



# PUNTA GORDA **POLICE**

"A STATE ACCREDITED LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY"

1410 TAMIAMI TRAIL  
PUNTA GORDA, FL 33950  
(941) 639-4111  
[www.ci.punta-gorda.fl.us](http://www.ci.punta-gorda.fl.us)

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**June 3, 2014**

### **Team Punta Gorda and the City of Punta Gorda Announce Opening of Community Garden**

The City's first Community Garden is finally ready to blossom. Located behind the Public Safety Building in Punta Gorda, the Community Garden has 25 regular planting beds and 1 ADA plot which are available on a first come first serve basis. The Community Garden was made possible through the collaborative efforts of TEAM Punta Gorda, Master Gardener Mike Stevens, several of the boys from AMI Kids Crossroads, and City Staff from Public Works, Utilities, Urban Design and Police. Funding was provided by a generous grant from The Mosaic Company. Punta Gorda Mayor Rachel Keesling detailed, "The Community Garden is an asset that we can all be proud of. What a beautiful display of groups coming together for the good of the community. All of the groups and individuals that helped create, organize and establish the garden: Thank You!"

In September of 2012, Team Punta Gorda approached the City of Punta Gorda about creating a Community Garden. Punta Gorda Police Chief Albert (Butch) Arenal spearheaded efforts to utilize available space at the Public Safety Building to help facilitate this project and partnership. "The Community Garden is a perfect example of a community partnership that not only benefits our residents, but provides an excellent way for our police department to interact directly with our citizens," stated Chief Arenal. "We truly appreciate TEAM Punta Gorda for choosing us for this outstanding project." Howard Kunik, City Manager, added, "We were quite pleased that we had available land behind our Public Safety Building to accommodate a Community Garden. This could be one of the few in the country to place this type of garden within an area normally reserved only for Police and Fire personnel. What a true partnership."

A year later this idea went from concept to reality when ground was broken on the garden. The designated planting area was prepped and the assembling of planting beds was completed along with the installation of proper irrigation and drainage. After months of advertising plot availability, a soft opening occurred on March 15<sup>th</sup> and after a presentation on proper gardening techniques by Master Gardener Mike Stevens, planting began. "This has been one of those great community partnerships. The city public safety staff, Team Punta Gorda Volunteers, Mosaic and local residents all worked together to build something we can all be proud of," stated Nancy Johnson, Chief Executive Officer of Team Punta Gorda.

## **Team Punta Gorda and City of Punta Gorda Announce Opening of Community Garden**

June 3, 2014

Page 2

Within the garden there are two memorial benches in honor of Marshal John H. Bowman and Assistant Chief Richard L. Beecher who are the only officers in the history of the Punta Gorda Police Department to die in the line of duty. The benches were dedicated during a brief ceremony on May 15<sup>th</sup>.

The Police Department's Volunteers in Policing are managing the Community Garden at no cost to the community. For more information on the Community Garden and availability of beds please mail the Garden Manager, Pat Prusha, [pprusha@pgorda.us](mailto:pprusha@pgorda.us) or call (941) 575-5535. Registration forms are available at the Punta Gorda Police Department, 1410 Tamiami Trail, Punta Gorda, FL 33950. Garden opportunities are available with priority being provided to residents of the City of Punta Gorda.

A brief dedication ceremony to officially open the Community Garden and recognize those who have contributed to this effort will take place on Friday, June 6, 2014 at 8:00 a.m. at the Punta Gorda Community Garden. The community is invited to attend.

### Photo Attachments:

Photo 1 – Memorial Garden

Photo 2 – Memorial Benches

Prepared by:

**Captain Jason Ciaschini**

**Punta Gorda Police Department**

(941) 575-5524

[jciaschini@pgorda.us](mailto:jciaschini@pgorda.us)