

CONGRATULATIONS!



Rob & Annette Lopez
ServiceMasters-CCS
2012 Blue Chip Award Winner



Welcome to Charlotte County Economic Development Office Newsletter

Please enjoy your copy of the Charlotte County Economic Development Office Newsletter. If you need any further information, please feel free to contact our office at 941-764-4941 or at FloridaEDO@charlottefl.com.

Check Out the Improved Virtual Entrepreneur Web Site



Global Entrepreneurship Week

The Charlotte County Economic Development Office partnered with our local Entrepreneurial Support Organizations - Goodwill, SCORE; Workforce Development Board and the Small Business Development Center to celebrate Global Entrepreneurship Week.

The week started with "Wake Up Charlotte with Charly



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UPCOMING EVENTS

Charlotte County
New Business Tax
Receipts

November - 96

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UPCOMING EVENTS

December 3 - Charlotte Harbor CRA Advisory Committee Meeting 11 AM, Room 119

December 6 - ECEC Meeting (Call for Information)

December 15 - Chamber Christmas Parade, 12 noon

December 19- IDA Meeting

Caldwell". Mr. Caldwell shared his 7 Fundamentals of Online success to both business owners and students at Charlotte Technology Center. Mr. Caldwell provided great tips and additional resources to benefit both for profit and not for profit businesses and organizations that use the web. For more information visit: www.successacademy.us.

The luncheon program held on November 14 recognized owners of three start-up companies that have successfully launched their businesses and have demonstrated entrepreneurial spirit and enthusiasm. Bob Burtholder, a SCORE counselor, introduced Charlotte (CeeCee) Krasinski as the SCORE entrepreneur of the year.



Charlotte Krasinski identified a problem and developed a solution. She manufactures and sells the "snap-a-strap" purse clip. Her product can be found at several area stores and salons. To purchase this innovative product please visit: <http://snap-a-strap.webs.com/>.

Peter Keating, Small Business Development Center (SBDC) Counselor recognized two clients; Amanda Wathen of Hucky's Softball Training Inc. and Vince Molnar of O-Sea-D Aquatic Adventures.

Ms. Wathen is a former graduate from Port Charlotte High School and a former professional player for the Russian National Team Carrousel. Her goal is to encourage young women to get and stay healthy through soft ball. Ms. Wathen offers a full range of training programs and is the instructor for Miss Charlotte Fast Pitch Softball camp.

Mr. Molnar is a graduate from Charlotte High School, class of 2006. After graduating from college with a degree in molecular biology in 2010, Vince decided to turn his passion for the outdoors into a business and in July 2010 he launched O-Sea D Aquatic Adventures a full service kayak retail center and eco-adventure company located in Punta Gorda. To get kayak lessons or to book an adventure visit: www.oseadkayaking.com or call 347-8102.

The guest speaker at the luncheon was Brent C.J. Britton. Brent is a Computer Science graduate from MIT and has a law degree from Boston University. He is an entrepreneur and an angel fund investor. He presented an entertaining presentation on how to develop your "pitch" to investors. The presentation was geared towards second stage companies looking to secure venture capital for business expansion; however his points can be applied to anyone selling their product, idea, or self. The top points included:

Noon at the EDO
Conference Room 504

December 24 & 25 - EDO
closed for Christmas

January 1 - EDO Closed for
New Years

January 3 - ECEC Meeting
(Call for Information)

January 7 - Charlotte
Harbor CRA Advisory
Committee Meeting 11 AM,
Room 119

January 15 - Suncoast
Technology Forum
Luncheon, Polo Bar & Grill,
Lakewood Ranch, 11:30 - 1
PM

January 16 - IDA Meeting
Noon at the EDO
Conference Room 504

January 21- EDO Closed for
Martin Luther King Day

January 26 - Hands Across
the Harbor

February 4 - Charlotte
Harbor CRA Advisory
Committee Meeting 11 AM,
Room 119

February 7 - ECEC Meeting
(Call for Information)

February 18 - EDO Closed
for President's Day

February 19 - Suncoast
Technology Forum
Luncheon, Polo Bar & Grill,
Lakewood Ranch, 11:30 - 1
PM

February 20 - IDA Meeting
Noon at the EDO
Conference Room 504

March 4 - Charlotte Harbor
CRA Advisory Committee
Meeting 11 AM, Room 119

March 7 - ECEC Meeting

1. Create the story - identify the problem, identify the market, identify your great solution, and identify your perfect team. Tell a good, clear, exciting, entertaining, repeatable story. Tell your story in one sentence that includes a captivating hook. If presenting a presentation keep it to no more than 20 minutes with a maximum of 20 slides. Keep the presentation direct - tell them what you want and be truthful
2. Deliver the experience - look sharp, be excited, know your stuff
3. Refine and rehearse - research your audience; follow a vision with a sense of purpose. Practice, Practice, Practice your pitch. Have data that backs up your claims.
4. For those seeking venture capital, the pitch is about the money. Be prepared with the ROI (Return on Investment).

Look at "pitching" as auditioning for the starring role in a major production. You must be confident and knowledgeable to succeed.

Follow Brent's blog at brentbritton.com or on Facebook by searching [brent.britton](https://www.facebook.com/brent.britton) or Twitter; [@bcjb](https://twitter.com/bcjb).

The final program, "Get Your Social Media On!", with Tamara Patzer, provided an overview of some of the new social platforms including Pinterest an online bulletin board to share images. Visit www.pinterest.com to start connecting.



Get Your Social Media On!
class with Tamara Patzer

For more information on SCORE please visit www.CharlotteDesotoSCORE.org. For more information on SBDC, please visit them at <http://cli.fgcu.edu/sbdc>.

Lean Sigma Certification Course

Florida Gulf Coast University is offering a thirteen week course to achieve Lean Sigma Certification. Lean Sigma represents a collaboration of years of proven management strategies developed into one clear and concise management program with one goal in mind; to improve the performance of a company or organization. Whether your company's goal is to provide the best customer service or the best products, the process is the same and is very simple!

(Call for Information)

March 19 - Suncoast Technology Forum Luncheon, Polo Bar & Grill, Lakewood Ranch, 11:30 - 1 PM

March 20 - IDA Meeting Noon at the EDO Conference Room 504

April 1 - Charlotte Harbor CRA Advisory Committee Meeting 11 AM, Room 119

April 4 - ECEC Meeting (Call for Information)

April 16 - Suncoast Technology Forum Luncheon, Polo Bar & Grill, Lakewood Ranch, 11:30 - 1 PM

April 17 - IDA Meeting Noon at the EDO Conference Room 504

May 2 - ECEC Meeting (Call for Information)

May 6 - Charlotte Harbor CRA Advisory Committee Meeting 11 AM, Room 119

May 15- IDA Meeting Noon at the EDO Conference Room 504

May 21 - Suncoast Technology Forum Luncheon, Polo Bar & Grill, Lakewood Ranch, 11:30 - 1 PM

May 27 - EDO Closed for Memorial Day

Benefits of Lean Sigma include;

- Reduced waste and costs,
- Improved profitability,
- Increased customer satisfaction,
- Greater employee satisfaction

When: February 21, 28
March 7, 14, 21, 28
April 4, 18, 25
May 2, 9, 16, 23

Time: 1:30 - 4:30 PM

Where: Florida Gulf Coast University
Office of Continuing Education
117 Herald Court
Punta Gorda, FL

For more details, contact Dr. Robert Peterson at 941-505-1554 or email rpeterson@fgcu.edu.

Hands Across the Harbor



Saturday, January 26th, the 5th Annual Hands Across the Harbor will kick off from Bayshore Live Oak Park with fitness enthusiasts walking, running or biking over the bridge at the historic Charlotte Harbor and returning back to the park for breakfast and family friendly activities, awards, door prizes a chance to win a get-a-way package to the Royal Plaza - an official Downtown Disney Resort.

Proceeds from the 5th annual walk, run and bike event will benefit Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center. Register at www.handsacrosstheharbor.com.

Gulf Coast Venture Forum

The Gulf Coast Venture Forum 2013 Kick Off meeting was held on November 1. Ray Leach, CEO of Jumpstart Inc. was the guest speaker. Ray Leach provided an inspiring overview of the Entrepreneurial cultural. Jump Start Inc., started in Northeastern Ohio to encourage startup businesses. In 2012, JumpStart Inc. received a \$1 million dollar challenge grant from the Knight Foundation to expand into six other regions in Michigan, Indiana, Minnesota, New York, and Louisiana. Gulf Coast Venture Forum is considering the

steps necessary to bring the model to Florida. According to Ray Leach, the average start up owner is a 40 year old male, who is married with children. His advice is to seek out allies and mentors and to be prepared for rejection when looking for investor funding. He believes we need to encourage and educate investors to invest real money in startups and we need to celebrate entrepreneurs and provide more entrepreneurial training in schools. For more information on JumpStartUp visit: <http://www.jumpstartinc.org>.

EZ Strategic Development Plan

The draft Enterprise Zone Strategic Development Plan is available for public review on the EDO website: www.floridasinnovationcoast.com The Board of County Commissioners will conduct a public hearing to consider adoption of the plan at 10 a.m. on December 11. Following adoption of the Plan, the Plan and application will be sent to the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity. The Economic Development Office anticipates that the zone will be approved during the first quarter of 2013. Once approved the zone will provide incentives to businesses to expand or locate in the enterprise zone. For more information, please telephone Debrah Forester at 941.764.4943.

Suncoast Technology Forum

The November 20 Suncoast Technology Forum luncheon included a presentation by Cihan Cobanoglu, Professor & Dean of the College of Hospitality and Technology Leadership, University of South Florida. Dr. Cobanoglu discussed how technology is changing the way services are delivered to assure customer satisfaction and repeat visits. His focus is on the hotel industry and his students have worked with the Ritz Carlton, Sarasota to develop new technology.

Classical South Florida Begins Broadcasting on 88.7FM

Classical South Florida (CSF), a nonprofit listener supported public radio organization dedicated to broadcasting classical music, has begun airing its programming in Fort Myers and throughout Southwest Florida on WNPS 88.7FM. CSF acquired the local frequency earlier this year.

Classical South Florida began operating in October 2007 via WKCP 89.7FM in Miami and later expanded its service to WPBI 90.7FM in West Palm Beach. WNPS 88.7FM in Fort Myers launched in June 2012. Classical South Florida is a listener-supported organization affiliated with American Public Media Group.

The CSF program schedule will include broadcasts of nationally renowned programs such as Performance Today, SymphonyCast and live performances from The Metropolitan Opera, as well as Florida favorites such as Backstage with the New World Symphony. More information on programming and the CSF organization is available online at ClassicalSouthFlorida.org.

2012 Blue Chip Award Winner



Rob and Annette Lopez, Air Force veterans who built a thriving commercial cleaning business, ServiceMaster-CCS, on shoe leather and determination, are the winners of the 18th annual Southwest Florida Blue Chip Community Business Award Thursday, November 1st.

"ServiceMaster-CCS epitomizes the spirit and resolve of America's small businesses," said Frederick Nerone, Ph.D., chief investment officer, Hodges University and Blue Chip Award judge. "Most people are not aware of the sacrifices that are made by entrepreneurs as they don't like to talk about themselves or their achievements. ServiceMaster illustrates everything that is right about our small businesses and their unique ability to overcome adversity and create jobs. This is, truly, a compelling story."

BB&T-Oswald Trippe and Company and BB&T Bank sponsor the competition each year to recognize small business owners who have overcome adversity and succeeded in private enterprise with the hope that others will learn from their experiences.



The Lopezes are prime examples of this intrepid breed of entrepreneur.

When they separated from the Air Force and moved to Charlotte County in 2007, the country's economic recession was just taking hold. Annette Lopez was able to find work as a paralegal, but Rob Lopez had no luck landing a job.

He decided to make his own luck by launching a local ServiceMaster from his garage without any revenue, contracts or accounts. What he lacked in resources he made

up for with drive and desire. He marketed his business tirelessly through cold calls, sales letters, newsletters, posters and personal visits, wearing out three pairs of shoes in the first six months.

Working six days a week, marketing by day and cleaning by night, he was grossing \$10,000 a month by the end of the first year. Just as things were looking up, he became gravely ill. Cerebral spinal fluid had built up in his brain, the result of a previous bout of bacterial meningitis, and he needed emergency surgery to implant two shunts to drain the fluid to his stomach.

Although he had no health insurance, he was able to find a surgeon who would operate and let him pay off the bill over time. It was one of seven brain operations and countless medical procedures he'd need to repair shunt malfunctions, infections and other complications.

As a sole proprietor of a fledgling business with only one employee, it was a dire time. He hired a second worker and his family pitched in. He essentially ran the business from his hospital bed while his wife worked full time as a paralegal, shuttled paperwork back and forth to him and made sure the quality of his employees' work remained high.

"It's amazing to look back and think about all that he has done while dealing with his condition," Annette Lopez says. "He even finalized and signed a contract while in the hospital bed."

Although he had ongoing health problems and often felt bad, he kept building the business. "He really worries more about his employees getting paid than he does about the company's bottom line," said his wife. "He has a big heart."

Eventually, she left her job and joined him in his business as he struggled to recover. They continued to grow the company, moving into a real office and then into a bigger one. With well-trained employees and a web-based communications log for each account, they were able to provide excellent customer service, added more clients and employees. In 2009, they purchased the Lee County territory, further expanding the business.

Knowing that Rob's financial and medical history would disqualify them for bank loans, they built the business from the ground up on their own. As a result, the business remains debt-free. Technology has allowed Rob Lopez to handle much of the business from a laptop, which has proved invaluable as his health has been so unpredictable that he must often work from bed.

They are still paying off Rob's medical bills, a little bit every month. But they have been able to hire people to handle some of the tasks Rob once did himself. Annette Lopez handles administrative and financial matters while Rob Lopez concentrates on sales and marketing.

They have 22 part-time workers and three full-time employees. And, even as he struggles with his health issues, Rob Lopez puts in long hours to keep the business running, "I run my business with four core values. Honor God in all I do. Develop my employees. Excel with customers. And grow profitably."

Despite his health problems and the rocky economy, the Lopezes feel optimistic about the future.



The finalists included Kim and Gerard Campanella, Bicycle Center of Port Charlotte; Shelly Osterhout, Computer Solutions of America in Fort Myers; David Wacker, Intech Printing & Direct Mail Inc. in Naples; Peter Garda and Larry Smith, owners, and Matt Smith, vice president, P&L Foods Inc. d/b/a Stan's Coffee Service in Port Charlotte.

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