



252 W. Marion Avenue, Punta Gorda, FL 33950 941-639-3720 [www.puntagordachamber.com](http://www.puntagordachamber.com)

## **Getting ready for new fiscal year:**

Plans are well on their way for the start of our new fiscal year, starting September 1st. The first major step in that process was reached last Friday as the new Board of Directors was approved, according to our by-laws. With no petition to change the slate having been received, Alexia Martin of WhitCo Insurance was duly elected Chair, starting in September, ably supported by Cherie George of Gettel Automotive as Chair Elect and Marjorie Benson of Friendly Floors as Vice Chair. Rounding off the Executive Committee will be Cathy Perry of Simply Sweet, Della Booth of TIME Realty Services and June Amara of Creative Window Treatments. June will be rounding off her year as Chair at the end of August. Although she'll be shy to admit it, she really did shine throughout the year as Chair. She presided under the strangest of circumstances, as we all exited the strains of 2020, dealing with the aftermath of a chaotic period in the business world. Running her own small business, she still dedicated her energy and time to the promotion of the entire business community in our area. A fond Thank You is being planned for September 18<sup>th</sup> at the Isles Yacht Club as we take time to thank her for her service and to welcome Alexia at our annual awards' dinner. From a very grateful Board and membership, June – we thank you from the bottom of our hearts! Joining the Board as new Directors this year will be: Brett Hawker of Illusions Salon and Spa/ Heartland Payment Systems, Tara McCoy of Bayfront Health, Kathy Robinson of Centennial Bank and Tim Sandage of Coastal Expressions and Wine/ Amazon Web Services. We welcome you all to the new Board family and congratulations. As the time of writing, Alexia Martin, as the new

Chair, who has the role of appointing three Associate Directors to guide her through her year, had made two of her three appointments – namely Jacqueline Benjamin of Charlotte State Bank and Trust and Zarita Mattox of Kingdom Life – Center for H.O.P.E. Jacqueline is no stranger to the Chamber Board, but nonetheless we appreciate everything you do in our name. Zarita is a newbie and we have very high hopes of the energy and drive she brings to the Board. Joining the Chamber two years ago, it was clear there was a chemistry that sparked when she stepped out and started to attend our gatherings. Now the membership is disappointed when she is not able to attend, because they miss her singing, among many other things!

As we appoint our new Board and work together on the growth of our extensive Program of Work for the upcoming year, it is very important to remind ourselves and others what the purpose of the Chamber is. In essence, we are the advocating voice of business in our community. We are a major stakeholder on all issues that affect the business community locally. We have exceptional connectivity to our elected officials and their staff. We present opportunities on a regular basis to network and strengthen your business with other business leaders in the area. We reach out to other communities and attract them to our area as a future potential location. We undertake events that benefit our community and make it FUN! There is a major misconception that we are connected to government and other national and State Chambers of Commerce. This is simply false. Being a member of another Chamber of Commerce network is voluntary and we have elected not to be part currently, until we see potential added benefits to our own members. We do not see the benefit of passing membership dues on to our own members, if we feel they underrepresent the needs of our community. We work with government in an advisory capacity, but are not in any way affiliated to them. Blaming a Chamber for the work carried out by any government entity is misguided and inaccurate. We are in a nutshell here to ensure our businesses make the best of what they can achieve in this

community and to keep the promotion of doing business locally vibrant to ensure a better community for all of us to live, work and play in.

Our upcoming networking commences tomorrow morning at 7.15am at Beef O'Brady's. Punta Gorda, as they host our July Business Over Breakfast, sponsored by Chelsea Place Senior Care. If you are planning to attend, or would like to see what it's all about, simply call us today on 941 639 3720 with your RSVP so we can cater accordingly. Attendance is free.

Our members have been saying how the job market is both volatile and stretched right now. As a result, on August 31<sup>st</sup>, we'll be hosting a job fair at the Event Center in Punta Gorda- 3-7pm. If you are looking for employees, book your space now, while space is available. Members are \$50 and non-members are \$100. We provide you with your skirted table and four chairs. Bring your banners and literature to attract new recruits! To sign up, simply call us on 941 639 3720 or email [chamber@puntagorda-chamber.com](mailto:chamber@puntagorda-chamber.com) Looking for employment? This is a free and ideal opportunity to meet local businesses who are all hiring. Bring your resumes and a smile and let's get everyone back to work and enjoying their careers.

Also, Chamber Feud is making a triumphant return. Last year, due to COVID, we didn't repeat the hilarious team-building fun of the previous year. Now, it's back. Will the 2019 winners, Chapman Insurance, hold on to their title? We have already received the 12 qualifying teams, so the practicing is already underway. The elimination rounds will take place on August 24<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> starting at 5.30pm and the finals will take place on September 2<sup>nd</sup>. The venue will be the Women's Club, on Sullivan Street. For all looking for a laugh, you are all invited to come along and enjoy our teams making fools of themselves at your expense. You simply cannot buy entertainment this cheap! \$5 entry and beer/wine/soda will be on hand for donation. We are also this year

offering small cheese/meat plates and popcorn to keep everyone nourished.

To check out all of our upcoming meetings, simply visit [www.puntagchamber.com](http://www.puntagchamber.com) and you'll see the next events in the top right corner (if using your desktop computer). Tickets for lunches are once again available online at this site, using the Chamber Store link. It's ok with us to bring your business friends and associates as guests to experience first-hand what others are talking about. Just by attending, there is a very good chance that your business may automatically be seen on our social media platform, as photos of these events are often shared to our Facebook page. Getting your name out there and having fun at the same time is a perfect compliment to "networking". Even those who are nervous about public speaking very quickly learn how comfortable we make you feel.

In November we are so looking forward to four jazz-filled days from November 17<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> as we present the Wine and Jazz Festival week. Tickets are now available by visiting the shop chamber link at [www.puntagordachamber.com](http://www.puntagordachamber.com) The Thursday night event is already sold out, so do not delay in getting your Wednesday, Friday and Saturday tickets before the same happens to them to. We are truly honored to get this show "back on the road". Special hotel rates are available at the Fourpoints by Sheraton (\$109). More hotels to follow shortly. Simply call them asking for the Wine and Jazz rate – 941 637 6770. It's time to enjoy family, friends and great music once again, right here in our backyard! Punta Gorda will party (safely) that week for sure!

Our weekly "Where's John?" videos have been enjoying great acclaim on both our social media platform and YouTube Channel. They are best viewed on a desktop and are always updated on our website [www.puntagordachamber.com](http://www.puntagordachamber.com) These videos give a great opportunity for businesses to showcase, for free, their businesses

but also for us to get to know the mission of each of our members that we highlight.

Our office is open each day (M-F 9-4) for your convenience. Have you visited our offices recently? We are located at 252 W Marion Avenue, Punta Gorda and we have two rooms filled with every piece of literature you could possibly need to make your stay, your residence or your business more fulfilling than ever. Don't forget, if you prefer, our website [www.puntagordachamber.com](http://www.puntagordachamber.com) has a new addition – our new 2021 Member and Visitor Guide, which makes looking up our members and finding things to do even easier for you. The link you'll find in the top right of our homepage. If you have any questions about our city, please do not hesitate to call us. We are here to help.

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Charlotte Sun is a proud Platinum sponsor of this Chamber.