

Charlotte Community Central

COMING THURSDAY
Dreaming of
a pink Christmas?

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BEST BETS

TODAY

Remembering Pearl Harbor: There will be a Pearl Harbor Day service at 10 a.m. at the El Jobean Fishing Pier adjacent to the Myaska River Bridge in Port Charlotte. Don Coppola, former Charlotte County commissioner, will speak. There will be music and a flag detail. Various veterans organizations will participate. Call 629-5640 for more information.

Another ceremony will be at 5 p.m. Fishermen's Village, 1000 W. Petta Esplanade, Punta Gorda. There will be a wreath ceremony conducted by active duty personnel from the Army, Marine Corps and Navy, with music by the Royal Canadian Singspice Band.

List of the month recipients: The Arts & Humanities Council of Charlotte County will host a reception featuring artist of the month Dave Mathewson Jr. from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. at 2811-M Tamiami Trail. Holiday music will be performed by female barbershop quartet Potpourri. Mathewson's wildlife paintings and ink drawings will be on display at the Humanities Council through the month of December. For more information, call 764-8100.

CALENDAR

TODAY

Charlotte Alliance For A Safe & Drug Free Community meeting: 9:30 to 11:30 a.m., Mid-County Regional Public Library, 2050 Forrest Nelson Blvd., Port Charlotte. 866-7743.

Interfaith network off to a strong start

By AMY ABERN

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It took Hurricane Charley pummeling the area for people to realize the need for a central networking force to help Charlotte County repair, rebuild and recover after the destruction. Enter the interfaith Interagency Network of Charlotte County, a not-for-profit agency established in November 2004.

In a year's time, INNCC has lived up to its motto to "repair, rebuild and recover," having served 632 clients and repaired 99 homes in Charlotte County. More than 800 volunteers logged nearly 24,000 hours working on damaged Charlotte County homes and commercial buildings. More than 30 social service organizations serve as partners.

INNCC's executive director, **Dennis Celorje**, took a few minutes during INNCC's installation-of-officers dinner Friday to reflect on the organization's success.

"I'm very proud of what we've done," said Celorje. "But this was a group effort. We could not have accomplished as much as we did without our board, our staff and our volunteers."

The installation dinner reflected the commitment of the organization: All officers and staff signed on to their posts for another year. **Brenda Bala**, executive director of The Housing Corporation of Charlotte County Inc., president; **Ron Thomas**, executive director of Charlotte County Habitat for Humanity, vice president; **Craig Brown**, administrator for Port Charlotte Unit-



COURTESY: DENNIS CELORJE

Dennis Celorje, executive director for interfaith interagency network of Charlotte County, visits with guests at the INNCC dinner.

ed Methodist Church, secretary; and **Paul Versnik**, chief executive officer Charlotte County Family YMCA, treasurer. Board members are **Elizabeth Burdick**, program coordinator for The Housing Corporation of Charlotte County, Inc.; **Major Eugene Gesner**, Salvation Army; **Cecy Glenn**, chief ex-

ecutive officer of United Way of Charlotte County; the **Rev. Larry Grisham-Johnson**, rebuilding coordinator for Peace River Presbytery; **Loraine Heiber**, housing coordinator for Charlotte County Human Services Division; **Rev. Skip Streubing**, pastor of Peace Lutheran Church; and **Megarie**

van Sickle, executive director of the Charlotte County Chapter of the American Red Cross.

In addition to Celorje, the INNCC employees are **Ann Schultz**, executive assistant; **Charles Brown**, project coordinator; **Claudette Balines**, volunteer coordinator; **Judy Cardon**, case manager; and case workers **Tammy Lindner**, **Angie Newbold** and **Joyce Versteegh**.

Secretary **Craig Brown** noted that one of the reasons INNCC has been so successful has been because of the unity of the people in the organization.

"I've been a resident here for forty years," said Brown, "and I am amazed at the friends, family and fellowship of this group."

Vice President **Thomas** is already looking to the future.

"We have to finish what we started and wait for the next disaster," he said.

To that end, one of INNCC's partner organizations, Habitat for Humanity, is building a 48-bed facility to house out-of-state volunteers. They expect the building will be completed in January.

Over the past year, INNCC received a \$300,000 grant from Volunteer Florida and a donation of 5,000 furniture items from South Seas Resort on Captiva Island.

INNCC will oversee the distribution of more than \$500,000 in building materials purchased by the county to qualified applicants looking to rebuild their homes.

INNCC is currently looking for volunteers. For more information, call 206-2034.