

# 2023 ANNUAL REVIEW



**Thanks to our dedicated volunteers and financial supporters, TEAM prospered in a year filled with unique opportunities. We continue to partner with the public and private sectors to help make our dynamic community an even better place to live, work, and play.**

- Punta Gorda in Bloom volunteers successfully restored colorful planters and pots in historic downtown Punta Gorda during 2023, an ongoing enterprise funded by the Schulman Foundation.
- TEAM added 24 new yellow bikes to the Free Loaner Bike program during 2023. They are available at 4 strategic locations, including the newly renovated Fishermen's Village Marina.
- TEAM volunteers painted their hearts out refreshing 5 Port Charlotte homes in one morning for the Peace River Community Housing Project (PORCH). PORCH owned homes are leased to lower-income tenants who otherwise could not afford to live in our community.
- Pedal and Play in Paradise, Punta Gorda's premier biking event, welcomed more than 400 riders for a full day of tours and festivities. Exciting plans are underway for the March 23, 2024 cycling event.
- TEAM continues its commitment to community gardens. The 8th season of the History Park Organic Community Garden is fully subscribed. Late last year, TEAM and local community volunteers participated in the reclamation of an abandoned garden on E. Virginia Avenue. The fenced and manicured Happy Hour Gardens continues to enhance Punta Gorda's east side.
- Paddle Punta Gorda returned in 2023 to much acclaim. More than 60 kayakers explored 4 scenic waterways under the supervision of naturalists. Numerous prizes were awarded. TEAM volunteers and the Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center (CHEC) coordinated the event.
- TEAM also partnered with CHEC in July for a "Kid's Pedal in the Park" event, with participation by the Punta Gorda Police, YMCA, and many volunteers. Food, music, prizes, and fun made this a special day.
- TEAM continues to facilitate the Charlotte Harbor "Clean Water" project as plans move forward to test water samples in estuaries and canals.
- TEAM convened several historic organizations in Punta Gorda to discuss the future of the Freeman House and make recommendations to City Council.





## Free Bicycle Loaner Program Celebrates a Milestone

Florida's first free bike loaner program celebrated 13 years of remarkable community service with a host of new bicycles, pick up locations and accolades. The program, in cooperation with the City of Punta Gorda, serves more than 5,000 riders each year from every state and several countries. In



March, volunteers purchased, assembled, and distributed 24 new bikes to its 4 Punta Gorda host locations: Four Points by Sheraton, Fisherman's Village, Becky's Garden Shoppe and Springhill Suites. There are currently 36 bikes, including a "trike" and a hand-pedal bike. The new bikes were purchased at a greatly discounted price from TREK Bike Shop in Punta Gorda, funded through bike sponsorships and proceeds from Pedal and

Play in Paradise. The free bike loaner program is managed solely by TEAM volunteers. There is plenty of opportunity to get involved in this enriching program. *Pictured top left: Nancy Johnson accepts Peace River Riders bicycle club donated bike. Right: cyclists leaving from Four Points; riders enjoying the Punta Gorda River Walk. Learn more and get involved at [www.teampuntagorda.org/free-bike-program](http://www.teampuntagorda.org/free-bike-program).*



## Paddle Punta Gorda Explored our Estuaries

A total of 66 participants paddled under blue skies and favorable winds from 4 launch locations to learn about our beautiful scenic waterways. Numerous prizes were raffled including the grand prize, a \$500 paddle donated by EPIC Kayaks. Launch site sponsors included Downtown Bait & Tackle, Kayak Eco Tours, Bay Kayaking, and realtor Denise June. Paddlers enjoyed beautiful blue skies and abundant sunshine as they explored lush estuaries and inlets. *Pictured right is naturalist Ashley Cook,*



Park Manager of Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center.

## New "Kids Pedal in the Park" Event

TEAM partnered with the Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center to host a biking adventure for kids ages 7-12 in July. It was a fun-filled educational summer event held at CHEC's beautiful nature preserve in Punta Gorda. The fun included games, live music, scavenger hunt, breakfast, lunch, and prizes. Members of the Punta Gorda police department attended and provided new helmets for participants and taught them how to properly fit the helmets. Before and after the event, musicians Jim Austin and Bentley Smith of Salty Paws, provided live



entertainment. A representative from the YMCA was present with an activity station for the kids. Thank you Punta Gorda Rotary Foundation and all the other generous sponsors who provided funding. Story and photos at [www.teampuntagorda.org/bicycle-friendly-community-initiatives/](http://www.teampuntagorda.org/bicycle-friendly-community-initiatives/).

Learn more about TEAM initiatives at [www.teampuntagorda.org](http://www.teampuntagorda.org). Find the QR code link on page 4. Please support all our sponsors, including those Platinum Sponsors whose logos appear on page 3.





## Punta Gorda in Full Bloom

The Punta Gorda in Bloom team did it again. Enjoy the refreshed look of 400 new colorful plants added to 61 containers along Marion and Taylor in Punta Gorda by 20 enthusiastic volunteers. Punta Gorda in Bloom (PGIB) is an award-winning program, funded by the Schulman Foundation. Volunteers are always needed to "parent" the planters with attention. Contact TEAM to get involved. Learn more at <https://teampuntagorda.org/pginbloom/>



## Painting Their Hearts Out in Port Charlotte

Five affordable Port Charlotte rental homes owned by the Peace River Community Housing Project (PORCH) were painted in



November. PORCH homes are leased to deserving disadvantaged residents. Forty + TEAM volunteers tackled the project. The event was funded by the Punta Gorda Rotary Club Foundation. PORCH envisions a day when safe, affordable housing is available to all disadvantaged SW Florida populations, including disabled veterans, the underemployed, homeless, and those with special needs. Plans are in the works for more painting projects in 2024.



## Another Perfect Day for Pedal and Play

On a perfect Southwest Florida spring day, 417 riders enjoyed one of four cycling routes, great food, drink, and entertainment. One cyclist summed up the March 25, 2023, Pedal and Play in Paradise event with this comment: "Upbeat with exercise, food, beer, and people.... what's not to like?" We are grateful for the



generous support of 39 event sponsors including Waste Management, Suncoast Beverage, and Harbor Scoops. In addition to cycling the beautiful greater Punta



Gorda area, riders enjoyed yoga, massages, raffles, and games. 98% of survey respondents indicated they were ready to participate again. This was great news for the hundreds of TEAM volunteers and Naval Junior ROTC students who put in countless hours to produce a memorable event. *Thanks to photographers Jim Austin, Scott Johnson, and Deb Hoyt for photos. The 2024 Pedal and Play event is scheduled for March 23.*





## TEAM Turns 20 in 2024

### CEO Nancy Johnson Reflects on Our Mission

As we approach our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, I can't help but reflect on the impact TEAM Punta Gorda has had on our community since its inception after a devastating hurricane in 2004. It was then that volunteers decided to stick around and be part of the rebuilding process. Their commitment to the city became the organization known as TEAM Punta Gorda. Since then, we've developed great partnerships with our local government, and with the other community organizations whose efforts make this town great. It's this spirit of collaboration which continues to sustain us these many years later. It has been a privilege to serve and be a part of the creative efforts that we nurture. Citizens bring projects and resources to us, and we facilitate their implementation. We have become a force for growth and development, and a vehicle for community engagement. We look forward to exciting times ahead, and continued support from our sponsors and friends as TEAM turns 20 in 2024.



## Volunteers are the Key to Our Success

### Board President Sandy Dressler

2023 was a highly successful year. The key to our success is our volunteers and we had more than 600 volunteers this year.



Volunteers are a gift to the community. They give but they also receive. There are benefits to being a volunteer. Volunteering gives you a sense of fulfillment. It creates opportunities to meet new people and make new friends. It gives you a sense of belonging as you contribute to important causes and help your community. Volunteering also gives you opportunities to

explore new interests and productively use your skills.

Volunteerism is crucial to the success of TEAM Punta Gorda. It is always needed and forever appreciated. We look forward to 2024 which is the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of TEAM Punta Gorda.

*Pictured: Sandy and Ron Dressler at Pedal and Play.*

## TEAM Punta Gorda Board of Directors

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