

Celebrating National County Government Month

By Hector Flores

April is National County Government Month. As a 28-year employee of Charlotte County, I have always viewed county government as where things get done that improve our community in many ways. My colleagues and I are committed to delivering exceptional services guided by the values we share: committed, accountable, resourceful, energetic and supportive.

According to the National Association of Counties, 3,069 county government agencies include more than 40,000 elected officials and 3.6 million employees. These county workers live and work alongside their fellow residents and use the same services, facilities and programs. They drive our roads, play in our parks and vote for their local leaders.

Counties play an indispensable role partnering with state, regional and federal governments to meet residents' needs. Counties are responsible for maintaining roads and bridges, caring for our physical and mental health, administering elections, ensuring public safety, and protecting and preserving our environment.

Many residents of Charlotte County came here from states where county governments serve a different, less prominent role. In many northern and midwestern states the most visible local government entities are cities and towns. Counties may handle corrections and court functions, but not have elected county officials.

Even among our sister counties, Charlotte County stands out for having only one municipality, Punta Gorda. The rest of the county is unincorporated, meaning the responsibility for building and maintaining road and drainage infrastructure, providing services, such as water and sewer, libraries, parks and administering programs and establishing and administering policies falls to county government.

Like all Florida counties, Charlotte County was created by an act of the state Legislature. Before becoming a county in 1921, we were part of a much larger DeSoto County and before that part of Manatee County. Florida counties also share a common makeup of so-called constitutional offices. These offices include the clerk of the circuit court, property appraiser, sheriff's office, supervisor of elections and tax collector. They are run by independently elected official, but funded with county taxes.

Local schools are run by another elected board, which, like the county, has taxing authority. Budget and curriculum decisions are made by the Charlotte County School Board. The court system is likewise independent from county government, though the court facilities are funded and maintained by the county.

Throughout April, we'll be featuring more information about the county and our people on our social media platforms. Visit www.charlottecountyfl.gov/social for a list of platforms

were use. Behind all of the programs, services and facilities are my colleagues and I want to take this opportunity to thank them for their public service and commitment to making our community a better place to live, work and play.

Spring Renewal

The Charlotte County Family Services Center is hosting the Spring Renewal social event from 11 a.m.-2 p.m., Friday, April 12. Organized by the Community Action Agency Alliance Board's Aging, Disabled Adults and Veterans committee, the free event will feature food, drinks, giveaways and a chance to socialize with friends and make new ones.

The Family Services Center is located at 21500 Gibraltar Drive in Port Charlotte.

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