This column originally appeared in the SUN Newspaper on November 6, 2024

Reflecting on 20 Years with TEAM Punta Gorda

By Nancy Johnson

Today, I'm writing my final column as CEO of TEAM Punta Gorda. After careful thought, I have decided to step away. This moment feels right to pause and reflect on the incredible journey we've had together—the ways TEAM Punta Gorda and our community have grown side by side over the past 20 years.

It all began with the devastation of Hurricane Charley. I vividly remember arriving in Punta Gorda in 2004, just after Charley's impact, and seeing debris piled up like snowbanks. Our community was resilient. Over 1,200 individuals and businesses came together, raising $250,000 in only a few weeks to start rebuilding. We brought in a city planner, and with united effort, created a Citizens' Master Plan. That plan became the guiding vision for Punta Gorda's recovery and growth—a true touchstone that has shaped our development for years to come. What has unfolded since then has been nothing short of remarkable.



Reflecting on my time at TEAM Punta Gorda, I feel immense pride in what we've accomplished together. Our efforts have focused on three key areas:

Community Improvement: From beautifying downtown landscaping to developing community gardens and adding interpretive signage along Harborwalk, our projects have enhanced our shared spaces. Programs like Paint Your Heart Out, the Veterans Fountain, and the Gilchrist Park Playground are tangible reminders of our commitment to a vibrant, welcoming community.

Community Development: We have worked to make Punta Gorda a better place for all. Through the 2005 Master Plan, the affordable housing initiatives, and the Journey to the Future symposium, we have laid groundwork for sustainable growth. Preparing for the City's 2019 Master Plan and launching water quality projects such as the current Citizens Partnership for Clean Canals, highlight our dedication to long-term progress.

Community Service: Programs like the Yellow Bike Loaner Program, Pedal and Play events, and TEAM Builds with Habitat for Humanity have connected and empowered residents, offering ways to get involved and make a difference.

As Punta Gorda faces the challenges of two new hurricanes, I am stepping away with a deep sense of gratitude for these past two decades and a hopeful heart for what lies ahead. Our community has shown time and again that we can rise above hardship by coming together. The work is far from over, and I look forward to supporting Punta Gorda in any way I can. Now, more than ever, we need to continue collaborating, understanding one another, and moving forward—stronger together.

Thank you, Punta Gorda, for allowing me to serve alongside you.

Nancy Johnson is the former CEO of TEAM Punta Gorda. Ideas or questions can be addressed to team@teampuntagorda.org or call 941-637-TEAM (8326). If you'd like to take a closer look at TEAM, visit the website, www.teampuntagorda.org. Sign up for TEAM Talk, the organization e-newsletter to keep up to date. TEAM Punta Gorda is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

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