

Allegiant adds three routes

By LIZ HARDAWAY

STAFF WRITER

Snowbirds now have more means to fly south for the winter.

The Punta Gorda **Airport** begins seasonal service to three new destinations this week, Allegiant Air announced Wednesday morning. The routes go to Appleton, Wisconsin; Omaha, Nebraska; and Syracuse, New York. To celebrate, the company is offering discounted one-way fares to these destinations.

“We’re excited about the addition of these three new seasonal routes to Punta Gorda **Airport**’s flight schedule in mid-November,” said Punta Gorda **Airport** CEO James Parish. “PGD and our community partners are gearing up for several busy months of seasonal visitors and property owners looking to enjoy the warmth of southwest Florida.”

The routes are expected to bring in nearly 27,000 new visitors annually and could possibly bring in \$9.5 million in direct expenditures and \$14 million in total economic impact, said Sean Doherty, the interim director of tourism

for the Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach Visitor and Convention Bureau.

“We’re happy to have those new routes open up,” Doherty said. “It’ll be interesting to see how Omaha performs,” as it is the most western destination PGD has to offer, Doherty said. Allegiant also announced nine new routes out of Sarasota-Bradenton International **Airport** Tuesday, the Tampa Bay Times reported. The nonstop routes will begin February and are expected to bring an additional 160,000 passengers to Sarasota and Bradenton annually.

The new routes include Asheville, North Carolina; Baltimore; Grand Rapids, Michigan; Cleveland; Columbus, Ohio; Harrisburg, Pennsylvania; Nashville, Tennessee; Richmond, Virginia; and Syracuse, New York. As part of the launch, the airline is also offering promotional pricing. For more information, visit allegiant.com.

“While we know southwest Florida is a sunny and warm destination for our friends up north, we always get excited about adding additional cities for our local residents to visit too,” said PGD spokesperson Kaley Miller. “This will make it affordable and convenient for our kids to see snow and their northern cousins for the first time!”

“Opening up direct connections to these markets will help us promote our unique vacation product to these potential visitors. We look forward to telling our story to all three of these markets,” Doherty said.

Service to Omaha (OMA) will begin Nov. 14 with \$68 fares. These must be purchased by Nov. 16 for travel by Feb. 28 to receive this discounted fare. Flights from PGD to Syracuse (SYR) start at \$79 on Nov. 15 and need to be purchased by Nov. 17 to travel by Feb. 21. Appleton (ATW) flights start Nov.

16 at \$104 and need to be purchased by Nov. 18 for travel by Jan. 31.

PGD now offers 42 nonstop routes.

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Allegiant Airlines has helped Punta Gorda Airport become the 11th busiest in the state, surpassing Sarasota-Bradenton.

PHOTO PROVIDED

Warbird pilot Don Stamp dies in traffic crash

By ANNE EASKER

STAFF WRITER

The aviation community lost a legend this weekend, local pilots agreed. Eighty-year-old Don Stamp, a pilot of 50 years and founder and organizer of the Don Stamp Warbird Review, died in a single-vehicle traffic crash Saturday evening.

“It’s just tragic, because he’s kind of a legend in the Warbird community, and he was a pillar in the formation of the T-6 North American Trainer Association,” said James Olzacki, president of the Florida Warbirds. “It’s a big loss for the aviation community across the country.”

Just weeks ago, Stamp flew his World War II-era plane in the Florida International Air Show at the Punta Gorda **Airport**, leading a formation of historic military aircraft in “The Missing Man,” a salute to those who have passed away.

He helped organize formation clinics each year at the Punta Gorda **Airport** by the T-6 North American Trainer Association to train pilots in the same kind of flight maneuvers he flew in the airshow.

Dana Carr, President of the Florida International Air Show, said Stamp was instrumental in bringing back the airshow in 2016 and the Warbird Review was a big crowd-pleaser.

“He had a nickname, ‘Grumpy,’ but the truth is, he was a very nice person,” Carr said.

According to the Punta Gorda Police Department, Stamp stopped on Herald Court on Saturday evening and activated his emergency flashers. Surveillance video captured his vehicle moving forward slowly, then accelerated for unknown reasons. He crossed Taylor Street, drove up the ramp of the Sunloft Center parking garage, and struck a wall.

It’s unknown if Stamp suffered from a medical emergency prior to the crash, but autopsy results are pending, according to a press release. The crash is still under investigation.

“I’m sure he’s going to be sorely missed, because he’s just a phenomenal guy,” said Stan Smith, president of the Experimental Aviation Association Chapter 565 at the Punta Gorda **Airport**. “He always supported the local aviation events,

and the Don Stamp Warbird Review has become a staple of a lot of airshows around the nation as well as here locally.”

Olzacki said Stamp probably spent half his weekends of the year flying in airshows.

“Even though he had a business in Ohio, his life was pretty much going to airshows,” Olzacki said. “He would do almost anything for those who were putting on some kind of flying event or in need of support for some kind of flight for some other purpose like veterans or a memorial service or a military acknowledgement. He was almost always the first to step up and say he’d be a part of it.”

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Don Stamp and Mike Porter stand in front of Stamp’s plane, which he flew in the Warbird Review at the Florida International Air Show.

SUN PHOTOS BY ANNE EASKER

North to south, Charlotte County's building boom

For those not aware of the Parkside District in Charlotte County, it is situated in the heart of Port Charlotte. The area is bordered by U.S. 41 to Midway Boulevard and the Morning Star and Fordham waterways. It includes approximately 1,100 acres consisting of two area hospitals, many businesses, retirement centers and singlefamily homes. The area is a Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA), which was established by the county to address the decline of the area in past years.

Recent development has seen many positive changes. Numerous homes have changed ownership from rental properties to owneroccupied homes. Price appreciation in value is also evident. A sales tax project, McGuire Park, recently opened and includes a splash pad and other amenities.

Hopefully, it will be used by area residents and will be an asset to the community.

Paving projects have been underway in many parts of the area. Elkcam Boulevard has yet to be paved. It was to be done after the McGuire Park completion as promised by county officials.

Lighting on Elkcam was to be installed, however, at a recent Team Parkside meeting, it was found that funding to install the lighting is still lacking.

The Harbor Boulevard project is underway, however utility work has put the project about three months behind schedule.

The coastal corridor from Naples to Sarasota will grow much like the east coast. Much of the underdeveloped land in the county is either slated for development or is currently on the market. The first recent major development is the Babcock Ranch area that borders Lee County near Fort Myers. The Cheney Brothers opening has provided the county with higher paying jobs and has been a positive factor to the area. Road work in the Punta Gorda area has expanded Interstate 75 to three lanes in the county.

More development is on the drawing board.

Allegiant is moving on the Sunseeker Resort in Charlotte Harbor.

This development will include hotel accommodations, condominiums, shops and restaurants.

Some believe that the development will provide the area with higher paying jobs, however, jobs in these industries are not higher paying.

Excluding the initial construction jobs, it will force other businesses in the area to compete for the existing work force.

New brick-andmortar stores are under construction or are being completed. One complex, known as Port Charlotte Market Place at the site of the former Kmart on Cochran Boulevard, will include the Burlington Store, Home Goods and other retail outlets.

airline also has added many more destinations from Punta Gorda in recent years.

When the Sunseeker Resort in Port Charlotte is completed, Allegiant will benefit from charter flights to the area.

The article also addressed the passage of a resolution to increase the passenger facility charge from \$2.00 to \$4.50. Many airports in the area are at the higher level of \$4.50. The resolution was approved by a 3-2 vote by the **Airport** Authority. Opponents of the increased fee stated it would hurt families in that the increase is passed on to passengers in the ticket price.

This writer and the Curmudgeon Club wish to thank all the citizens for taking part in the recent election. Many candidates were on the ballot and regardless of the outcome, it is important for voters to become familiar with the candidates.

This can be done by attending candidate forums sponsored by various organizations or by keeping informed though the media or contacting the candidates. There were numerous amendments on the ballot that will affect our pocketbooks and the quality of life in our county and state.

Bill Southwick is a member of the Charlotte County Curmudgeon Club. Readers can reach him via ccurclub@embarqmail.com.

The Curmudgeon Club website is www.ccurclub.com.

Other progress is evident in Charlotte County. Building construction is taking place at accelerated levels. When most of us settled in the county, it was because of the undeveloped areas that existed. County officials were looking for ways to expand the area for raising the tax base either through small business expansion or population increases.

A column in the *Sun* dated Sept. 22, 2018, addressed the rise in passenger traffic at Punta Gorda **Airport**.

John Redmond, president of Allegiant, discusses how dominant the airline is at Punta Gorda. The

ccurmudgeon.org.

CURMUDGEON CLUB

BILL SOUTHWICK

NOVEMBER CHARLOTTE COUNTY AIRPORT AUTHORITY MEETING.

RENTING A CAR MIGHT GET MORE EXPENSIVE

What you need to know next time you fly:

More expensive rental cars?

The Airport Authority approved a proposal for the ability of adding a customer facility charge when someone rents a car. "We don't have an amount in mind," PGD CEO James Parish said, but the initial discussion has been a dollar a day. The average car rental is a little over five days, he said. The charges would allow development to improve the rental car facilities and fund projects. All commissioners, except Robert Hancik, voted to approve the proposal. "I just have a problem with burdening the passenger directly with an additional cost when we're not recurring reasonable rates and charges from our airline," Hancik said.

More parking coming

In a parking lot that typically reaches capacity every Friday, Parish said, PGD has approved engineering firm AECOM to create more parking. Phase one will put in approximately 500 spaces across from the Airport Administration building on Viking Avenue and future phases will add about 1,900 spaces. The existing long-term passenger parking lot is located along Viking Avenue and Golf Course Boulevard.

Happy birthday, PGD

Punta Gorda Airport turns 75 this year. The airport was established Dec. 11, 1943, as the Punta Gorda Army Airfield and used for combat pilot training. Now, the airport has 42 destinations and served almost 1.3 million passengers last year.

The board also talked about:

New head-honcho Commissioner Pam Seay (pronounced “sea”) was elected chair of the Charlotte County **Airport** Authority Thursday morning. She was nominated by her colleague, Paul Andrews. Current chair James Hearston was also nominated, but voted for Seay. “I said I’d accept the nomination,” Hearston told Rob Hancik, who nominated him. Hearston was elected vice chair. Coppola and Hancik were unanimously elected as Secretary/Treasurer and Assistant Secretary/Treasurer respectively.

“I’d like to take us through the master plan,” Seay said, which plans for 66 projects in 20 years. “I believe I can be an asset in achieving

those goals.” Seay is most excited about building the new general aviation terminal facility. “It’s about time we paid great attention to the staple of our **airport**.”

More money

During the treasurer’s report, PGD’s CEO James Parish said the **airport** did better money-wise than they budgeted for. They expected to make \$3.1 million and made just under \$4.2 million after all of operating expenses were taken care of.

“That is a very good sign,” Parish said. PGD has \$11.5 million in cash reserves and almost \$74 million in assets.

Airshow 2018

The Florida International

Airshow was a huge success, said the event’s president Dana Carr. Those who went Saturday said there was a problem with parking, but there was a good flow Sunday. “No one waited more than 20 minutes Sunday,” Carr said.

Though the numbers aren’t finalized, Carr said the airshow made \$15,000 to \$20,000 in donations to their charities, and retained good seed money for next year’s show. This year, the event had around 21,000 attendees, but is expected to double next year when the Thunderbirds soar in. Plan ahead: Next year’s airshow is Nov. 1-3, 2019.

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Punta Gorda Airport offers accelerated flight school

By **BRIANNA KWASNIK**
STAFF WRITER

Punta Gorda Airport offers Flight Fast Track (FFT), an accelerated flight training school.

FFT is a three-week private pilot course, with accelerated courses in instrument training, CFI training, and commercial multi-engine and commercial

single-engine courses.

According to flypgd.com, FFT's David Schall "loves showing people the possibilities of flight. Where it can take you, how you get there, how it can change and enhance your life, or absolutely define it."

The program also offers Airline Transport Pilot License training.

In other education

news...

Florida SouthWestern Collegiate High School announced their students of the month for October: Freshmen — Brooke Andrews and Jacob Storm; Sophomores — Lucabella Romero and Hunter Gibson; Junior — Sean Garrigus; and Seniors (not pictured) — Mikayla Houseman and Zane Hendrickson.



PHOTO PROVIDED

Students who received student of the month honors at Florida SouthWestern Collegiate High School: Freshmen: Brooke Andrews & Jacob Storm; Sophomores: Lucabella Romero and Hunter Gibson; Junior: Sean Garrigus; and Seniors (not pictured): Mikayla Houseman and Zane Hendrickson.

PUNTA GORDA

Airport traffic keeps climbing

By **LIZ HARDAWAY**
STAFF WRITER

It's official: We're in season, and the snowbirds are flying.

Punta Gorda Airport saw 55,018 more passengers in October than the month before, PGD reports. This is 13 percent more than October last year, with 2018 showing an average growth of 25 percent from the year before.

"We're pleased to continue steady increases in passenger traffic at nearly 25 percent more than last year at this time," said airport CEO James Parish. "In October 2018 we actually surpassed 1.3 million passengers for the calendar year, breaking our 2017 total passenger record. This puts the airport on track to reach 1.6 million passengers by

the end of the 2018." Last year, Punta Gorda Airport saw a total of 1.29 million passengers.

With this increase in traffic, Allegiant and the Transportation Security Administration recommend passengers arrive at least two hours early when it comes to early morning flights. This goes especially for those planning to use the airport's long-term parking. Punta Gorda Airport has six flights departing between 6 and 8 a.m.

Thursday, so it takes some time for all the passengers to check-in and get through security.

"We have shuttles and golf carts transporting passengers to and from the overflow parking areas," said airport spokesperson, Kaley Miller.

Punta Gorda Airport saw a 68 percent increase in departing passengers this month compared to September.

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PGD PARKING COSTS	
LONG-TERM PARKING:	SHORT-TERM PARKING:
First 2 HoursFree	First 2 HoursFree
Each Additional Hour \$1.00	Each Additional Hour \$1.00
Daily Maximum \$11.00	Daily Maximum \$24.00
Weekly Maximum \$65.00	<i>Overnight parking is not recommended.</i>
	— <i>Source: PGD</i>