaimed water delivery, wastewater treatment. The class learned about upcoming expansion of the water reclamation facility at the East Port Environmental Campus. The facility expansion will increase the capacity to treat nine million gallons of wastewater per day. The expansion also includes the addition of advanced wastewater treatment.

The day concluded at the Punta Gorda Public Safety Building, where city officials gave an overview of the municipal government and a tour of the firehouse and police headquarters. The class saw demonstrations of life-saving equipment and fire extinguisher use and safety, including a chance for some to put out a fire themselves.

I wish the class members well with their remaining sessions and success in their fundraising event and class project. I appreciate the members' commitment to developing their knowledge of the county and strengthening their leadership skills to continue to contribute to the community.

Nesting season

Shorebird/seabird beach nesting season began Feb. 15. County staff has installed temporarily fencing and educational signage around nesting areas to provide a safe buffer zone to nest and raise their young.

Beachgoers are advised to avoid posted shorebird/seabird nesting areas and leave dogs at home. Dogs are seen as predators and have the potential to disturb critical nesting activities.

Thank you for your cooperation in preserving and protecting our abundant wildlife in Charlotte County.

Readers may reach County Administrator Hector Flores at Hector.Flores@CharlotteCountyFL.gov.