

Online marriage schedule? There's an app

Not resting on our laurels from my first year in office in 2017, your Charlotte County Clerk's Office continued looking for ways to provide efficient services to our local taxpayers while simultaneously reducing our operating budget. I am happy to report 2018 was another successful year.

Following up on the success of the Jury Services app developed and launched by our in-house IT team in 2017, we introduced a new and unique Marriage Scheduling app for both the iPhone and Android devices.

With our new online marriage-scheduling system, couples can complete an online marriage application and schedule a block of time for their wedding ceremony to be held in our newly designed marriage room in the Charlotte County Justice Center. This state-of-the-art system allows for follow-up text messaging



Charlotte County
Clerk of Courts

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and appointment notifications.

Since instituting this system, more than 200 couples have married in our office. The positive response by couples who have used this new system and ceremony room have been a highlight of 2018.

Your Clerk's Office provided a convenient solution to citizens wanting to pay their fines and fees with cash without them having to personally come into the Justice Center during business hours to make their payment. We partnered with nCourt and PayNearMe, financial services technology companies, to create the ability for Charlotte County citizens to pay their fines and fees in cash using a convenient

barcode scan at participating merchants, such as CVS, 7 Eleven and Dollar General.

The new program is convenient, guaranteed and confidential. This helps working people, as they can now pay after regular working hours. We are the first clerk's office in the state of Florida to offer this payment option.

As our office is always looking for excellent staff, we implemented a new Internet-based system from NeoGov for job postings and online submission. This highly advanced online system allows us to quickly respond to the office's needs for highly talented candidates in our diverse departments.

Your Clerk's Office for the second year in a row lowered our citizen's tax burden by reducing our budget by 2 percent and returned \$368,305 to the Charlotte County Commission, despite health care costs rising by over 5 percent and rising Florida Retirement

System rates. I am happy to report we have been able to accomplish this in both of my first two years serving as your clerk of court. I attribute this to an excellent staff and the implementation of cutting-edge software systems which make our office incredibly efficient.

Many citizens do not realize that the comptroller side of the Clerk's Office directs investment of millions of dollars of Charlotte County funds. Our team continually analyzes the current structure of investments, with a primary focus on providing security, safety and liquidity of the county's investments. Taking advantage of rising interest rates, we shifted a sizable portion of county funds into U.S. government agency securities and instruments, which earned a substantially higher yield. In 2018, over \$7.9 million was earned on investments controlled by your Clerk's Office, as compared

to \$4.9 million earned in 2017, an increase of 61 percent.

For the second straight year, your Clerk's Office has been awarded the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting by the Government Finance Officers Association for the year ended Sept. 30, 2017. The Certificate of Achievement is the highest form of recognition in the area of governmental accounting and financial reporting, and its attainment represents a significant accomplishment by a government agency and its management.

Not only does our office serve the community, but we strive to be an active supporter of our tight-knit community. We are extremely proud that the Clerk's Office staff raised \$4,000 for The Center for Abuse and Rape Emergencies and \$2,000 for the Animal Welfare League in 2018, through car washes, bake sales and other fund-raising

team events.

My office will continue developing new and innovative ways to provide a better service experience for local citizens, while always being mindful of reducing the burden to local taxpayers. As promised a year ago in my 2017 year in review, our office will never rest on its accomplishments. We will always strive to find better, more cost-efficient ways to provide our services to the public. By combining excellent staff and the implementation of advanced technologies, our goal is to provide you with more services for less cost. I look forward to reporting to you this time next year on our 2019 calendar year advancements.

For more information about our office and to access all of our new features, please visit us at CharlotteClerk.com.

Thank you!

Roger D. Eaton is Charlotte County clerk of the circuit court and county comptroller.