



Week in Review

July 1 - 7, 2025

The *Week in Review* is prepared and published by Laurie Hayes, Director of Communications, for the staff and residents of the City of Bartow, 450 N. Wilson Avenue, Bartow, Florida 33830

Bright Ideas Innovation Award Winners Announced

Last year, the City of Bartow, under the direction of City Manager Mike Herr, launched the Bright Ideas Innovation Program. This initiative allows employees to have a voice in improving City operations and encourages continuous process improvement, collaborative team solutions, organizational effectiveness and

process mapping. This program created a framework for all employees to become Bright Ideas Innovators by developing and submitting ideas for review, feedback and adoption.

It is similar to one Herr began in Winter Haven when he served as manager of that city.

"The Bright Ideas initiative is intended to give our employees an opportunity to have a say in just how exceptional city government can be by providing ideas to reduce red tape in a process, reduce operating costs in our city budget or recommend a different approach to daily work that improves services to our citizens and businesses," Herr explained.

"When employees are given an opportunity to unleash their talents good things will happen for our citizens and our work force morale will continuously improve as well."

Bright Ideas Criteria is defined as follows:



Top left: Mike Herr and Jennifer Noe
 Top center: Mike Herr and Wiley Pratt
 Top right: Mike Herr and Courtney Stevenson
 At right: Mike Herr, Brandon Altman and Tray Towles



- Aligns with the City's Mission and Goals
- Benefits either the community, citizens, customers or city employees
- Addresses one of the following areas: best practices, cost savings, equipment improvement, policy change, process improvement, safety consideration or technology enhancement
- Identifies a clearly defined problem or opportunity for improvement

Upon submission, Bright Ideas are reviewed by an Employee Advisory Group which makes recommendations to the City Manager's Leadership Team. That team is tasked with choosing which Bright Ideas to move forward, based on the above criteria.

Last month, the City celebrated its first Bright Ideas Innovators. These four members of the City staff have had their ideas, which range from providing monetary and other assistance to bring dwellings into compliance with City Code to using new technology to prevent infrastructure issues – adopted by the City. Each employee also received a monetary innovation award ranging from \$500 to \$1000 based upon City impact.

"I am very pleased with the ideas that have been submitted thus far and am especially excited to see these brought to fruition for the benefit of both City staff and our citizens," Herr said at a ceremony to recognize the winners.

The Innovators and their Bright Ideas are as follows:

Angel Fund - Brandon Altman, Code Compliance and Neighborhood Services Inspector

Award: \$1000

Problem: Citizens who have code violations and are unable to come into compliance due to age, financial situations, health concerns, etc.

Solution: An Angel Fund would take a portion of the proceeds received from Code Enforcement daily fines and redistribute them to address, or assist in addressing, code violations for residents who are unable to come into compliance because of extenuating circumstances. These individuals would be those not eligible for assistance within the CRA district or from other assistance programs.

Outcome: The Angel Fund will allow the Code Enforcement Division to assist citizens with obtaining new roofs, cleaning up property, or repainting their homes.

Beneficiaries: Elderly citizens, citizens with major health concerns, etc.

Mail Courier (evolved into paperless invoices) - Jennifer Noe, Administrative Support Assistant, Bartow Electric Utility

Award: \$1000

Problem: Because the Electric Warehouse lacks mail delivery services, all incoming mail must be sent to City Hall. This requires someone to visit City Hall multiple times each week to ensure that important documents such as invoices and paper checks are received in a timely manner.

Solution: If the City were to hire a person to handle interdepartmental mail and deliveries it would greatly improve efficiency. This streamlined process would ensure smoother operations for both remote departments and those housed at City Hall which process financial and other paperwork.

Outcome: The original solution was to hire someone to deliver interdepartmental mail or incorporate the responsibilities into an existing employee's job description. Instead, after pondering the problem, the City was able to adopt a paperless invoice system that eliminated the need to transfer documents from one department to another.

Beneficiaries: All departments located outside of City Hall.

Smart Cover Utility Infrastructure Monitoring System - Wiley Pratt, Wastewater Plant Manager

Award: \$1000

Problem: The City's sewer system periodically experiences overflows which could be prevented with a monitoring system that identifies potential issues before they occur. In addition to the unwanted inflow and infiltration and the production of odorous gas, these incidents can trigger fines by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection.

Solution: The Smart Cover Monitoring System uses sensors attached to the City infrastructure (manholes) that transmits ultrasonic readings via the City network for data analysis. Reports are then compiled and accessed online or through a mobile app to advise utility operators of impending overflows, H2S levels and infrastructure entry.

Outcomes:

- Monitoring inflow and infiltration during heavy rain events

- Predict/prevent manhole overflows
- Detect Infrastructure Entry
- Sewer line cleaning
- Monitoring of H2S levels
- Reduce call-outs and overtime
- Prevent consent letters and fines from FDEP

Beneficiaries: City of Bartow personnel and residents

Time Buy Back - Courtney Stevenson, Wastewater Plant Operator II

Award: \$500

Problem: Losing personal days and vacation days being capped off at a certain number of hours.

Solution: Allow employees to sell up to 24 hours of their time off.

Outcome: Departments aren't left shorthanded when employees rush to take their personal days before they lose them. It will also allow employees to build up their vacation hours.

Beneficiaries: City employees

Our Country's Independence Celebrated in Style

Mother Nature and Uncle Sam battled it out on July 4, but in the end, the celebration of our nation's Independence came out on top. Hosted by the City of Bartow for the first year, the 4th of July Celebration was a rousing success with family fun, live music - including headliner Eli Mosley presented by Thunder Chrysler Dodge Jeep Ram - culinary treats, community and, of course, fireworks!

Many thanks to all the staff who contributed to the success of the event and to those residents and visitors who came out to enjoy the festivities.



Stepping into Wellness

The City's "A" Team is hosting a four-week walking challenge for City staff that began on June 2 and ended on the 29th.

There are three Exercise Group Levels, which include:

- BEGINNER: Minimum steps to participate – 10,000 steps a week
- INTERMEDIATE: Minimum steps to participate – 25,000 steps a week
- ADVANCED: Minimum steps to participate



Top: Tyler Douglas & Benoit Maldonado
Bottom left: Johnny Purvis, GIS Analyst;
Bottom right: Michael Davis, Solid Waste Manager



– 50,000 steps a week

Walkers competed for prizes like a Walking Pad, a 6 – in – 1 Ninja indoor grill, a Massage chair and an Apple/Android watch.

Throughout the challenge, a participant in each group with the most steps each week receive a Travel Trophy. In Week 4, the recipients were Michael Davis, Solid Waste Manager, with 46,629 steps (beginner); Tyler Douglas, Library Assistant, with 173,731 steps (intermediate), and Johnny Purvis, GIS Analyst, with 128,558 steps (advanced).

The overall winners were as follows: Benoit Maldonado, Library Assistant with 247,155 steps over all (beginner); Tyler Douglas, Library Assistant, with 784,986 steps overall (intermediate); and Johnny Purvis, GIS Analyst with 648,260 steps over all (advanced). Congrats to all!

Beware of Gators in our Parks and Waterways

At this time of year, alligator activity in our area is elevated due to mating / nesting season. This results in increased aggression and a higher chance of human encounters.

It's crucial for both people and their pets to maintain a safe distance from alligators, and to be vigilant near bodies of water to include those at City parks. Avoid approaching nests or young alligators and never feed the gators.



Summer Fun (and Learning) at the Bartow Library!

Summer Reading is in full swing at the Bartow Library. Next up in their Super Summer Show lineup is Gigi the Clown at 10am on July 9 at the Bartow Civic Center. Gigi and her puppet dog Zelda celebrate their love of comedy, sing-alongs, and circus in a performance packed with fun for all. This show includes magic, comedy, dance, juggling, sing-along, and bubbles! Get ready to color YOUR world happy!

Don't miss out on any of the fun - [Check out their special Summer schedule](#). See ya at the Library this summer!



450 N. Wilson Ave., Bartow, FL 33830
(863) 534-0100

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US**



City of Bartow | 450 N Wilson Ave | BARTOW, FL 33830 US

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