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Dixie County Chamber's 54th Annual Meeting shows success from 2018 & more



The 2019 Dixie County Chamber Officers are (from left) Vice President Melanie Anderson, Co-President Cheryl Jones, Co-President Andrew Rains, Treasurer Debbie Dembo and Secretary Cindy Bellot.

Story and Photos

By Jeff M. Hardison © Jan. 30, 2019 at 5:08 p.m.

CROSS CITY – Members and guests of the Dixie County Chamber of Commerce filled the dining room of The Putnam Lodge, including at the bar and even some at the outer enclosed seating area, for the 54th Annual Dixie County Chamber of Commerce Meeting on Monday night (Jan. 28).



People serve themselves at the buffet-style banquet.

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Chamber President Carol West opens the program.



Bob Leichner of Dixie Music Center returns to his seat holding up one of the door prizes from the night. This is a travel bag from Central Florida Electric Cooperative.

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2019 Chamber Vice President Melanie Anderson (left) gives 2018 Chamber President Carol West a plaque for West's outstanding service to the Chamber.



As Melanie Anderson stands next to her after the presentation, Carol West (right) holds the plaque which shows the Chamber expressing its grateful appreciation for her service.

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Chamber officers and directors accept their duties as Dixie County Court Judge Jennifer Johnson administers the oath of office to them.

Lodge owners Ed and Beverly Pivacek -- with an outstanding support staff -- provided an elegant setting and meal for the changing of the guard in leadership and other aspects at the Chamber's annual meeting.

A very full year of accomplishments was reviewed, outgoing Chamber President Carol West was presented with a plaque by incoming Vice President Melanie Anderson and the theme of Dixie County being "A great place to Live, Work and Play!" echoed throughout the Shamrock Subdivision (at least inside the lodge) as the unity of the community was shared with listeners via the Rotary Club of Dixie County's portable public address system.

THE MEAL

Ed Pivacek is glad to share with interested people the finer points of his many delicious offerings, and this special menu on Monday night went far-beyond the hors d'oeuvres first considered as a gift from the couple to the Chamber.

As President West intimated, for the folks who did not see the updated memo, this was a full course meal from salad to dessert. The general theme of the meal was that of a tropical island, with some South American flavor perhaps as well.

The salad, briefly speaking, was a spring salad mix of watermelon, raspberries, cucumbers and more with a Balsamic vinegar (in Italian: aceto balsamico), which was amazing. Hawaiian coconut pork was the main entrée for some, although Ed Pivacek was all about highlighting the salad's role in the meal of the evening, as he was tagged for information during a very quick on-the-spot interview.

Moros y Cristianos (or simply arroz moro) is a Cuban dish of rice and black beans that is served in many Cuban restaurants, and this was among the fare. Peas and pearl onions; Cuban style yucca; and fried plantains are among the items people chose as well at the buffet-style banquet.

Desserts were cheese cake and Beverly Pivacek's yellow cake with chocolate icing, and her husband's face lit up when he shared that was among the multiple pièces de résistance of the eve.

JEFF CARY'S VIDEO

Jeff Cary has been serving as a volunteer videographer for the Chamber for some time now. He takes great pride and finds joy in giving this artwork for people to see the

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Chamber.

Some of his videography was shown on a loop at the event, and afterward, he spoke about visits to the Chamber's website by people from across the globe.

2018 PRIMARY PROJECTS

President West served as emcee throughout the evening, and although some members are even more shy about speaking to the crowd than she, details of the successful ventures to help the existing business interests continue to thrive, and to invite new entrepreneurs to the area were perfectly shared.

Incoming Co-President Andrew Rains, who was administered the oath of office by Dixie County Judge Jennifer Johnson as were Chamber Co-President Cheryll Jones, and 2019 Vice President Melanie Anderson, Secretary Cindy Bellot and Treasurer Debbie Dembo, with directors Richard T. Balog, Darbi Chaires Meisner, John Cherry, Rebecca Fusco, Dana Johnson, Heddie Johnson, Robbie Lee, Ruth Ann Lovelace and Beverly Pivacek, spoke about the Hero Flag Project.

Terry and Debbie Dembo are the main champions in this project, Rains said, which has caught on significantly.

For a week before and after, as well as during Memorial Day and Veterans Day, America flags are flown along a long stretch of U.S. Highway 19 in Cross City. There are now almost 450 veterans being honored by this flag and cross display, Rains said.

Beyond the Dembo family help, Rains said there are many other people and groups who contribute to the successful building, storing and placing of these unique wooden monuments.

The \$40 payment is for two years, which is four times the cross and flag is displayed for each veteran being honored, Rains said.

The Dixie County Education Foundation provides four \$750 annual scholarships from the Chamber's flag project, Rains said.

Terry and Debbie Dembo are the main people who make this ongoing project continue, Rains said, and all of the veterans whose names are on those markers are being remembered for their service to the country.

Ruth Ann Lovelace spoke about the new "Welcome To Dixie County" sign, placed by the Dixie County Chamber of Commerce. The sign is on the east side of U.S. Highway 19 just north of the Joe H. Anderson Sr. Bridge. Lovelace and the Pivaceks designed it, with Ed choosing blue as the main color, she said.

Volunteers like Kimbo and Katrina VanAernam, and a long list of companies helped bring the project to fruition, Lovelace said.

Lucas Rollison was in charge of obtaining the sign, Lovelace said, as she said there were many people who added to the whole landscaping around it.

100 YEAR CELEBRATION

In April of 2021, Dixie County will herald its 100th year of existence.

Cindy Bellot spoke about this upcoming landmark in time.

Introduced by President West, Bellot echoed the sentiment that every church, fraternal organization, civic organization, business organization, municipal and county government groups, and everyone else in Dixie County needs to make this centennial celebration something to remember.

Bellot said the Dixie County Library branch in Cross City has open access to Ancestry.com.

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“So we don’t have to lose our heritage,” Bellot said.

People can use the library’s computers or just connect through the Wi-Fi there for free access.

From that connection to Ancestry.com, Bellot said, people can look into their own families’ heritage. They can write it down and share it.

Right now, she said, there is not much in the way of publications that chronicle the history of Dixie County. By everyone becoming involved, the heritage that exists in this county will not simply disappear.

Bellot said if people will give her their families’ histories, then the library will put it all together as a publication. She looked over to her husband Arthur Bellot, as she said there are people in the room who need to tell their families’ stories.

As time goes by, she intimated, there is a continued loss from the community of memories from years past as people pass away. She remembered speaking with a couple of hunters one time, and as they talked to each other they uncovered that they are cousins.

Right now there are quarterly meetings at the Dixie County Public Library of the Centennial Committee. However, it is going to take more than one committee to make this upcoming year of celebrations actually be something to go down in the history books.

In 2008, the City of Lake City celebrated its sesquicentennial (150th anniversary) as a city.

Lake City first began as the town of Alligator in 1821 near the Seminole settlement known as Alligator Village. Alligator became the seat of Columbia County in 1832 when it was formed from Duval and Alachua counties. In 1858 Alligator was incorporated and renamed Lake City.



More than a dozen of the many bricks heralding Chiefland’s 100th year in 2013 are seen in the wall formed in 2013. In the upper left as one of the cornerstones, the brick shows *HardisonInk.com* with Jeff, Sharon and Goldy Hardison. Since then, adding to the names of mascots in addition to Goldy

are Inky and Needles. Things change over time, but this was part of the history captured in 2013 in Chiefland.

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Chiefland was incorporated in 1913 and that city celebrated its centennial in 2013. Some individuals and business interests bought vertical banners that were placed on light poles. Some individuals and business interests bought bricks that were placed to form a wall in front of what is now the Tri-County Community Resource Center.

There were coins minted to celebrate the occasion as well.

In 2011, the First United Methodist Church of Chiefland celebrated its 150th anniversary – sesquicentennial – having formed first in 1861.

Every place chooses its own methods to celebrate historic landmarks in time. Time will tell how Dixie County shows the world its recognition of its 100th anniversary as a county.

Dixie County was created in 1921 from the southern portion of Lafayette County.

2019 OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

The 2019 Dixie County Chamber of Commerce officers and directors who were sworn in by Dixie County Court Judge Jennifer Johnson are Co-President Andrew Rains, Co-President Cheryll Jones, Vice President Melanie Anderson, Secretary Cindy Bellot, Treasurer Debbie Dembo, and directors Richard T. Balog CPA, CFF, Darbi Chaires Meisner, John Cherry, Rebecca Fusco, (Dixie County Clerk of Court) Dana Johnson, Heddie Johnson, (Dixie County Property Appraiser) Robbie Lee, Ruth Ann Lovelace and Beverly Pivacek.