

our ^{Sustainable} community



GIVING MATTERS

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Sarah
OWEN

President & CEO
Southwest Florida
Community Foundation

Why Us? Why Now?

There is a lot to be said about a good fit. When a person, idea or concept is the right match in an organization great things can happen. Business gurus have long heralded the idea of getting the right people in the right seats on the bus to create a dynamic team.

At the Southwest Florida Community Foundation much of our work centers on identifying good fits for our region. We work hard to match donors to organizations that are creating the change they want to see in the world, we convene stakeholders who possess the right skills and resources to design solutions and opportunities, and we find the most flexible vehicles for philanthropists to customize their giving.

We are always on the lookout for potential projects that are the right fit to create regional change for the common good.

In this issue of Our Community, we are focused on a sustainable Southwest Florida. We think the idea of doing the most good for the community right now while protecting it for the future is important.

This long view is the cornerstone of a community foundation. We are charged with doing things “For Good, For Ever”.

But how do we know if we are successful? Forever is a very long time.

In this issue you will learn more about the concept of a sustainable Southwest Florida and how we can all work together to create a region focused on the evolving economic, social and environmental needs of our community.

When Lee County talked to us about taking on its countywide sustainability plan we recognized a good fit right away. Sustainability is at the center of everything we do and with great partners in business, government and the social sector we realized we could build a regional framework and map that helps all of us collaborate, measure success and understand community priorities.

As you dive into these pages I hope you can identify where you fit in and we can begin this journey together of creating a place where people want to live, learn, work and play. In other words making our region a good fit for its residents now and in the future.

Here we go. —OC



So True!

TOGETHER WE'RE BETTER

WHAT IF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA WORKED TOGETHER TO better prepare every student for post-secondary success and a career? Would our sons, daughters and grandchildren decide to stay here and find satisfying jobs?

What if the preservation of our region's natural beauty became a model for the nation?

What if the impact of your philanthropic dollars reached even deeper to improve the economic, social and environmental health of the region?

What if our region became known as an innovator with its eye on sustainability? Would more businesses start, stay, expand and relocate here?

What if we made a commitment to creating and continually assessing the sustainability of our community? Would we improve the quality of life for residents 50 or 100 years from now?

These are important questions we're asking ourselves and our community at the Southwest Florida Community Foundation. By committing to the region's sustainability and implementing

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solutions, we can design a better place where people want to live, learn, work and play – now and in the future.

A sustainable Southwest Florida is a community that survives and thrives. Sustainability impacts everyone, crisscrossing city and county borders, interconnecting people, values and causes in exciting collaborations, and multiplying donors' investments in the community.

"Sustainability aligns and advances goals, objectives, work, passions and causes," said Sarah Owen, president and CEO for the Southwest Florida Community Foundation. "It helps philanthropists and residents understand and see the impact of their dollars, gives students the opportunity to receive the type of education that will prepare them for well-paying jobs, and assists us in developing more effective and efficient programs for people served."



OWEN

Sustainability = LOVE

Sustainability is also a love story, an all-encompassing vision of a community improving the quality of life for future generations in this special region we call home.

Together we play a role in mapping and measuring regional sustainability in a meaningful way and continually moving forward as advocates for regional change.

The framework is already in place.

Last April the Lee County Board of Commissioners transferred *CompleteLee*: A sustainability plan to the Southwest Florida Community Foundation. They recognized as a partner with educators, governments, nonprofits and citizens, we were already spearheading sustainability by engaging community stakeholders in important conversations and connecting philanthropists and donors with their causes to solve regional issues.

The existing framework will also serve as the springboard for a regional roadmap for long-term change.

"Sustainability is at the center of everything we do and it has been for 40 years," said Ms. Owen. "No single entity can create a sustainable Southwest Florida. It takes all of us to look at a more expansive vision. We want our partners and donors to realize they are not alone in advocating for a cause; whatever they're working on is contributing to regional change. We are all interconnected."

The plan will foster new collaborations, strengthen existing ones and help partners identify and incentivize synergies.

In the business world, companies are aligning sustainability with the goals and values of the company.

"Executives have cited cost-cutting or reputation management as top reasons for pursuing sustainability initiatives," said Tessa LeSage, the foundation's director of social innovation and sustainability. "A 2014 McKinsey & Co. report found 43 percent of executives – the largest number ever and up from 30



LESAGE

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percent in 2012 – are describing a shift in thinking."

Operating at this level allows companies to offer more jobs and higher wages.

a great business strategy!

From a business standpoint, sustainability "is about balancing resources in the office, how you operate your business, the way you treat employees and how you're involved in the community and giving back in a meaningful way," said Jonathan Romine, a partner in EnSite, a Fort Myers design firm specializing in sustainable planning, landscape architecture, civil engineering and urban design. "If you're in business in this community, you need to roll up your sleeves and get involved wherever it will make the most impact."

EnSite supports the area's major education nonprofits and initiatives and Mr. Romine serves on the board of the Imaginarium and mentors students.

"I'm a firm believer education is the great equalizer," he said. "The end goal of sustainability is creating a better place where we make a living, put food on our



ROMINE

COURTESY PHOTOS
▲ Gartner recruits locally from all backgrounds including tourism, construction, recent graduates and experienced associates for sales.

table and give back to the community. By laying the framework for sustainability we're putting a vision in place, not for today or even in our lifetimes, but for the community 50 years from now."

Gartner, which specializes in information technology research and technology advice for businesses, has enjoyed tremendous success in Southwest Florida since opening its Fort Myers office in 1998.

"Fort Myers is a good location for Gartner due to the talented local workforce, the excellent environment that attracts people from across the country, and the competitive cost of living compared to other locations in the US," said Andrew Spender, a spokesperson for the Stamford, Conn.-based business. "We have grown by approximately 200 new associates each year for several years and have plans to continue to grow at the same pace."

Gartner now employs more than 900, has expanded to two buildings and is constructing a training center that will open this summer and continue to introduce employees and prospective residents to Southwest Florida.

Employee salaries average more than \$60,000 plus benefits and uncapped earning potential for its sales team. It recruits locally from all backgrounds, including tourism, construction, recent graduates and experienced associates for sales, said Mr. Spender.

While the company's sales associates have the opportunity to request transfers to any of Gartner's locations worldwide, its local finance and client services teams are from Southwest Florida or have opted for permanent residency here, according to Nate Swan, group vice president of sales in Fort Myers.

"A lot of employees come down here and realize they can start a family and buy a home," he said. "There are a lot of great things that make this area so attractive. We get good people."

Mr. Romine, who was involved in creating *CompleteLee*, said the successes of Lee County's sustainability plan will create a spinoff throughout Southwest Florida.



SWAN

Collaboration between government, education, nonprofit organizations, residents and philanthropists are the key to sustainability, as is collecting and measuring data and outcomes to demonstrate the region's resiliency and desirability as a great place to live, learn, work and play.

Communities that aren't resilient face long-term challenges. Dubuque, Iowa, started looking at sustainability after a series of major business closings and downsizing in the 1980s. By adapting sustainability as core values and working with its community foundation, the city successfully attracted new businesses and residents and is introducing programs that make a difference in the quality of life.

"We look at sustainability as a holistic system-wide approach from the top down to grassroots leadership," said Cori Burbach, the city's sustainable community coordinator. "One of our biggest driving factors was improving our workforce, investing in existing businesses, exploring new markets and looking at the people piece – creating a community where people want to live."

The city turned to the local **community foundation** to understand the challenges affecting Dubuque. It assembled a group of employers and educators to study issues such as reliable day care and transportation to keep students in school and adults in jobs.

bringing people together

"Sustainability is the interconnectedness of our social system, business and environment," Ms. Burbach said. "It's about collective impact and challenges I can bring the community around to move the needle."

Dubuque was recognized in 2015 as a four-STAR Sustainability Tools for Access and Rating Community. Lee County was a pilot participant in the national STAR program and is among 44 three- to five-star rated communities benefiting from a comprehensive data-driven rating system evaluating quality-of-life issues – everything from health-care, housing affordability, workforce readiness, emergency response times and how safe residents feel.

In Broward County, sustainability has been a game changer, said Jill Horwitz, a natural resources specialist in its environmental planning and community resilience division.

*** Lessons learned**

"We're carrying our partners' messages, we're looking at grants very differently now, and we're refocusing our efforts to make sure we're doing what's good for the community," she said. "We're making sure programs are hitting multiple targets and we're designing more effective programs and policies. It's worth the time to build relationships; that's what a community is all about."

The Southwest Florida Community



Sustainable Southwest Florida



Getting There **TOGETHER**

Framework and Roadmap for Continuous Improvement



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The Board of Trustees of the Southwest Florida Community Foundation is made up of community leaders who are representative of the communities we serve. Trustees approve all grants made by the Community Foundation and ensure that the organization meets all laws and legal requirements.



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FROM PAGE 2

Foundation is well into that dialogue, measuring program outcomes, bringing stakeholders to the table and connecting donors with social, economic and environmental issues. It has already built these relationships, said Ms. Owen.

The social component of regional sustainability encompasses arts and culture, education, transportation, healthcare, livability and opportunities for social mobility. Government and non-profits often provide many of these services and a sustainability framework allows them to gauge the impact of the work for the people served.

"Sustainability reduces duplication of services, increases funding opportunities, and enhances the ability to collaborate and innovate," Ms. LeSage said.

Goodwill Industries of Southwest Florida has created a self-sustaining business model that generates money through the resale and recycling of donations in its stores to hire and train employees.

"For us, sustainability ensures we are a viable nonprofit run like a business," said Jennifer Nelson, senior director of operations. "We are focused on spending less money so we can serve more people and collaborate with like-minded partners which is also important to make a community sustainable."

Enterprise Holdings has committed to sustainability and community steward-

strong
commitment
in SWFC

ship with the next generation in mind. Its corporate sustainability report holds the family-owned company accountable to principles balancing the interests of customers, employees and the parts of the world where it operates vehicle rental locations.

In Florida Enterprise has demonstrated the company's overarching commitment to implement sustainable practices by hiring and purchasing locally. During its most recent fiscal year Enterprise Holdings made more than \$20 million in companywide purchases from diverse Florida-based suppliers, including certified minority- and women-owned businesses. Operations throughout the state also reduced energy and water usage by as much as 20 percent.

"The investments we make in our neighborhoods here in Florida not only help us grow and improve our business, but also make a positive difference in people's lives," said Rob Wilson, vice president and general manager for Enterprise Holdings Southwest Florida. "By creating jobs, providing sustainable transportation alternatives and stimulating growth through our business and philan-



WILSON

thropic efforts, we're not just serving our customers - we're strengthening Florida's communities."

Southwest Florida's environmental resources - pristine local, state and national parks, its Gulf of Mexico beach-

es, rural communities and climate - also influence the sustainability equation. It's this setting that brings residents and potential residents to play, stay, live and work.

"A strong economy in Southwest Florida depends on protecting our unique environment. It sets us apart from everywhere else in the state and country," Ms. LeSage said. "The preservation of natural resources must be balanced with the economic and social aspects of a highly desirable, sustainable region and within the context of the issue at hand."

"We're excited about introducing community sustainability on a regional level," added Ms. Owen. "This complements and expands the work of the Southwest Florida Community Foundation. Sustainability is an ongoing process evolving with the changing needs of our community. With endowment as one of the important tools we offer donors, they can give to their passion in perpetuity, we can offer so many sustainable solutions."

We're in this together and forever."
—OC

Sustainability at a Glance

Economic

IF YOU'RE PASSIONATE ABOUT ENSURING A STRONG, DIVERSE LOCAL economy, sustainability is for you. In business, sustainability continues to rise in the ranks of importance as a core business issue. In the past, executives have cited cost-cutting or reputation management as top reasons for pursuing sustainability initiatives. A 2014 McKinsey & Company, found 43 percent of executives (the largest share, up from 30 percent in 2012) are describing a shift in thinking and are aligning sustainability with the goals, mission, or values of the company. What if Southwest Florida became known as a region that has its eye on sustainability? Would business more often bet on starting, staying, expanding, and relocating to Southwest Florida?



▲ Glades County Training Center



Social

DOES YOUR PASSION FALL IN THE REALM OF SOCIAL ISSUES? THEN there's something in sustainability for you. This is where arts and culture, education, transportation, healthcare, livability and opportunities for social mobility come into play. Government and non-profits provide many services aimed at addressing social problems and providing opportunities but too often we fall into a cycle of providing services without really understanding the impact the work has on the people we serve. Understanding and promoting the social realm of a sustainable region reduces duplication, increases funding opportunities, and enhances the ability to collaborate and innovate.

Environment

TOO OFTEN WE VIEW THE ENVIRONMENT AS THE SOLE BENEFICIARY of sustainability initiatives, which is a misunderstanding. The protection and preservation of natural resources must be balanced with the economic and social aspects of a highly desirable, sustainable region and within the context of the issue at hand. The environment is a point of passion for many in Southwest Florida because it is the very reason they choose to visit, live, or do business here. The environment provides the resources we need to live, habitat for other living-beings, opportunities to learn, prospects for innovative growth, and creates the backdrop for recreation and many attractions for tourism.

—OC



Paradise

Game
changer

Ck
this
out