Cedar Point Happenings

Read up on the latest happenings at Cedar Point, the saltier side of CHEC!

Expanded Programs Offer Even More Fun!

From Wild Wednesdays to junior camps to manatee outreach, CHEC is now offering even more ways to enjoy environmental education!

Landmark Donation

The largest gift ever given to support CHEC’s programs and mission.

David Sussman Photography Exhibit

Displayed in CHEC Punta Gorda’s Caniff Education Center building, this gorgeous nature photography exhibit was a smashing success!

CHEC’s Annual Signature Fundraiser

The 3rd annual Harvest for the Harbor, CHEC’s signature fundraising event.

A New Lease on Life for our George Hindmarsh Monarch Garden!

CEO Doris Button and husband Charlie have transformed our monarch butterfly garden, originally dedicated on Earth Day 2015. Come visit! It is flourishing and will soon be fluttering with butterflies.

David Sussman’s Photography Exhibit “Nature Preserved”

CHEC Receives A Landmark Donation

Our sincere gratitude to Jack Kleven & Judy McCalla for the single largest private donation to CHEC in its history. Read more on page 9.

….and more.....
A Message from our Chief Executive Officer

Environmental non-profits are marked by their strong sense of mission. The work is seen as so crucial and so fundamental to the continuation of life on earth that it is hard to imagine how we’ll survive this century without the combined efforts of passive environmental education.

Acceptability of our organization from the general public is key. CHEC’s participation in monthly meetings have resulted in new ideas. Discussions with diverse groups from other organizations and guest speakers serve as a great tool to increase our knowledge of the ever-changing economy and helps to develop new policies that will streamline and increase our productivity.

Our staff and volunteers understand our clearly defined mission and how fulfilling this mission fits into CHEC’s strategic overall plan; a strategic plan which details priorities and costs of programs and initiatives.

I ask for continued cooperation and support as we continue processes of change in our organization.

Suggestions are always encouraged and welcomed.

Doris J. Button, CEO
Happenings at CHEC Cedar Point

2017 was a very busy and productive year at CHEC’s Cedar Point Environmental Park! Programs included **366 fourth graders, 390 second graders**, and **336 participants on Seagrass Wading Trips** (both public and private), plus events like **Great American Cleanup, Coastal Cleanup, Summer Fishing Camps, FDEP Water Quality Training**, and **Florida Archaeology Training**. Our Visitors’ Center is open Monday through Friday, 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM, so stop in for a visit!

As many may be aware, CHEC partners with Charlotte County to schedule and conduct numerous **educational programs** at various county properties. These include programs held at Cedar Point, Ann Dever Regional Park at Oyster Creek Park, Dr. Willard “Bill” Coy Preserve on Buck Creek, Amberjack Environmental Park, Tippecanoe Environmental Park, Tippecanoe II Mitigation Area, Charlotte Flatwoods Environmental Park, and Bayshore Live Oak Park. Most sites offer guided walks through beautiful preservation lands; additionally, CHEC conducts **educational lectures** at the pavilion alongside Charlotte Harbor at Bayshore Live Oak Park. These lectures have proven to be very popular with topics like “Cultural History of Charlotte Harbor (Hickory Bluff)”, “Mystery of Migration, and “Wonderful Whacky World of Lichens”. We hope to continue these educational programs in the upcoming year.

Guided Walk at Tippecanoe Environmental Park

CHEC has a wealth of **talented, energetic volunteers** that cover all aspects of maintenance and programs. The **Garden Keepers** are a dedicated assembly of men and women that meet to dig, cut, plant, transplant, and trim the Butterfly Garden. The Garden was originally planned and created in 2008 by a partnership of CHEC staff, Charlotte County staff, and members from the Mangrove Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society.
February 14 was not only the day set aside for love, candy, and valentines, but also the Big #90 Birthday for long-time CHEC volunteer, Denny Girard! Born in Ballston, New York, Denny served in the Air Force, married his valentine, Pat, and moved to Englewood in 1963. What changes he has seen! He and his buddy, Al Squires, were a few of the first to scrape trails through Cedar Point (through the rainy summer of 1995) and lead the first guided walks. He is now a guide, an author, a photographer, and a friend. Happy Birthday, Denny!

What began as an extension of the existing butterfly garden has morphed into an area that includes native trees and shrubs with 2 arbors, wildflowers edging the sidewalk, a rain garden and a woodland garden. Bird baths have been donated over the years, which attract our feathered friends, not to mention the fruits and berries provided by some of the native trees and shrubs. The Garden Keepers meet on Monday mornings at 9 AM to put in a couple hours of work with casual conversation and comradery making the work fun and the time pass quickly. New helpers are always welcome to join.
CHEC was very pleased to welcome Dr. Craig Huegel, Ms. Nancy Wiley, and Ms. Esther Horton as guest lecturers at two fundraiser lecture evenings at Cedar Point Environmental Park. Craig spoke about “The Importance of Native Plants”, on January 23, and Nancy and Esther spoke about “A History of Englewood and Surrounding Areas”, on February 22. Over 150 visitors participated in these educational and interesting presentations. Thank you to all the volunteers that assisted with registration, set-up, and refreshment serving, and to Gottfried Creek for providing the wonderful background music.

Cedar Point Thanks:

- Jesse & Lorraine Perry for the owl nesting box.
- Polly Allen for the 2018 Ecological Calendar.
- Bill & Helene Messner for shop & garden supplies.
- Michael & Marjorie Hille for their cash donation.
- Robert & Mary Risdon for their cash donation.
- Englewood Shell Club for their cash donation.
- Women’s Fellowship Venice UCC for their cash donation.
- Jean Key for a new riding mower.
Wild Wednesdays
at CHEC Punta Gorda

Volunteer Master Naturalist Cindy Christel has turned CHEC’s Wild Wednesdays film series into a must-see event! On select Wednesdays from November through April, Cindy presents unique and unusual educational and entertaining nature films in a show-and-tell format, complete with coffee and snacks. There are as many as two shows on certain Wednesdays, with as many as 57 attendees! The presentations are held in the conference room in CHEC’s Administration building at 10941 Burnt Store Road in Punta Gorda.

April 4, 2018 is the last show of this year. We’ll update our website calendar at the end of this year with next year’s schedule. We’ll also have the schedules available in print (see below) at our Punta Gorda administration office and Caniff Welcome Center, and at Cedar Point in Englewood.

Thank You to our Partners & Supporters!

Mosaic for underwriting CHEC’s Seagrass Adventure Wading Trips for both the general public and every 2nd grade student in Charlotte County.

Southwest Florida Water Management District, Mosaic, Charlotte County Public Schools, Charlotte Board of Commissioners, Marine Advisory Committee, WCIND, Peace River Audubon Society, Allegiant, Punta Gorda Marina, Cape Haze Marina, Kingfisher Fleet, Charles S. Caniff Charlotte Harbor Fund, Babcock Ranch, George & Jane Pauloviks, Friends of CHEC, as well as private donors and proceeds from Hands Across the Harbor.

Typically, one of the last things a child wants to do during a school break is learn. Our campers must not be typical! CHEC hosted multiple weeks of Summer Camp in 2017, as well as launching a new Fall Break Camp and upcoming Spring Break Camp in 2018.

Campers delved into an array of environmental topics, including Florida’s habitats, marine science, fishing, and animal diversity. We enjoyed learning through interactive games, hands-on activities, crafts, experiments, hikes, and so much more. We explored the solar system and created a star chart… discovered the food chain by dissecting an owl pellet… made oobleck and slime with a little chemistry… learned how to bait a hook and caught a live fish… met a real biologist who works with manatees… we could go on and on! Each week of camp also featured a field trip based on our topic, allowing the campers to be fully immersed in the subject matter.

Camp is offered to science enthusiasts 6-12 years old at CHEC Alligator Creek in Punta Gorda, or 8-13 years old at CHEC Cedar Point in Englewood. Check our website at www.cheflorida.org (the “For Kids” tab, or the home page calendar) for dates and information about 2018 Spring Break and Summer Camps. We would love to have your young naturalist join us!
Third Grade Manatee Program

“What do you mean we are going to interview a manatee?” “How can we do that?” “How do manatees talk?”

Thanks to a grant, CHEC is once again pleased to offer a manatee-themed program to every 3rd grader in Charlotte County Public Schools. Not only are manatees an iconic animal and Florida’s state marine mammal, but the topic also fits well into 3rd grade science curriculum regarding animal classifications and adaptations. After uncovering what the students already know about manatees, we dive into the presentation. There is an engaging PowerPoint. There are real manatee biofacts. And there is a puppet – the highlight of the show – Ms. Manatee! The students become reporters and ask Ms. Manatee questions about her life as a sea cow… how many manatees there are in the world, how long manatees can hold their breath, how old manatees can live, and much more.

Did you know manatees have marching molars and a third eyelid? Ms. Manatee does! She can tell you all about them and how they help her survive in her environment. After Ms. Manatee has answered the students’ questions, she returns to her watery home to munch on seagrasses (as any “real” manatee would). At the conclusion of the program, the students get to touch an actual manatee skull. Hopefully, they have also become more in tune with these gentle giants with which we share a harbor.
Landmark Donation

In April, 2017, CHEC received the largest donation in its 30 year history. **Jack Kleven and Judy McCalla**, residents of Riverwood in Port Charlotte, FL, changed condos and put their original condo up for sale. After a year on the market without a transaction, Jack decided to do some research to see whether tax law would allow him to donate the condo to a deserving charity. CHEC was the first of four non-profits on his list. Jack and Judy are ardent environmentalists, so CHEC’s mission fit well with their passion for nature and preservation. Jack called CHEC and spoke at length with Doris Button, CHEC’s CEO. By the end of the conversation, Jack had already made up his mind. He said Doris was so nice, he just couldn’t say no!

CHEC was subsequently able to sell the condo. Over ninety percent of the money realized from that sale was invested to ensure CHEC’s continued viability. Less than ten percent was spent on upgrading and streamlining its computer network, purchasing a much-needed tractor and an all-purpose utility vehicle for trail and road maintenance, and adding or expanding some of CHEC’s educational outreach programs. Over the years, many non-profits, including CHEC, have seen a significant and permanent reduction in funding from federal, state and local government and other sources. Donations like this from caring supporters are key. CHEC is profoundly appreciative of Jack and Judy’s most generous gift.
David Sussman’s “Nature Preserved” Photography Exhibit

Well-known local nature photographer David Sussman chose CHEC Punta Gorda to exhibit approximately 50 gorgeous canvasses, from a life-size Florida panther to microscopic vegetation spores. His “Nature Preserved” exhibit included one of the finest collections of our natural habitat in Charlotte Harbor ever to be seen at one location by one artist. Mr. Sussman captures his images through a variety of lenses and aerial photography using his sUAS (small unmanned aircraft system). This collection took years of research and field work. Placards with historic and local information about his subjects were also on display. David photographs, processes, prints, stretches and frames all of his own work.

The exhibit ran from November 27, 2017 through March 30, 2018. It was located at CHEC Punta Gorda’s Caniff Education building/Welcome Center, which provided expansive display space ideally suited for this event. An opening reception was held on December 7, 2017, from 5-7 p.m., with wine, hors d’oeuvres, and music by professional harpist Harmony Lange. Two social hours/lectures were held on January 25 and February 8, 2018, respectively. A closing reception was held on March 22, 2018, from 5-7 p.m., where two lucky winners were the recipients of two lovely raffled pieces.

The Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center wishes to thank Mr. Sussman for choosing us for his exhibit. This event generated considerable excitement and brought us many visitors who might otherwise not have known about CHEC and its mission. CHEC relishes the opportunity to educate newcomers about the environment and preservation at our locations, and through venues such as these.
Harvest for the Harbor 2017

Our 3rd annual Harvest for the Harbor, CHEC’s annual signature fundraising event, was held on November 3, 2017, at Laishley Park Pavilions, under a full moon and a sky full of shining stars.

The tables were beautifully set.

Charitable donations received from this event enable CHEC to continue its mission of providing environmental education, recreation, research and preservation land management for the residents and visitors of the greater Charlotte Harbor area.

The Archer Band played and approximately 86 guests danced. Donors dined on a multi-course meal prepared by La Fiorentina, one of Punta Gorda’s premier restaurants. Craft beers were provided by Peace River Distributing.

There was a silent auction. Everyone had a wonderful time.

The Archer Band played music enjoyed by all.
CHEC is very grateful to everyone who attended this event and donated money, time, expertise, talent and materials to make it a smashing success. We couldn’t do it without you! We look forward to seeing you all again in 2018.

CHEC CEO Doris Button and Board Member Kellee Anderson

CHEC Thanks its 2017 Harvest for the Harbor Sponsors & Commodities Donors

- Osborne Levell Wealth Management – Presenting Sponsor
- Farr Law Firm – Event Sponsor
- Peace River Distributing – Event Sponsor and Commodities Donor
- Mosaic – Event Sponsor
- La Fiorentina – Commodities Donor

....its Major Contributors

- McCrory Law Firm, Punta Gorda
- DeSoto Auto Mall, Arcadia
- Michael Haymans & guests, Punta Gorda

....and its Volunteers & Staff

- Stephanie & Bill Courtney, Volunteers
- Chris Salmonsen, Naturalist
- Libby Strong, Volunteer
- Martha Clemente, Naturalist
- Becky Facer, Staff Program Coordinator
- Billie & Bob Babineau, Volunteers
- Kellee Anderson, CHEC Board Director
- Bobbi Rodgers, Staff - Cedar Point Resource Manager
- Charlie Button, Volunteer
CHEC Punta Gorda is Looking Good…
Thanks to our Dedicated & Committed Grounds Volunteers!

Our volunteer grounds crew – Bob Isaksen, Ed Williams, Mike Messner, Miles Coady, and Jim Martel do an outstanding job for CHEC every single day. They maintain our trails, repair our boardwalks, and fix what breaks. They are the ultimate handymen, mechanics, builders, and landscape artists. Bob has volunteered at CHEC for over 26 years. Ed has volunteered for over 8 years. Mike is a relative newcomer but has logged a staggering number of hours - over 1600 - since arriving a little over a year ago.

Although not grounds crew volunteers, we wish to recognize Larry Linn and his wife, Patty, for volunteering in different capacities for over 17 years.

CHEC owes these volunteers a debt of gratitude that can never adequately be paid. They keep our park beautiful and running like a well-oiled machine. Bob, Ed, Mike, Miles, Jim, and Larry - CHEC thanks you for your service to us!
Charlotte County Public Schools Science Fair Project

The Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center offered a special challenge to local students to develop science projects that promote an understanding of, and an appreciation for the sustainable use of the Charlotte Harbor Estuary. The purpose of the Water Resources Award was to increase students’ engagement in water-related issues and research, and to introduce them, as future leaders, to local and global water challenges. Consideration for the CHEC award was open to projects aimed at improving water quality, water resources management, water protection, and storm water or wastewater management.

It was essential that projects use the best available science, and use the scientific method for experimentation, monitoring, analysis, and reporting the results.

The awards were presented to students in four Charlotte County schools. Each winner received a plaque and a cash prize.

**Winners:**

**Punta Gorda Middle School:**

*Biaggio Fratelli.* Grade 8.

*Project Title:* Road Surface Degradation by Water.

*Teacher:* BettyJo (BJ) Richards.

**Port Charlotte Middle School:**

*Kelly Green & Marissa Schuler.*

*Project Title:* Marine Pollution.

*Teacher:* Amanda Linneweber.

**Murdock Middle School:**

*Cassidy Gibbs,* Grade 8.

*Project Title:* Super Surge.

*Teacher:* Melissa Fiuza.

**L.A. Ainger Middle School:**

*Isabell Raggazone & Analisa Gutierrez,* Grade 6.

*Project Title:* Filter that Water.

*Teacher:* MJ Sanger.
We’re Updating Our Website!

Our new resident webmaster, aka Dorothea Strickland, is beautifying and modernizing our website. Check us out at http://www.checflorida.org! Our home page now has a gorgeous green background, a moving picture show, a new “For Kids” tab, a new running events banner, and a lovely new CHEC logo. Don’t forget to view the events calendar on our home page for details about what’s coming up at both CHEC Punta Gorda and CHEC Cedar Point in Englewood. Save us as a Favorite, or Bookmark us! Keep watching for new material as Dorothea works her magic. See you on the site!
It’s That Time of Year!

Spring & Summer Eco-Camps at CHEC

For the first time, a new Spring Break Camp program was offered at our Alligator Creek Preserve location in Punta Gorda. Two weekly sessions were held – March 26-30 and April 2-6, 2018. Entitled “Paleo-Explorers”, enrollees delved into the incredible world of paleontology - the study of ancient life. Children learned how scientists knew what dinosaurs looked like, and how long the wooly mammoth lived. Campers discovered various types of fossils, how they formed, and the plant and animal life that created them. By all accounts, the new Spring Break Camp program at CHEC Punta Gorda was a rousing success, and we hope to repeat this accomplishment again in 2019!

Summer Eco-Camps will take place at both CHEC locations in 2018. At Cedar Point in Englewood, summer camp participants will learn to fish. You may enroll your 8-13 year old in one of the two available weeks – June 11-15, or June 18-22. The cost is $150.00 per child for non-CHEC members and $135.00 per child for CHEC members. For more information or to register, call 941-475-0769 or email Bobbi@checflorida.org.

At Alligator Creek Preserve in Punta Gorda, summer camp participants will enjoy a program sure to educate and delight. The information, including subject matter and dates, once finalized, will be published on our website and distributed at Charlotte County schools. For more information, and to register, call 941-575-5435, or email Becky@checflorida.org.
Become a Friend of CHEC

Membership support is crucial to CHEC’s continued mission. To that end, we are exceedingly grateful for all our members – those that are new and those that renew again and again.

Our membership program is chock full of goodies! Levels of membership are tiered; the higher the tier, the more benefits you get! In addition to the membership benefits listed below, a CHEC membership card will get you a 10% discount on CHEC items at our Caniff Center gift shop, a $4.00 discount when you attend our paid lectures, and a $15.00 discount per child when you enroll your children in our Spring & Summer Camp programs. Browse the benefits and consider becoming a CHEC member today!

FOC Benefits

Membership Levels

$50.00 - Alligator - 1 year membership
✓ ANCA Benefits
✓ 12 oz. bottle Florida Wildflower Honey
✓ 10% Discount in Gift Shop on CHEC Merchandise
✓ 10% discount at Table & Tap Restaurant - Babcock Ranch (must show card)

$100.00 - Sea Turtle - 1 year membership
✓ Enjoy all $50.00 mbr. level benefits plus:
  • Gift box of three 16 oz. bottles of honey - 3 Flavors
  • 20% off merchandise at Curry Creek Outfitters + 1 free hour rental of kayak, SUP or rowboat - Babcock Ranch (must show card)

$250.00 - Roseate Spoonbill - 1 year membership
✓ Enjoy all $100.00 mbr. level benefits plus:
  • CHEC Kayak Adventure for six (6) or private Wading Trip for ten (10)

$500.00 - Mangrove - 3 year membership
✓ Enjoy $250.00 mbr. level benefits plus:
  • Four (4) T-shirts from Gift Shop
  • Upgrade: CHEC Kayak Adventure for ten (10) or private Wading Trip for twelve (12)

$1000.00 - Bobcat - 6 year membership
✓ Enjoy $500.00 mbr. level benefits plus:
  • Engraved silver name plate on CHEC’s Recognition Board at Caniff Building
  • Upgrade: CHEC Kayak Adventure for twelve (12) or private Wading Trip for fourteen (14)

$2500.00 - Eagle - 10 year membership
✓ Enjoy $1000.00 mbr. level benefits plus:
  • Upgrade: Engraved gold name plate on CHEC’s Recognition Board at Caniff Building (lifetime)
  • CHEC Private Boat Journey on the Peace River for twelve (12)
Contact Us

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Newsletter designed & edited by Diane Peterson (diane@checflorida.org).

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