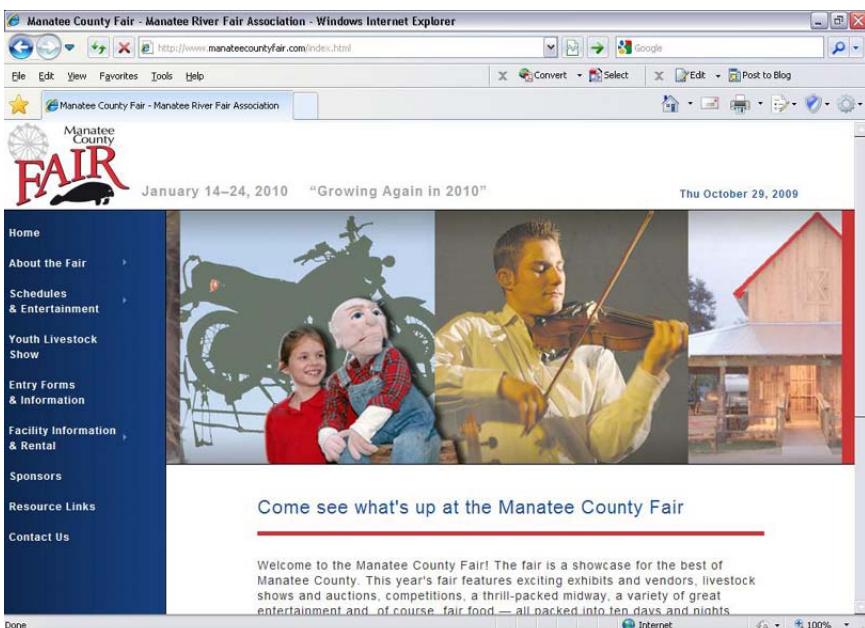
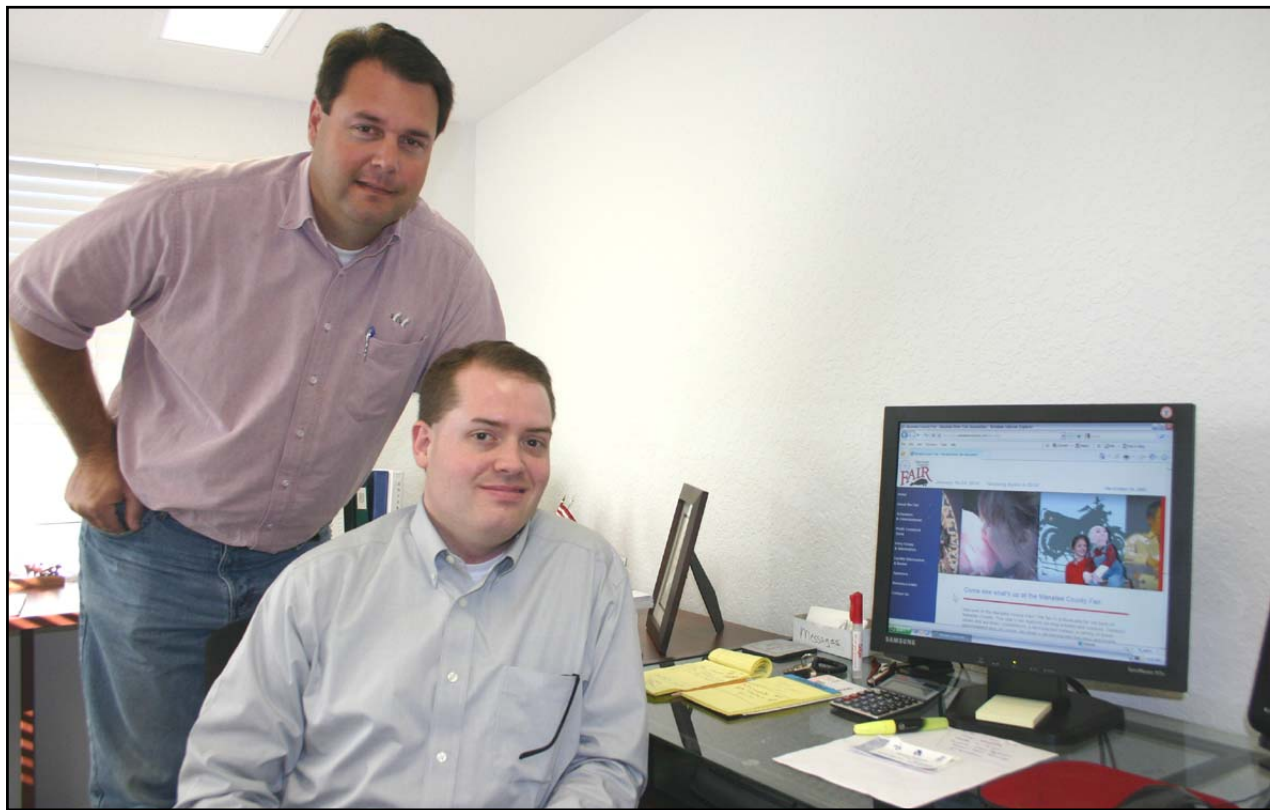


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Fair Manager Dan West, left, and Associate Director and IT administrator Patrick Bryant check out the Fair's new website which came online Oct. 23. At left is the Home Page of the website, featuring a new updated look. To view all the new features visit www.manateecountyfair.com.

City hopes to get projects moving, people working

There was a lot of talk about dirt Monday night at the city commission and CRA meetings. Such as "when's the dirt going to move?"

With approved projects on the boards but not much visible action, that question was raised more than once. Commissioners want to see some groundbreaking, which means jobs for people.

CRA interim director Jeff Burton and Public Works Director Allen Tusing had the answer to the question. At the present time most of the projects are still in the engineering stage. Sixty percent of the plans are completed on the Ward I Phase II project, the resurfacing projects for 10th St. and 10th Ave. West and 10th St. and 14th Ave. West will be going out for bid, and Monday night commissioners authorized Public Works to put out for bid the 23rd Street realignment project. One project that got underway Monday was the 17th Street improvements from Business 41 to U.S. 41, with a completion date of February 2011.

The CRA Board approved the project presented last week for the purchase and renovation of the CBI property by doctors Karen Raimer and Mark Alkire. They also approved a public mural art project to beautify the city with art work by local artists. The project will be coordinated by Palmetto Art Center.

In an update on the ball field project, Allen Tusing presented 3-dimensional drawings of the project, which will be useful a selling tool when seeking funding sources such as major league baseball teams like the Rays or Pirates. *The 3-dimensional drawings can be seen on Page 11.*

Bank merger became effective November 1

The combined management team and Board of Directors of First America Bank and Manatee River Community Bank have announced the legal merger of the two banks effective November 1, 2009.

Doing business under the First America Bank name, the resulting financial institution will have approximately \$285 million in total assets and will be headquartered at First America's existing office at 2811 Manatee Avenue West, in Bradenton.

The operational merger of the two banks into one will take place over the next 90 days. "Customers will see a transition of the names but will experience few changes in their normal banking activities. We are taking a customer friendly approach to the transition and will continue to provide the exceptionally high level of service established by both First America Bank and Manatee River Community Bank," stated Daniel S. Hager, Chairman and CEO of First America Bank.

"During this time, customers will be able to handle all their banking needs as usual, and account holders should continue to use their normal banking locations. If customers have any questions about the transition, they should contact their local office," said Allen Langford, President of First America Bank.

When the operational merger is completed in the first quarter of 2010, First America Bank will have offices in Bradenton, Sarasota, Palmetto, Osprey and Ellenton.

Manatee County Fair 'Growing Again'

The theme for the 2010 Manatee County Fair is "Growing Again 2010" and the Fair is doing just that.

Not only does the Fair have a new office, and a new exhibition hall to be ready for the January fair, it also has a new web site.

Those logging on to the web site will not see the familiar ferris wheel of other years. The new site greets visitors with a montage of fair scenes scrolling across the screen.

In its first major revision since it came online in 1999, the website uses current technology and incorporates several new features. Visitors will find a Google map for Fairground location and a new menu for easier navigating. There are also links and new search

capabilities.

Citizens entering crafts, livestock, or various competitions and talent shows will find a page where they can find all rules and regulations as well as entry forms. The entertainment page includes links to the artists websites for those wanting a preview or bio of the entertainers.

Of course the best way to see what the new website has to offer is to simply log on and see for yourself – www.manateecountyfair.com.

The new website was designed by Cindy Ritchie and Pete Blews, with photos by Ted West Photography.

"Growing Again 2010" Manatee County Fair will run January 14-24, 2010.

Emergency Management Chief wins inaugural award

Florida Division of Emergency Management has named Manatee County Emergency Management Chief Laurie Feagans the first ever recipient of the County Emergency Director of the Year.

Feagans received the award last week during the 2009 Current Issues in Emergency Management (CIEM) seminar for emergency management directors in Orlando. It was the group's first ever State

Emergency Management Awards ceremony. The seminar provides unique coordination opportunities for each county's lead emergency management officials.

"I took the award as not only (FDEM) recognizing me but the entire emergency management team which is really known to be helpful around the state," Feagans said. "It's truly an award for the team, not just me. I'm very humbled and appreciative."