

Congressman Mahoney and CFO Sink Partner to Hold Economic Development Summit for Charlotte County

(September 21, 2007)

(Port Charlotte, FL) - The Economic Development Summit was held in Port Charlotte, FL on Friday, September 21, 2007, to connect small business owners and entrepreneurs in Port Charlotte with federal, state, and county agencies. The summit was coordinated by the Chief Financial Officer Alex Sink and the Florida Gulf Coast University Small Business Development Center, and sponsored by the Charlotte County Chamber of Commerce and the Punta Gorda Chamber of Commerce. Congressman Tim Mahoney (FL-16) served as honorary chair and delivered the keynote address.

"As Florida's Chief Financial Officer, I understand the importance of encouraging the growth of small businesses in our state," said CFO Sink, who oversees the Department of Financial Services. "One of my top priorities is to work with local communities to spur small businesses growth through education on important financial issues."

"Creating jobs with a future is my top priority in Congress. Small business is the economic engine that drives our economy and it is critical that we connect our business community with the resources they need to grow and prosper. The summit provided our business leaders in Charlotte County with an opportunity to invest a morning and come away with information that will make their businesses more profitable," said Congressman Tim Mahoney (FL-16).

"Small Business owners need to take advantage of the multiple resources that will be available to them during the Economic Development Summit scheduled for this Friday morning. The access to information and the ability to personalize the services (get to know the person) is a huge advantage of a program of this type. Businesses can improve their operations by access to education and information and then using the material provided. Charlotte County has assembled the most important programs - take advantage of it now!" said Dan Regelski, Director of the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU).

"It was great to have so many resources in one room focusing on our small businesses. The workshops and hand-outs contained practical information that business owners can use tomorrow. Questions were asked and answered and business cards were exchanged. It was a very productive morning for local businesses," said Julie Mathis, Executive Director of the Charlotte County Chamber of Commerce

"Events such as this one today are vitally important to the continued growth of our area. Punta Gorda has really re-energized itself since the devastating hurricane of August 2004 and today's forum managed to bring a much-needed new energy to our re-birth process," said John R. Wright, President of the Punta Gorda Chamber of Commerce

The Economic Development Summit consisted of three expert-led education sessions:

- • Financing Your Small Business
- • Steps to Start and Find Federal Government Bidding Opportunities
- • Property and Casualty Joint Underwriting Association and Commercial Non-Residential Coverage

Representatives from the Florida Department of Financial Services were one hand to answer questions on a variety of insurance and financial topics. More than 15 government agencies were also present and provided information related to small business development.

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