



# Seminole's Seven Cities Cite Success

Despite a bear market, much was still  
accomplished in Seminole County.

BY KEVIN FRITZ

PHOTOS COURTESY OF SEMINOLE COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

**T**he economy may have owned the headlines in 2009, but despite hardships, the mayors of Seminole County's seven cities say 2009 was really a year of creativity and perseverance in their respective metro areas.

## ALTAMONTE SPRINGS



Uptown Altamonte is a great place to shop, eat and enjoy live events.

“We managed with a 10 percent drop in revenue and a 17 percent reduction in property taxes without significantly reducing the quality of services in our city,” notes Mayor Pat Bates. She says to reduce costs, consolidation and pooling resources was key in 2009, such as a partnership with the Seminole County Sheriff’s Office that saved \$386,000.

“Consolidation is necessary,” Bates says. “With the economy the way it is, consolidation is something everyone needs to think about.”

A major triumph in 2009 was the decision of the Adventist Health System of Florida Hospital choosing Altamonte Springs as its headquarters, bringing jobs and opportunities to the city. The first of three phases will be a 450,000 square-foot facility.

One thing Bates really looks forward to in 2010 is the completion of a Buddy Ball field at Eastmonte Park, which will be home to the new Central Florida Bambino Buddy Ball League for physically and/or mentally challenged children.

## CASSELBERRY



Wirz Park will be one of the stops along the new Wirz Park Trail.

The “Community Minded City” was lucky enough to have debuted not just one pride and joy in 2009, but two.

Lake Concord Park, located behind City Hall, had its grand re-opening Oct. 24 featuring educational elements on water quality, rainwater collection, lake shore preservation and landscaping. The pièce de résistance is an open baffle box with a glass top that shows how storm water is caught and cleaned. “It’s also extremely beautiful,” says Mayor Charlene Glancy. “We saved large oaks, which created an instant canopy.”

The second is the completion of phase one of the Wirz Park Trail, a system of paths for walking, biking, and

hiking throughout the city.

Glancy says beautification enhancements in the median on 17-92 were completed in 2009, and an additional \$1.4 million is allocated for widening sidewalks and improving landscape in 2010. Lake improvements will also continue to be a high priority, especially on the Triplet Chain of Lakes.

## LAKE MARY



The Lake Mary Events Center continues to bring in money for the city.

Lake Mary is still enjoying its status as the best small town in Florida in which to live, according to “CNN/Money Magazine.” Not resting on its laurels, Mayor David Mealor says the emphasis the city placed on renewing its downtown core in 2009 with an exciting new transit-oriented district, has really taken shape. It features new street signs and way-finding signs on Lake Mary Boulevard that promote various activities, a precursor to the long-awaited SunRail commuter line. “Because of the anticipated SunRail system, we can create a destination point where people can work, live and play,” Mealor explains.

The new Lake Mary Events Center has proved to be quite profitable and more desirable in 2009, especially for weddings, says Mealor. The city also struck a deal with Sanford in 2009 allowing Lake Mary to use reclaimed water in its rights of way and parks. In 2010, Lake Mary looks forward to bringing reclaimed water to residents.

## LONGWOOD



The city of Longwood plans to continue reducing spending in the New Year.

Mayor John C. Maingot says he faced several new economic challenges, reducing its 2009-2010 budget by 9.1 percent over the previous year. Longwood also instituted a policy of spending for “mission-essential” items only and cutting out

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all contingencies. However, no tax increase was discussed or proposed, and the city has maintained its current level of employees. He says revenue is projected to be reduced by another 10 to 12 percent in 2010 and Longwood leadership is putting procedures in place to further reduce spending and evaluate the necessity of all services.

“We can no longer conduct business as usual and must think outside of the box in terms of doing more with less people and less revenue,” he says. However, with the adoption of a comprehensive plan in 2009, Maingot believes the city is better prepared for the future. “We are now in a position to begin immediate proactive economic development as the economy recovers,” he says.

## OVIEDO



The Oviedo Police Department has a new station to look forward to in 2010.

Being selected by “Relocate America” as a top 100 city in which to live and named as the second best small town in Florida by “CNN/Money Magazine,” Mayor Mary Lou Andrews knows Oviedo is doing something right.

Oviedo faced economic issues throughout the year, but made due without much compromise. “No services were cut, and no additional fees were incorporated to cover the decreased property tax revenue,” says Andrews.

Instead, the city focused on conservation issues. They now require new development and redevelopment of existing properties to utilize Florida-friendly plants and low-impact irrigation systems, and reclaimed water was made available in some residential areas with plans to serve 14 neighborhoods by 2013. And the city’s first “green” building opened in 2009: a new public works facility that received a gold certification from the U.S. Green Building Council.

In 2010 progress will continue on the improvement of the state Road 434/426 corridor and the construction of a new police station.

## SANFORD

Mayor Linda Kuhn calls 2009 “the year of groundbreaking in the city of Sanford.” The city leader since 2005, Kuhn points to various projects, including the new public safety building, which will be completed in 2010. The \$20 million facility will house both the fire and police departments. Kuhn says 2009 also brought the completion of the first phase of the new Fort Mellon Park, which boasts the largest splash pad in Central



The first phase of Fort Mellon Park was completed in Sanford this year.

Florida. The amenities that include basketball courts and a playground were requests from a survey sent to residents. “We are so proud of that project,” she says.

With the generosity of construction company Wharton Smith, the city finished a \$2.5 million expansion of the West Side Community Center. In addition, streetscape plans were completed on First Street by adding new lighting, plants, and sidewalks. The project was commemorated with a grand opening July 1 to coincide with Sanford’s annual Fourth of July celebration.

## WINTER SPRINGS



Winter Springs is home to the beautiful Blumberg Boulevard park area.

Winter Springs celebrated its 50th Anniversary in 2009, and Mayor John Bush says although it was a year of celebration, it was also a year of closely watching their budget and being creative in a tough economy. “We cut \$1.7 million from our general operating budget,” he says. In addition, the city hired an economic development consultant to look at reducing the tax burden on residents.

For Winter Springs’ finest, not only did the city maintain a low crime rate, but the police department received national reaccreditation for their work and the department instituted a new Citizen’s Police Academy and graduated its first class.

For 2010, Bush says the city has adopted goals, which include partnering with other entities to pursue the development of Seminole Way, (the initiative associated with the state Road 417 corridor that spans the length of Seminole County), and to develop and implement a policy for addressing water supply and conservation. ☐