

## TEAM Builds – “Boots on the Ground”

One of the many things that distinguishes TEAM Punta Gorda as a great community asset is the organization’s ability to turn out volunteers when and where they are most needed. Formed in 2004 after the devastation caused by Hurricane Charley, TEAM’s first task was to hire a world-renowned community planning firm to help create the Citizens’ Master Plan, a blueprint for future growth. Most of the concepts of that plan have been adopted by the city and the results have been impressive. Our quaint, friendly, waterside community has risen in great style from the rubble created by Charley.

Once the city had accepted the master plan and was hard at work implementing it, there was some question as to what TEAM would do next. What role would the organization play moving forward?

One of the ways TEAM has elected to be useful, is to collaborate with the city of Punta Gorda and other local non-profit entities on projects of importance to the community. These partnerships take various forms. Volunteers from TEAM, for example, recently worked with city leaders to conduct a needs survey for the future use of two aging facilities at Gilchrist Park. Over 1000 citizens participated in the survey, the results of which were presented to the city council in February. A paid consultant would have charged a significant sum to conduct such a thorough and well-written study. The cost to the city using TEAM volunteers was zero.

One partnership which stands out is TEAM’s relationship with Charlotte County Habitat for Humanity. First forged through the Paint Your Heart Out project in which volunteers repair and paint selected homes in the community, the relationship with Habit for Humanity continues to blossom. The TEAM Builds initiative makes use of TEAM’s army of volunteers to help Habitat build homes thus helping fulfill the promise of more affordable housing in our community.

It’s a productive partnership: Habitat is highly skilled at building affordable housing; TEAM, with its email distribution list of over 3,000, can get the word out when help is needed and put volunteer “boots on the ground.” At one of Habitat’s recent projects, for example, TEAM was able to generate dozens of volunteers for raising exterior walls, rough-in framing, roof truss

and roof deck installation, interior wall framing, siding installation and interior painting. Some of the volunteers signed up for multiple days of work while others elected to work fewer times. The TEAM signup program identified the work to be performed on any given day so volunteers could choose the type of work they preferred.

The result was that a charming, three-bedroom bungalow emerged from an empty lot and a deserving family had a new home. Great results from a powerful partnership.

*Bill Welsch – May, 2018*