

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Light Up the Night Returns to Downtown Punta Gorda and Opens Nominations for 2026
Hometown Hero**



Visit LightUpTheNightPG.com or Scan the QR Code to Learn More.

PUNTA GORDA, Fla. – Light Up the Night will return to Downtown Punta Gorda on Friday, December 4, 2026, bringing the community together for an evening of holiday celebration, live entertainment and the lighting of the city's Christmas tree. This year's event will also shine a spotlight on one exceptional Charlotte County resident through the 2026 Hometown Hero Recognition.

The Hometown Hero Recognition was established last year, with Charlotte County Sheriff's Sergeant Elio Diaz named as the inaugural honoree. Sgt. Diaz gave his life in the line of duty, and his courage and service helped define the spirit of the recognition.

Now, Light Up the Night is asking the community to help identify this year's Hometown Hero. Nominations are open to Charlotte County residents of all ages and are intended to recognize neighbors, volunteers, teachers, first responders and everyday people whose service, leadership, courage, volunteerism or acts of kindness have made a meaningful difference in the community.

Self-nominations are not accepted. Nominees may be recognized posthumously in exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the selection committee. The nomination application asks community members to share the nominee's story, including examples of the positive impact they have made on Charlotte County and how they embody the spirit of Punta Gorda and Charlotte County.

Nominations must be received by October 15, 2026. The selection period will take place October 15 through October 31, and the 2026 Hometown Hero will be announced during the first week of

November. The honoree will then be celebrated during Light Up the Night on December 4 in Downtown Punta Gorda.

Completed nominations may be submitted in one of three ways:

Email: lightupthenightpg@gmail.com

Online: Complete and submit the online application at lightupthenightpg.com

Mail: CHC, 210 Wood St., Punta Gorda, FL 33950

Light Up the Night itself is a free community celebration designed to bring families, friends and neighbors together in the heart of Punta Gorda for the holiday season. Festivities begin at 5 p.m., Santa arrives at 6 p.m., and the evening culminates with the Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony at 8:30 p.m.

Through the support of local sponsors, volunteers and community partners, Light Up the Night continues to grow as a holiday tradition that celebrates both the season and the people who make Punta Gorda and Charlotte County stronger.

For event updates, sponsorship information and Hometown Hero nominations, visit LightUpTheNightPG.com or email LightUpTheNightPG@gmail.com.

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