



CHARLOTTE COUNTY
Economic Development

WEEKEND WAVE

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Friday Economic Roundup

FGCU awarded \$1.1 million STEM grant

By THYRIE BLAND News-Press

Florida Gulf Coast University has been awarded a \$1.1 million grant to address the need for science, technology, engineering and math teachers in Southwest Florida.

The grant is from the Richard M. Schulze Family Foundation and will be paid over five years. The money will be used for the following:

- * Scholarships for undergraduate science, technology, engineering and math, which is also known as STEM, majors who minor in education and agree to teach for at least two years after graduating.

- * Training for STEM professionals who choose to teach.

- * Summer workshops to help teachers improve in STEM education.

"This pilot grant is intended to provide FGCU, an important player in teacher preparation in Florida, with an opportunity to decrease the debt load some students face that almost necessarily sends them into professions other than education while all along they might have preferred teaching as a career," said Mark Dienhart, who is the foundation's chair and chief executive officer.

For more information, call 239-590-1067 or go to fgcu.edu/foundation.

Punta Gorda airport grows with Allegiant flights

By LAURA RUANE NEWS-PRESS WRITER

Punta Gorda Airport is at a crucial point in its ambitious two-year terminal expansion program.

On Monday, passengers of Allegiant Air - its only scheduled commercial carrier - will use the new section of Bailey Terminal for the first time.

Construction will continue nearly nonstop, however. The original 16,000-square-foot terminal building will continue to be in use through Sunday. Next, it will be gutted, and updated to match the 40,000-square-foot addition that was built hip-to-jowl with the older structure.

Airport leaders aim to have the entire terminal transformed by February or March 2016. Meanwhile, they believe passengers will like what they see of the brighter, more spacious new wing.

"I'm hopeful they'll say 'What an improvement!'" said airport chief Gary Quill.

The airport's expansion is timely, given the pace of Allegiant's service growth here.

Over the past two years, Allegiant's local service has soared from roughly seven cities to 28. The latest additions, Grand Rapids, Mich., Akron/Canton, Ohio, and Kansas City, Mo., begin in November.

On Allegiant's wings, the airport served more than 628,000 passengers last year - an 88 percent increase over 2013.

This week, the Charlotte County Airport Authority announced the August passenger count totaled 60,240, a 55 percent increase year over year. August was the 20th consecutive month for year over year increases.

Naples-based DeAngeles Diamond Construction is general contractor for the expansion project, which has a total cost of about \$9.1 million.

The expansion is costing about \$8.6 million, with an additional \$500,000 for phase one of a parking lot expansion. The Federal Aviation Administration is chipping in about 70 percent, and the state transportation department and Charlotte County Airport Authority are each chipping in 15 percent of expenses.

When completed, the new terminal will boast:

- * Six air gates, with the potential to expand to 11;
- * A shop selling gifts, food and beverages;
- * A bigger parking lot;

and

- * A "whole lotta more seats," Quill said.

Punta Gorda Airport's service by Allegiant is tough to compare with multicarrier service at neighboring commercial airports. Allegiant fares tend to be much lower; however, Punta Gorda's routes typically are twice weekly.

Since moving to West Virginia last fall to work and to assist her mother, Lissa Craig Ford has used Allegiant regularly to spend long weekends with husband Peter Ford who's living in Estero.

She's disappointed the carrier recently ended its nonstop from Huntington, W.Va., to Punta Gorda, but said:

"The savings were huge. I paid anything from \$48 to \$120 each way. When the fare was \$48, I'd do the trip twice a month."

Flying Allegiant is not for everyone, though. "These aren't business travelers who need to get to a hub all of the time," said Pamella Seay, an airport commissioner and a professor at Florida Gulf Coast University.

What Allegiant does, Seay said, is make travelers out of "people who otherwise would be sitting on their couches."

Hands Across the Harbor launches Charlotte County's first Half Marathon

The Charlotte County and Punta Gorda Community Redevelopment Agencies (CRAs) invite residents to participate in the 8th Annual Hands Across the Harbor - Half Marathon Bridge Run, Ride, and Roll. The event will be on January 30, 2016 and feature a half marathon, 5k competitive run, 13.1 mile competitive longboard race as well as 5k fun walk, 13.1, 20 and 30 mile bike rides. Early registration ranges from \$25-\$50 and is available at www.HandsAcrossTheHarbor.com.

"Each year we draw in hundreds of residents and visitors who want to enjoy the beauty of the harbor, while staying healthy themselves. We've had a lot of support for expanding the run to a half marathon and are excited to see even more fitness enthusiasts this year!" said

chair, Debrah Forester.

In addition to adding the half marathon, Hands Across the Harbor has registered as a "green" event through Fit Planet.

"Our committee felt strongly that if we are supporting Charlotte Harbor's environment, we need to 'walk the walk' by making greener choices," explained Forester.

Awards for the half marathon and other events will be made from recycled glass. Waste Management will be providing additional recycling stations throughout the event. Supplies for the pancake breakfast will be green-sourced and recyclable. Event organizers are also encouraging attendees to go green with paperless registrations, carpooling, and by bringing reusable water containers to the event.

Early registration rates will start to go up on October 1st, so residents are encouraged to register early and rally a team in support of Hands Across the Harbor. Pre-registered participants will receive a high-performance t-shirt, free pancake breakfast, awards and a chance to win the Fabulous Getaway Prize - a two-night stay at the Hyatt Regency Coconut Point Resource and Spa plus a \$200 hotel gift card.

Proceeds from Hands Across the Harbor benefit the education programs at the Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center. For more information, visit www.HandsAcrossTheHarbor.com.

Charlotte County Mobile APP

The Charlotte County, FL mobile app is now available! Report issues, ask questions, get information--use your smartphone to report an issue such as a damaged street sign or illegal dumping. Receive updates and track the status anytime. Connect with other county services--lightning alerts at county pools, CC-TV live, park trail guides, and fun things to do. Find the free app in your device's app store or visit www.CharlotteCountyFL.gov and "Get the App" from the Hot Topics list on the left.

Enterprise Zone

To encourage economic development in economically distressed areas of the state, in 1982 Florida launched an Enterprise Zone program by providing incentives to induce private investment. At the 2015 legislative session, extension of the Enterprise Zone program was not authorized, and the program will sunset on Dec. 31, 2015.

Incentives include business machinery and equipment sales tax refund, building materials sales tax refund, job tax credit, and property tax credit for Florida corporations. To qualify for the incentives, a business or home must be within the Enterprise Zone, and further specific eligibility criteria must be met. The Charlotte County Enterprise Zone was approved by the state in 2013. The zone includes portions of the Punta Gorda Interstate Airport Park, Charlotte Harbor Community Redevelopment Area (CRA), Parkside CRA, and Punta Gorda, totaling approximately 16 square miles.

Visit http://FloridasInnovationCoast.com/index.php/site_selection/enterprise_zone for more information.

Applications must be approved by the Florida Department of Revenue before the sunset date.

For more information contact Debrah Forester, Redevelopment Manager with the Charlotte County Economic Development Department, at 941-764-4943 or Debrah.Forester@CharlotteCountyFL.gov.

FLORIDA ECONOMIC NEWS

- Sarasota No. 31 on list of most livable cities ([Sarasota Herald-Tribune](#))
- Blue Origin selects Florida's Space Coast for commercial aerospace operations ([Florida Trend](#))
- Palm Beach County to consider \$1 million in incentives for two manufacturers ([South Florida Sun-Sentinel](#))
- Sarasota County tourism to target meetings market ([Sarasota Herald-Tribune](#))

US ECONOMIC NEWS

- Household income approaches prerecession level ([AP](#))
- Another big drop in initial jobless claims ([Bloomberg](#))
- Federal Reserve will keep interest rates the same ([AP](#))
- U.S. eases rules for travel, doing business in Cuba ([AP](#))

ENTREPRENEUR NEWS

- Getting your online business ready for the holiday season ([Entrepreneur](#))

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