



## Participation is the Key to Long-Term Success!

There are many things that make Punta Gorda a special place to live, work and play, and one of them is the high level of citizen participation. At TEAM Punta Gorda, participation is one of the foundational principles that has contributed to our success.

Volunteers are definitely the engine that makes TEAM Punta Gorda go. We provide year-round opportunities for citizens to participate in improving our community. Some volunteer for one day or sign up for a longer project. Many are here in Punta Gorda for just a few months a year. Others work remotely, sharing their talents.



As we approach our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we are still here, celebrating the volunteers that continue to make this work possible. In 2023, 661 volunteers lent a hand with over 20 committees and special projects. Most of the project ideas came from them. We are fortunate to have many retired professionals in our community who like to share their skills, but younger people volunteer as well, fitting the activities into their careers and family lives. We just like to make things better!

A great example of volunteers working as a team is our community cycling event, *Pedal and Play in Paradise*, held recently on March 23 at Laishley Park. Volunteers were everywhere, manning rest stops and assisting the 330 bicyclists. It takes about 80 volunteers to put this event together and they have done so for 15 years. What a great day!

Often citizens bring projects and resources to us, and we facilitate their implementation. The Bloom project is such a great example of volunteer talent and professionalism. These folks know what they are doing and are transforming our downtown block by block with beautiful floral planters. It's all being done with no taxpayer dollars, sponsored by the Alan & Barbara Schulman Foundation, and designed by Richard Polk. They've installed over 600 plants in 40 planters and are expanding. We're very proud to have this award-winning group be a part of TEAM Punta Gorda. They were recognized last year by the National America in Bloom organization for their exceptional volunteerism, and that is what TEAM is all about.

Currently, TEAM has focused its attention on local water quality. Working with other nonprofits such as Heal Our Harbor, as well as local government, TEAM has begun testing water quality in the Punta Gorda canal system in hopes of gathering science-based data on the level and nature of impairment. This can lead to citizen participation in working towards cleaner water.

As our mission has expanded during the past 20 years, so too has our need for more volunteer participation at the leadership level. TEAM has no problem finding volunteers for “boots on the ground” projects like *Paint Your Heart Out*, or the *Bicycle Loaner Program*. Our challenge, as is often the case for many nonprofits, is recruiting those willing to take on leadership roles in the organization such as committee chairs or marketing and communications functions. As TEAM turns twenty in 2024, I personally invite you to learn more about the leadership opportunities TEAM Punta Gorda has to offer. Find out what interests you at [www.teampuntagorda.org](http://www.teampuntagorda.org).

Please remember our community nonprofits during the April 9-10 Sarasota Community Foundation Biannual *Giving Challenge*. Your online donation of up to \$100 will be matched through the generosity of the Patterson Foundation.

*Nancy Johnson*

Nancy Johnson is the CEO of TEAM Punta Gorda. Ideas or questions can be addressed to her at [team@teampuntagorda.org](mailto:team@teampuntagorda.org). Or call 941-637-TEAM (8326). Find a schedule of upcoming activities, volunteer opportunities and more at [www.teampuntagorda.org](http://www.teampuntagorda.org). TEAM Punta Gorda is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.