



Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center

Winter 2016 Update Newsletter

Cedar Point Happenings



Read up on the latest happenings at Cedar Point, the saltier side of CHEC.

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Expanded Programs Offer Even More Fun



From kayaking to fishing clinics, CHEC is now offering even more ways to enjoy the outdoors.

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Landmark Donation



One of the largest gifts ever given to support CHEC's mission!

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Valuing Our Volunteers



See how valued our CHEC volunteers are and learn about exciting volunteer opportunities

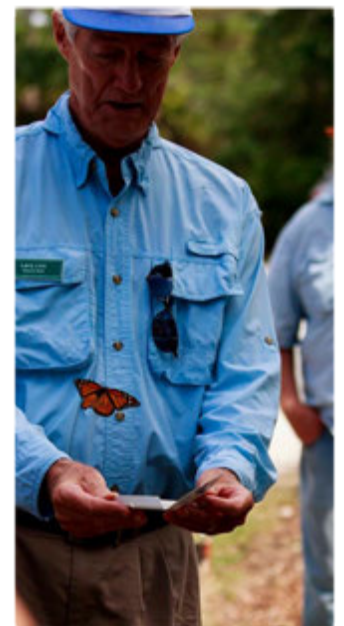
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Educating through fundraising



Harvest for the Harbor, CHEC's new fundraising signature event

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Above: Thomas Hecker, CEO, Dorothea Zysko, Board Chair
Right: Larry Lin, Treasurer



George Hindmarsh Monarch Garden Dedication

Please come visit our new monarch butterfly garden. It was dedicated Earth Day 2015, and is now flourishing and fluttering with butterflies.

CHEC Receives Landmark Donation

The Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center (CHEC) recently received the largest direct cash donation since its inception in 1987.

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Message from our Chief Executive Officer



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In wrapping up my first full year leading CHEC, I cannot contain my enthusiasm for the community support and increased involvement I have witnessed in my short time here thus far.

Thanks to a group of dedicated staff and volunteers at both our Cedar Point and Alligator Creek centers, we have been able to expand our environmental educational programming to reach even more people in 2015 – including offering summer camps and outstanding adult field trips and

lectures.

Our first gala, Harvest for the Harbor, was a smashing success with top-notch food and décor, raising over \$11,000 dollars to support our mission. We received one of the largest donations in the history of the organization and have been getting a number of new members - including several at the highest membership levels. The renovation of the Caniff to showcase an outstanding exhibit of famed Clyde Butcher nature photography, as well as a book signing by the photographer himself, led numerous visitors to come to CHEC's Alligator Creek center for the very first time with 56,000 visitors from August through February.

Now in 2016, we have added exciting new offerings including guided kayak trips and free fishing clinics. I hope you will join us in getting even more people out and connected to nature this year through volunteering, becoming a member, and/or participating in one of our many fun upcoming events.

Look forward to seeing you out on the trails,

Thomas Hecker

Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center CEO

Happenings at CHEC's Cedar Point

Every year, more people visit and participate in the educational programs that CHEC offers and 2015 year was one of the busiest years ever at CHEC's Cedar Point Environmental Park. Cedar Point logged over 9500 visitors last year, bringing the total visitation to 98,033 since the year 2000 when recording began.

Highlights from our 2015 CHEC Cedar Point Environmental Education Programs:

- wading trips for more than 450 2nd graders and 500 members of the general public
- guided walks for approximately 200 4th graders
- Moms and Tots Explore Nature Program for 95 pre-school aged children and their caregivers
- summer camp Fishing Clinic to teach 8 to 13 years old how to catch and release fish using responsible techniques.

Additionally, numerous other people learned about the Charlotte Harbor estuary at our programs offered off-site, where we also conduct guided walks and other educational activities. Come see all that's happening at Cedar Point, you'll be glad you did!

Call CHEC Cedar Point Education Center at 941-475-0769 for more information on upcoming programs.



Our beautiful Cedar Point Nature Center, lead by CHEC staff Bobbi Rodgers and a team of dedicated volunteers.

Thank You to Our Partners and Supporters

Mosaic for underwriting CHEC's Seagrass Adventure Wading Trips for both the general public and every 2nd grade in Charlotte County.

Southwest Florida Water Management District, Mosaic, Charlotte County Public Schools, Charlotte Board of Commissioners, Marine Advisory Committee, WCIND, Peace River Audubon Society, Punta Gorda Marina, Cape Haze Marina, Edward T. Bedford Foundation Grant, Friends of CHEC, as well as private donors and proceeds from Hands Across the Harbor for underwriting CHEC's 4th grade program for all 4th graders.

Bob from Mowers & More for free mower repair.

Riverview Flower Farm and American Farms for donating butterfly plants

Worden Farms for local organic produce

Trader Joe's for donating food

Food & Thought Organic Market for donating food

Peace River Seafood & Market for donating food

Fat Point Brewery for donating beer

Expanding Educational Programs at Alligator Creek at

Alligator Creek has been bustling with activity since we kicked off the 2015/2016 school year. Starting September of this year, we have completed sixty 4th grade programs that included 595 students and 126 teachers and chaperones to date. We have also improved staffing efficiency to continue to offer all of these fourth graders quality environmental education, while expanding our offerings of programming for our other visitors.

As a result of a grant from the Marine Advisory Committee, we have recently purchased kayaks to be used for our summer camps, kids fishing camps as well as for educational trips for the general public. We have also partnered with Charlotte County Parks and Rec. to do fishing clinics for children at county parks. This year is full of engaging and educational programs for all ages at Alligator Creek with our expanded adult lectures, field trips and other programs. Come to Alligator Creek, where there is something fun for any age!



Above: Kids enjoying a guided walk at Alligator Creek.
Left: Captain Al Petterson assisting in a wading trip.



Continued from Page 1 – CHEC Receives Landmark Donation

The \$100,000 gift was bequeathed by James Bottorf, a retired engineer from Kentucky that retired in Punta Gorda.

“Mr. B (as he referred to as by friends and people in the community) gave this generous gift to allow CHEC to continue to fulfill its mission of educating local children on the importance of the environment”, said CHEC board director/trustee and friend of Mr. Borttoff, Steve Osborne. “Mr. Bottorf retired to the area for the great quality of life, had a very big heart, and always was giving back to community”.

Mr. Bottorf enjoyed mentoring area children on computers at Cooper Street, taught navigation to young sailors at the local sailing club and assisted the Special Olympics. One of his biggest contributions to society was his ability to diffuse bombs during World War II and even wrote a manual on it based on his extensive experience with doing so.

This sizable donation will be well-stewarded and be applied toward our endowment”, says CHEC CEO, Thomas Hecker. Hecker added “His legacy will now provide more children with quality outdoor educational and recreational experiences to learn about the natural environment in the Charlotte Harbor area”. Mr. Bottorf’s life’s work included helping children and the Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center is honored to be able to carry out his wishes to continue to do so on his behalf.

Charlotte Harbor Fund helps children learn about the estuaries and the environment

We recently received \$30,000 grant from the Charlotte Harbor Fund , this fund was set up by Charles Caniff, Sr. Mr. Caniff was the one of the co-founders of CHEC back in 1987. His son, Charles Caniff Jr. and grandson, Chad Oxman, serve on the board that annually decides the allocation of funding. This grant will allow the Center to provide outreach programming on the importance of estuaries to all Charlotte County 3rd graders. Additionally, it will fund several weeks of free summer camps.



Above: Caniff Center at Alligator Creek Preserve in Punta Gorda

For more information, go to www.checflorida.org

Another Great Year of Volunteering at the Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center

The Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center offers a lot of different volunteering opportunities for citizens in the communities of Punta Gorda and Englewood. From helping with the desk maintaining the trails, narrating the boat rides at the Peace River, there is always some way to help. Volunteers are essential to keep CHEC up and running and at the same time helping to protect the environment through education.

The rewards of volunteering are always innumerable. Being able to make a difference in the future of the Harbor, allowing future generations the opportunity of having such a beautiful place to enjoy nature at its best, and providing wildlife with a sanctuary just to name a few. Also working along side other like-minded volunteers, is perfect for networking and socializing.

Volunteers at Alligator Creek have supported many different educational programs like the Guided Nature Walks, both at the Center and at Bayshore Park. They narrate the Peace River Boat Rides the Kingfisher Fleet. Other volunteers are essential to sustaining all the essential behind the scenes work, like providing coverage for the Clyde Butcher Exhibit, maintenance of the bird blind, maintaining the butterfly gardens and operating the front desk of the center.

Volunteers Bob Isaksen and Ed Williams built the bridge that now connects the Welcome Center to the Education Building at Alligator Creek, among many other projects they have done to upgrade and maintain the trails and facilities for our visitors to enjoy.



Above: New connector bridge



Above: New dock extension

Volunteers are Invaluable at CHEC

THANKS FOR GIVING

In what has become an annual event, every November, CHEC volunteers gather at the Alligator Creek location for food and fun.

CHEC staff cook turkeys and serve their volunteer counterparts, to thank them for their incredible dedication and service. Guests were treated to music from Les and Mary Caraher this year; many bringing their own favorite dishes and desserts to share.

It was a memorable day filled with gratitude for each other, as well as the important and good work we collectively get to do together. From all of us who work at CHEC, we want to express to our volunteers – “Thanks for Giving!” We couldn’t do what we do without you!



Just a few of our many terrific volunteers on our gardening team.

Do you like meeting new people and want to help?

We have immediate openings for volunteer greeters who help orient our guests, handle gift shop sales, and answer incoming calls from our new comfortable front desk reception area.

DID YOU KNOW?

In 2015, the Cedar Point volunteers conducted 2014 hrs in the office, 744 on programs, 329.5 at meetings, 903.5 doing studies and 1010.5 doing maintenance (mostly exotic removal) for a total of 5001.5 hours of volunteer work at 7 Charlotte County Parks, 1 Conservation Easement and 16 water quality monitoring sites?!



CHEC is a private, non-profit corporation whose mission is to offer environmental education, recreation, research, and preservation land management to citizens and visitors of the Charlotte Harbor area.

Harvest for the Harbor

We held our first and annual fundraiser called “ Harvest for the Harbor”. An exclusive and unforgettable evening on Charlotte Harbor. This unique outdoor farm-to-table event celebrated the Harbor’s harvest and local, small farmers with all proceeds going to benefit CHEC. All guests had the opportunity to sample distinctively delicious dishes created especially for this event by local chefs. It was a night to remember as the sun set over beautiful Charlotte Harbor along with rustic decorations, live local musicians and exciting silent auction items.



Above: Award Winning Chefs, Steve Iadevaia-River CityGrill, Don Splain ~ Personal Chef & Freedom Teague ~ Food & Thought Organic Cafe

Right: Guest enjoying a multi-course dinner Below: Thank you to our sponsors!

Mark you 2016 calendars now for “Harvest for the Harbor”



Board Vice Chair & Harvest Committee Chair, Stacy Calvino



Sustainable Spoonbill Award

Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center proudly awarded Eva Worden with its first and annual Spoonbill Sustainability Award at the 2015 Harvest for the Harbor. The Spoonbill Sustainability Award is the highest honor presented annually by the Center to recognize an individual or group whose work and actions are exceptionally significant and inspiring contribution to sustainability in the greater Charlotte Harbor area. Is to recognize his/her role as a community member or as part of a business, government, nonprofit or community organization that sustains or improves our quality of life in Southwest Florida.

Worden, along with her husband, Chris Worden PhD, whom she met while both were in the Horticulture Masters program at University of Maryland. They both went on to receive PhD's. Eva at Yale in Ecosystem Management and Chris in Soil Science at the University of Connecticut. Together they have taught thousands on the benefits of being a good steward for the planet through sustainable organic farming. The Wordens have been awarded an Official Proclamation by the State of Connecticut for their contributions to organic agriculture, are recipients of the prestigious Florida Innovative Farmer Award, and have been named Organic Farmer Experts by the Organic Trade Association. Eva, is also a former professor of horticulture from the University of Florida. Her demonstrated sustained commitment to the area's sustainability and protection of the area's natural resources through the farm's use of best management practices is befitting of CHEC's mission to protecting the Charlotte Harbor watershed and we were so pleased to offer her this token of acknowledgment for her efforts.



Above: Sustainable Spoonbill Award recipient Dr. Eva Worden and her son, Grant with sponsor and award presenter John Beane of Presley Beane Financial Services.

Below: Kaley Miller and Heather Nedley present a check to the Center for \$41,500 to support our watershed education programs for toddlers to



Honey for the Harbor

Sweeten your life, while providing enrichment for local school children.

Support the Center buy purchasing raw, organic, local and sustainable honey such as Sanibel Seagrape, , Black Mangrove, Saw Palmetto, Melaleuca, Florida Wildflower and Orange Blossom.



Clyde Butcher Exhibit a Huge Success.



Between Nov. 2, 2015 and Jan. 21, 2016, visitors enjoyed dramatic imagery of the famed photographer, Clyde Butcher in the Charles E. Caniff Education Center. The Preserving Eden exhibit included 36 darkroom developed, black and white photographs in varying sizes. The traveling exhibit celebrates Florida's wilderness and was the first time it was on display in Charlotte County. The exhibit generated high attendance and many donations, with the proceeds benefitting children's environmental education.

A HUGE thank you to Osborne Levell Wealth Management and Wells Fargo Advisors Financial Network who sponsored the exhibit and book signing with Clyde Butcher.





Summer Eco-Camps

Enroll Now! Space is Limited



Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center
Alligator Creek Preserve ~ Punta Gorda
Cedar Point Environmental Park ~ Englewood
Are you interested in enrolling your child in an enriching educational learning adventure through Florida's ecosystems! If so, NOW is the time to register for one CHEC's full-day summer camp programs. Each session will include enriching outdoor explorations, hands on activities, and will be taught by highly trained educators. Reserve your child's seat today!

(941) 575-5435 - thomas@checflorida.org www.checflorida.org

Please inquire about our new Spring Sunset Cruises to visit the bird rookeries.

Charlotte Harbor and Peace River Nature and Sunset Cruise

Enjoy a private guided cruise for you and 12 guests into old Florida to witness a spectacular sunset with hundreds of wading birds returning to their rookery, all while sampling locally brewed craft beer.

Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center CEO, Thomas Hecker and a licensed boat captain will take you out into the largest protected estuary in the United States on a 29 ft pontoon boat to view abundant wildlife including dolphins, manatees, bald eagles, rosette spoonbills, glossy and white ibis, wood stork, egrets, herons, alligators and more.

This 3-hour excursion offers a unique and priceless opportunity to experience the best that Southwest Florida has to offer. Flexible dates year-round.



Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center

"Connect to Nature"

Alligator Creek Environmental Center
10941 Burnt Store Road
Punta Gorda, FL 33955
(941) 575-5435

Cedar Point Environmental Center
2300 Placida Road
Englewood, FL 34224
(941) 475-0769