

Woman helps promote downtown Agency marketing manager credited with events

By JI Watson

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When Lisa Pletincks enrolled in college more than two decades ago, she had dreams of becoming a professional musician.

Today, the marketing manager for the Community Redevelopment Agency uses her pipes to promote downtown businesses.

"I try to bring people into downtown businesses instead of focusing on the outside," Pletincks said. "A lot of people don't even know we have a downtown. We've got to make it a destination and get the word out."

Pletincks came to the CRA by accident. She managed her father's medical practice for a number of years, but when he closed part of his practice, Pletincks was set to start a new life in Tampa. At the last minute the job she thought she was headed to fell through and Pletincks found herself without an income.

"I took a temp position with the city clerk in January '04," she said. She worked as the board secretary for the CRA, and was hired full-time in March.

That position led to administrative secretary for the group, and last month she was promoted to marketing manager. Pletincks credits her rise through the ranks with her gift of gab.

"I'll talk to anyone," she said. "I love being with people. If I'm tired, I don't want to go home. I want to go out and be with people."

In the short time that she's been with the CRA, Pletincks has been instrumental in coming up with



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Lisa Pletincks is the marketing manager for Cape Coral's Community Redevelopment Agency.

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COMING UP

The following are events Lisa Pletincks is developing for Cape Coral's Community Redevelopment Agency:

- May: Monthlong promotion "Keep it in the Cape — Support Your Local Businesses" banners. Banners with the slogan will be displayed in participating Cape Coral businesses
- May 1: CRA releases a Cape Coral downtown shopping, dining and entertainment guide. The guide will be available in June. Tentative plans call for the CRA to mail the guide to all Cape Coral residents.
- May 13: "Meet the Artist" Mother's Day promotions in downtown stores. Participating retailers will give women one flower to celebrate the day. Women who visit several

ideas for events to promote downtown Cape Coral. In January of this year she helped develop and promote the first food and wine tasting that paired area restaurants with retailers. The event drew 500 people to the area. In February, Pletincks brainstormed on a "Tribute to New Orleans," a good-natured competition that got more than 700 people into downtown restaurants to eat and vote for the best bayou cuisine. Mike Davidson from Leapin' Lizard Bar and Grill won the competition.

"We've gotten a lot of good response from the restaurants," Pletincks, 43, said. "They love having something to do every month."

Up next are plans for Mother's Day and Father's Day celebrations. On May 13 local artists will be on hand in local businesses for a "Meet the Artist" promotion. Women who attend also can pick up one flower at each business, and leave with a small bouquet after collecting single stems at several stores. The Father's Days promotion will feature beer-tasting in downtown restaurants and bars.

"I enjoy working with business owners and making them successful," Pletincks said. "It's kind of like the job of my dreams."

There are about 1,100 businesses in the downtown area that runs as far east as the Cape Coral toll booth and west to Tudor Drive, covering most of Cape Coral Parkway. The north-south boundaries extend several blocks in each direction. Pletincks has an operating budget of about \$100,000. The money comes from the tax base in the downtown area. It is money that Pletincks is eager to spend wisely.

"Their taxes pay our salaries," she explained.

Suzanne Kuehn, CRA executive director, said Pletincks is proficient at "putting all the parts together that need to be done."

"She's always two steps ahead of me," Kuehn, 60, said.

The two women work together to come up with new ideas to highlight downtown businesses.

"In redevelopment, no job is too big or too small," she said. "From sweeping a street to meeting with government officials, she has shown that she's not afraid."

The two are currently working on a dining guide they expect to complete in the next month.

"We're working on things that will brand us so that when people want something to do, they'll go downtown."

stores will leave with a small, mixed bouquet.

- June 17: International beer-tasting in downtown restaurants.
- July: Monthlong "We Support our Troops" banners will be on display. Residents can sign the banners that will be shipped to National Guard troops stationed in Iraq.

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CRA Chair Robert Greco said Pletincks is a valuable part of the CRA team.

"She's a natural," he said. "She's very people-oriented, friendly and easy to approach."

That approachability works well for business owners who are looking for a little help in getting customers through the door.

"She's going to bring new life to the downtown with her personality and skills," Greco said. "I credit Suzanne with putting together a great team."

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