

# Charlotte Sun



## ANNAN QUILTS SYRIA ROLE

Kofi Annan announced Thursday that he will quit his high-profile role as special envoy to the country at the end of the month.

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## OLYMPICS

### PHELPS OUTDUELS LOCHTE

Michael Phelps claimed his first individual victory of the London Games, beating Ryan Lochte in the 200 IM.

SPORTS PAGE 1

AN EDITION OF THE SUN  
VOL. 120 NO. 216

AMERICA'S BEST COMMUNITY DAILY

FRIDAY AUGUST 3, 2012

www.sunnewspapers.net

\$1.00

• For full Olympics coverage, see SPORTS section inside.

<b>2012 OLYMPICS</b>	<b>MEDAL COUNT:</b> 1. United States — Gold: 18 • Silver: 9 • Bronze: 10	2. China — Gold: 18 • Silver: 11 • Bronze: 5	3. Japan — Gold: 2 • Silver: 6 • Bronze: 11
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# Early voting begins Saturday

## Charlotte County voters get jump-start on election

By **BRENDA BARBOSA**  
STAFF WRITER

Charlotte County voters looking to beat the rush at the polls on Election Day will be able to cast their primary ballots in advance because early voting kicks off Saturday.

According to Charlotte County Supervisor of Elections Office spokesman Lou Spacco, polling

booths will be set up in three locations across Charlotte County, offering extended hours to registered voters interested in casting their votes for candidates running in the primary election on Aug. 14. Polling locations will open at 7 a.m. and close at 7 p.m., including this Sunday, Aug. 5. Early voting runs through Aug. 11.

"We shouldn't have any backup problems," Spacco said. "Certainly, if a bunch of people decide that at lunchtime they are going to go vote, there could be a little choke point. It's a very short ballot, so people aren't going to be sitting in a voting booth a long time making up their minds. So even the voting itself should go

rather quickly." Charlotte County voters will choose who they want to represent them in about a dozen races, including property appraiser, tax collector, supervisor of elections, Sheriff's Office, School Board and three County Commission seats.

Winners of each race will go on to compete in November's general

election on their party's ticket, except for the winner of the Sheriff's race, which has no opposing party or write-in candidates.

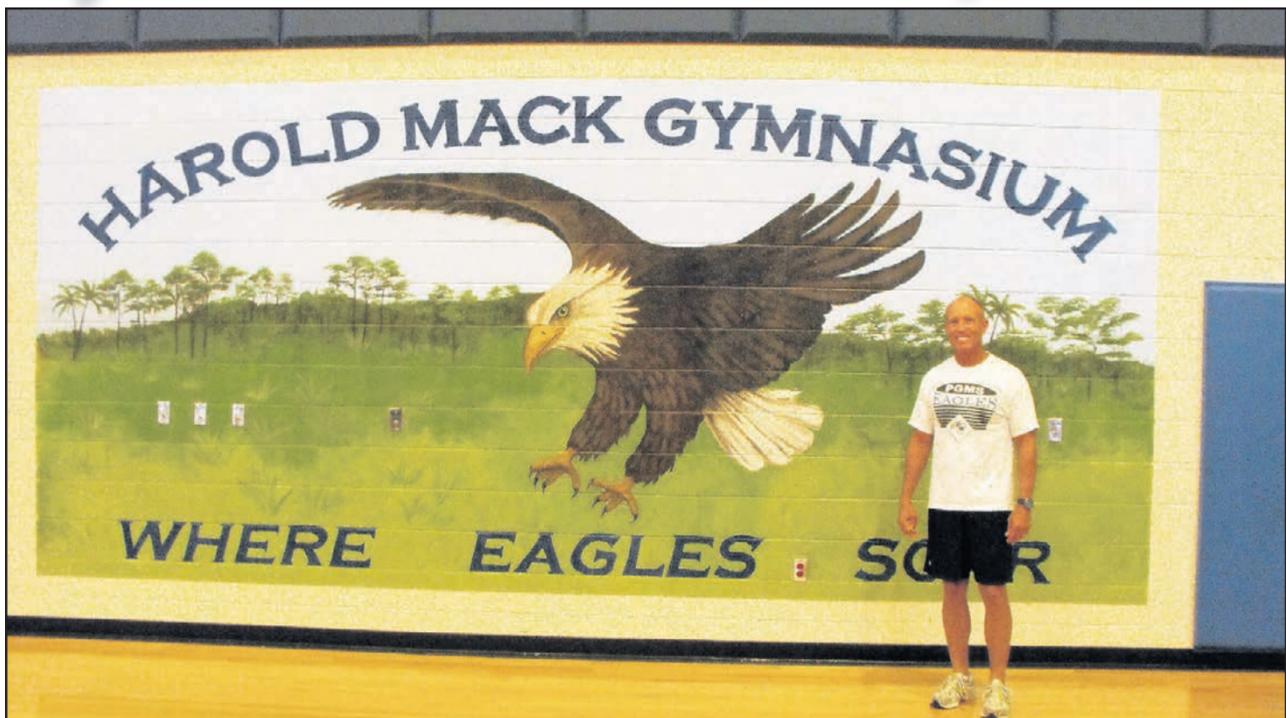
In the case of the three-candidate School Board race, if candidates don't earn a majority vote they will be required to have a runoff race in November, Spacco said. "They are a nonpar-

tisan election," Spacco said. "If one candidate does not get 50 percent plus one vote, the top two will go to the general election. In all the other races, it is plurality — whoever has the most votes."

Spacco is urging voters to have a photo signature ID with them at the polls.

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# Gym dedicated to coach, athlete



SUN PHOTO BY MERAB-MICHAL FAVORITE

The mural painted on coach Harold Mack's behalf was created by the school art teacher, Kathy Fedonni. She spent the summer crafting the work, which was unveiled during the ceremony honoring Mack.

## Punta Gorda Middle honors longtime educator

By **MERAB-MICHAL FAVORITE**  
STAFF WRITER

PUNTA GORDA — Wearing his usual gym clothes, a local sports hero and longtime Charlotte County educator was surprised when he walked onto the basketball court expecting to shoot hoops and instead found

hundreds of people gathered in his honor.

Every person in the crowd seemed to know Harold Mack Jr., 58, by a different name. His high school buddies called him "Macky." Fans who followed his sports career cheered "Mack the Knife" and "Blond Bomber," both terms coined by newspapers

during the 1970s. However, the majority of the people in the crowd on Wednesday afternoon knew him simply as Coach.

During the unexpected assembly, Punta Gorda Middle School's gymnasium was dedicated to Mack, who retired this summer after 37 years of service to Charlotte

County Public Schools. Gasps of delight filled the room when a mural of an eagle, the school mascot, was unveiled. The name "Harold Mack Gymnasium" was displayed above the bird in bold blue letters.

"It's surreal to me that

GYM | 12

# Schools to state: Fund mandates

By **MERAB-MICHAL FAVORITE**  
STAFF WRITER

PORT CHARLOTTE — School district officials are telling state legislators that something has to give.

In the absence of state funding, Florida's school districts have been forced to take growing amounts of fiscal resources and faculty away from student instruction, and redirect them to the implementation of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test, the primary determining factor for individual students, educators, schools and districts as a whole.

"We can only continue to go so far," said board member Lee Swift. "At some point in time, the state has to realize that student achievement will not improve from the way they are dealing with this."

In a resolution approved Tuesday, the School Board requested state funding to implement the complex assessments required of principals, teachers, students and district staff. They ask that the state incur any expenses related to the development of the tests and the instructional assessments, as well as expenses related to training, security, software and necessary infrastructure.

"We are not out of the woods yet," said Swift. "Dealing with the diminished funding from the state will require some very diligent efforts in the future, but every district in the state is in the same place we are."

Even the billion-dollar increase in K-12 education funding passed by the Legislature in April can't make up for the expensive mandates in recent years. Since the 2007-2008 school year, state contributions to the school district have decreased by approximately \$4 million annually. In addition,

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# Pushing open door on enterprise zone

By **TOM LEGROS**  
SUN CORRESPONDENT

PUNTA GORDA — A proposal to make Charlotte County more attractive to business was presented at a sparsely attended open house Thursday held by the Charlotte County Economic Development Office.

The measure is scheduled to go before the county commissioners for approval Aug. 28. If approved, it would establish an Enterprise Zone Development Agency and later appoint citizens as

members for four-year terms. The entire package could go to Tallahassee for approval by the Department of Economic Opportunity by Dec. 21.

The Enterprise Zone Development Agency would be responsible for coming up with a strategic plan showing the state how an enterprise zone would benefit the community. The plan would then have to be approved by the Planning and Zoning Board to make sure it's consistent with the county comprehensive plan.

"Companies choosing

to move into an enterprise zone may get tax breaks when they invest in property or equipment or when they hire employees. Existing companies could also get the same breaks for property improvements and adding new local employees," said Debrah Forester, the redevelopment manager for the development office.

Neighborhoods and areas included in the enterprise zone were selected using state criteria. The zone can be no more than 20 square miles, must have a poverty rate of

at least 20 percent, with half of the included areas having a poverty rate of 30 percent or higher, and an unemployment rate not less than the state's average.

The Parkside section of Port Charlotte, parcels in the vicinity of the Punta Gorda Airport, and other significant parts of Punta Gorda are included, as well as all of Murdock Village.

"The program is primarily designed for businesses which collect sales tax, since much of the benefits come in the

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CHARLIE SAYS...  
Early birds can avoid the rush and vote Saturday.