

BUSINESS PROFILES

Marietta Mudgett: Energized by the human dynamic

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correspondent

For Marietta Mudgett, Executive Director of The Greater Fort Myers Chamber of Commerce, work is not strictly business. Her early days in finance for human services organizations, including the Lee Mental Health Center and the Area Agency on Aging, taught her that interacting well with people is what matters most when it comes to successful business practices. She has put that philosophy into place every day since the Chamber's inception in 1989 and her promotion to Executive Director in 1991.

"We grew from nothing to 1,350 members today," says Mudgett. "And we have made a tremendously positive impact on the community."

For Mudgett, running the Chamber as a business means having a clear set of goals to accomplish. A main objective is to continue to grow the Chamber while maintaining their foundation of good relationships and effective services.

"We are a board-driven Chamber," she explains. "They set the tone and lay out the plan - it is my job along with my staff to carry out that mission."

As a result, the Chamber has developed and implemented a series of programs designed to bring businesses together and to establish a forum to build long-term relationships that will benefit the community.

This Chamber has set education as their highest priority, donating 10 percent of their dues to education-oriented programs, teachers and scholarship funds. Mudgett

feels that their commitment of more than \$400,000 has played an important part in the quality of education in our area.

Mudgett is also proud of the Chamber's Leadership Program - launched seven years ago, it is a well-run, affordable program that has produced many community leaders and a myriad of networking opportunities.

Most recently, Mudgett played an integral role in facilitating the new "Women in Business" program which meets the first Wednesday of every month, featuring guest

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speakers and themed formats that address current issues or concerns.

As Fort Myers grows, Mudgett is a watchful observer of change and notes that for the most part, there is a positive outlook.

"Because we originally shared a building with the Downtown Redevelopment Agency, I was aware of the early planning stages for the Riverfront District and now we are seeing that come to fruition," comments Mudgett.

She has also seen huge advances in technology that have revolutionized area businesses. In response, the Chamber has

formed the Information Technology Committee Technology Group as well as hosting an annual Technology Trade Show.

What does Mudgett forecast for the Fort Myers business community?

"I believe in the Lee County/Fort Myers economy and I see a healthy business climate over the next couple of years," she states. "People will keep coming here, and the Chamber will respond by continuing to work on affordable housing, small business issues and healthcare issues as they relate to area business. We are also organizing a task force that will work on healthcare referrals in our area."

As the community and the Chamber grow, Mudgett is motivated by the human dynamic that she experiences every day.

"One of the greatest things that we do is to provide an atmosphere that inspires professional and personal relationships," Mudgett explains.

Mudgett says that she learns something



COURTESY PHOTO

Marietta Mudgett

from almost everyone she meets and has been greatly inspired by the Chamber's Board of Directors, Bill Smith and Dick Ackert. She is a firm believer in the Golden Rule and the concept that if you send out good, you'll get good back.

"This is exemplified by my great staff," says Mudgett. "They are wonderful and I couldn't do what I do without their support and input. It's a pleasure and a privilege to work with them." ■

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