March 2014

Gulfshore Business
March: Focus on Cape Coral

This month's issue of Gulfshore Business features Cape Coral under the headline, "Cape Rising: Job Growth, Construction and Even Butterburgers Mean Big Things for the City."
The article includes an interview with EDO Director Dana Brunett. Here is a brief excerpt from the Brunett interview: "Recovery is happening much quicker than anybody ever anticipated...The housing stock is here. The bodies are already here. We want to get corporate offices and light assembly to get higher paying jobs." To view the Gulfshore Business online flipbook of this section, click here.

Economic Development News

Message From Your EDO Director

Oh So Busy!
Okay. So MerriBeth Farnham from HDPR Group, our marketing consultant, has been pleading with me to write this Director's Message so we can get our newsletter out. It's not that I don't want to do it. In fact, I rather enjoy writing these messages as it affords me the opportunity to keep you informed and have a little fun, too. The fact of the matter is that I'm busy. So busy, in fact, that it requires me to prioritize my workday and reprioritize it again by midday. Don't get me wrong, busy is good. Busy is what we need but it's always key to make sure we're focusing our energies on those tasks that will most benefit Cape Coral.

I can honestly say to you that this is the busiest I've been since coming here and I see it getting worse, which is even better, if that makes sense? Cape Coral is recovering at a rate far exceeding expectations and that's just what we needed as a community. Your EDO staff is working hard to get existing commercial space filled, get new commercial projects under construction, and create future opportunities for additional development.

What does this mean for Cape Coral? More job opportunities, increased investment in our community, and a stronger, more diverse tax base. All of those are very important and totally necessary for our continued growth and development as the 10th most populous city in Florida. What's my most recent accomplishment? Finishing this message and keeping MerriBeth happy. Next?!

Sincerely,
Dana Brunett
City of Cape Coral
Economic Development Director
Business Card Exchange Features Corporate Center

The EDO teamed with the Mid Cape Corporate Center to host a March Business Card Exchange through the Cape Coral Chamber of Commerce.

More than 40 people took this opportunity to network and to view the available commercial space. The Mid Cape Corporate Center offers 68,000 square feet of commercial space and is located along the Pine Island Corridor at 125 S.W. 3rd Place (next to the Publix shopping plaza at Hancock Bridge Parkway).

Email owner Doug Hannah to learn more.

South Cape Gets Boost From Local Business Women

Valerie Elam’s eyes light up when she describes the quaint shops and fine dining that can be found in Cape Coral, if you just know where to look. Elam owns the popular restaurant, Brew Babies, in South Cape. "I can't tell you how many times people have asked me if there was a map showing where to go," said Elam.

That’s when she made the decision to create a map and brochure on her own. Elam and fellow business woman Dee Frank invested their own money to develop a colorful map and brochure. Then they found local business sponsors to help pay to print a brochure featuring the South Cape Map as well as Tarpon Point Marina and Cape Harbour.

"Each area has interesting restaurants and shops that people can enjoy," said Elam. "We have so much to offer here. This map helps to point people in the right direction."

The new brochures are available at area hotels and City Hall. If you are a business in South Cape and want to be included in a future update, email Valerie at: valerieelam@hotmail.com To view an electronic version of the complete brochure, please download the following files: Side One Side Two

A Growing "Family" Through Service Expansion

Cape Coral-based Deerso is an example of a diverse and robust company that continues to expand since it began in 2007. It now operates in three ways: with a massive online enterprise, while also catering to local clientele with bricks-and-mortar stores and a division that visits customers on-site to provide efficient service.

Though Deerso Inc. sells an estimated 60,000 products from its Del Prado Boulevard S. headquarters—from cleaning supplies to automotive parts and farming equipment—to customers throughout the country, it’s their boots-on-the-ground operations they are nurturing here at home.

Since 2012, Deerso Retail LLC has bought two Family Hardware stores-the
2014 appears to be shaping into a year of investment in Florida businesses. Seventy-two percent of business owners and executives surveyed by BMO Harris Bank said they plan to pump money into their companies this year.

More at the Tampa Bay Business Journal.

Economic Enrichment Symposium Planned

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection and the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council are co-hosting the 2nd Annual Southwest Florida Brownfield Economic Enrichment through Redevelopment Symposium.

March 28
Lee County Public Education Center
2855 Colonial Blvd., Fort Myers, FL 33966

Click here to view details about the event.

New Cape Coral

April is Coming!
By Russ Winstead, CFM CBA, CGBP Certified Business Analyst, SBDC

As we approach the final month of season and the receipts reach their yearly highs, this is a good time to remember that the slower part of the year is now ahead of us. While Cape Coral is not nearly as seasonal as other parts of Florida, we do have a large number of seasonal residents who add to the baseline of our economy. The good news is, with a late Easter and record snowfalls, we will get more mileage out of this winter season. However, as the temperatures rise, the birds and many of our friends will migrate.

When it's busy and the money is flowing, it's easy to let loose a bit and spend! I understand and even encourage getting caught up on the many things we put off when the cash flow is tighter. We also need to reward ourselves (at a reasonable level) for the long hours and hard work we put in during season.

In addition to the catch-up and reward, this is the time to plan for the rest of the year and life. So, if you find yourself ahead of the game (financially) at the end of season, I have three suggestions.

1. Make sure you're caught up on your taxes. (You don't want that kind of

30-year-old one on S.E. 47th Terrace in Cape Coral and another on N. Tamiami Trail in North Fort Myers. The family-owned Deerso is targeting "people who are tired of the big box stores and want more one-on-one interaction," says Deerso/Family Hardware Assistant Vice President Christine DeBono. The S.E. 47th Terrace is "off the beaten path. We cater mostly to the age range of 25-64 at that location," DeBono says. "We think people will find that the service outshines the price. We have impeccable customer service."

When they took over the stores, most existing employees stayed on, including the chain's oldest employee.

A more recent expansion happened when Deerso took over Family Hardware Commercial in December, a blade-sharpening division with a route driver who picks up and delivers all types of blades—from scissors and knives to industrial blades and chainsaws—to be sharpened and returned to a place of business or construction location.

Family Hardware Commercial is based in the warehouse next-door to the Cape Coral Family Hardware in Deerso President Larry Peterson's prior business, called Preshers Tool & Fastener. (Peterson's wife and son are also active in the company.) Peterson's companies—throughout evolution and expansion—have long worked closely with the Cape Coral Economic Development Office (EDO) and other city departments to obtain proper signage, licensing and permits. Through strong planning and a good relationship with the EDO, DeBono foresees future growth in Family Hardware Commercial. "Everyone's been nice and efficient in the city that I've worked with. They've been warm and welcoming. I haven't had any issues," says DeBono.
134 new businesses registered for Cape Coral Business Tax Receipts (BTR) in February 2014. Click here to view the latest report.

Resources
Cape Coral Chamber Career & Services Center
Cape Community Foundation
CCCIA
City of Cape Coral
Lee County EDO
SBDC

Still Time to Register for March MicroEnterprise Program

If you are interested in learning how to develop a solid business plan, the SWFL MicroEnterprise Program could be just the right fit for you. This program is designed to assist business start-ups by offering education from seasoned business owners in the areas of accounting, legal, marketing, insurance and funding. Successful graduates will surprise later in the year.)

2. Set up a separate account for "contingency funds" (money that may be needed for some unexpected life or business expense).
3. If you get past items one and two, fund your personal savings and/or retirement fund.

Enjoy the rest of the year!

If you would like consultation or guidance in planning for the off-season or growing your business, please feel free to contact me directly or attend our FREE Fourth Wednesday Business Chats, held at City Hall in the main conference room every fourth Wednesday at 11:30 a.m. Call 239-574-0444 for more information.

Lee Memorial Healthpark Named Among Top 50 Hospitals

Lee Memorial Hospital and HealthPark Medical Center were named among the nation's 50 Best hospitals by Healthgrades, an online resource for comprehensive information about physicians and hospitals. This distinction places Lee Memorial Hospital and HealthPark Medical Center in the top 1 percent of hospitals nationwide, out of more than 4,500 hospitals evaluated. Healthgrades "America's 50 Best" designation recognizes hospitals for consistent clinical excellence by identifying those that received a Healthgrades Distinguished Hospital Award for Clinical Excellence for the most consecutive years. Lee Memorial Hospital and HealthPark Medical Center have achieved the Distinguished Hospital award (top 5 percent in the nation) for eight years in a row.

For more information, visit their website.

Lee County Business Survey Results Are In

Source: Horizon Council and FGCU

This quarterly business survey provides insights into Lee County's economy, future trends, and expectations for regional growth. Dr. Gary Jackson, Director of the Regional Economic Research Institute found this quarter's results to be "very encouraging since business executives feel the overall economy is improving".

The key findings of the Executive Climate Survey for the first quarter of 2014 are:
- The Lee County Business Climate Index was 74 for the first quarter survey (January 2014), up from 71 for the fourth quarter survey (October 2013);
have the opportunity to apply for a microloan collateral guarantee from Goodwill. Cape Coral classes begin on March 27th on Monday and Thursday evenings from 6-9p.m. The program runs for six weeks and costs just $65. For more information and to register, click here.

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City of Cape Coral
Economic Development Office

- 83 percent of executives stated that the current economic conditions have improved over last year;
- 85 percent of the executives expect the economy to improve over the next year;
- 76 percent of the executives stated that the current economic conditions for their industry have improved over last year, but 18 percent stated that economic conditions remained approximately the same;
- 80 percent of executives expect economic conditions for their industry to improve over the next year;
- 64 percent of companies expect to increase investment next year and only two percent expect to reduce their investment levels;
- 58 percent of executives had increased employment over the last year, while one percent had reduced employment;
- 56 percent of executives expect to increase employment at their companies during the next year and only two percent of executives expect to reduce employment;
- Of the companies that expect to increase the overall size of their workforce, 32 percent of companies expect to increase their workforce by one to nine percent. 34 percent expect to increase by 10 to 19 percent and 32 percent expect to increase by 20 to 29 percent;
- 56 percent of executives indicated that they were having trouble finding qualified employees;
- 52 percent of executives indicated that the preferred recruiting method is networking and 18 percent indicated internet job websites;
- Positions and occupations expected to be hired next year included Sales and Account Representatives, Cashiers, Customer Service, Engineers, Fabricators, General Maintenance Staff, Nurse Practitioners and Physician Assistants, Housekeepers, IT/Application Technicians, Machinists, Managers, Real Estate Agents, Reporters, Security Officers, Trades, and Truck Drivers;
- The employee characteristics desired by executives included a good aptitude, attitude, and attendance, attention to detail, clean, smart, motivated, and educated, problem solving, team player, strong communication skills, self-starter, and customer focused;
- The employee skills that were identified included AutoCAD, basic office skills, business and accounting skills, computer skills, interpersonal skills, sales, construction skills, critical thinking, engineering, soft skills, and welding; and
- The positions that companies are having trouble filling include assistant engineers, banking and commercial lending managers, cashiers and counter sales, design engineers, drivers, computer network technicians, fabricators, housekeepers and service staff, insurance sales and support, machinists, managers, experienced nurse practitioners, sales, construction trades, water resource engineers, and web development and application technicians.

To view the full report, click here.