

Estero girls high school soccer team dominates South Fort Myers, 7-2.



Bonita Springs Assistance Office passes \$20K mark, still has realistic goals during tough economy.

Shrimp Shack in Bonita delivers New England style chowder, tasty treats from traditional Gulf Coast recipes.

SATURDAY

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“My whole goal is to inspire art in the community and support artists.”

M.E. Parker,
Photographer and Bonita Shores resident



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Local photographer M.E. Parker poses with some of her framed photographs. Parker, founder of community artist group Side Street Artists, is now seeking to give student artists a chance to display and sell art.

FILLING THE GAP

LOCAL ARTISTS REACH OUT TO STUDENTS AFTER SEEING SCHOOL PROGRAMS CUT

AARON HALE
Banner Staff Writer

Some local artists, like photographer and Bonita Shores resident M.E. Parker, have taken notice of gaps in art education from school budget cuts. Parker and her non-profit group Side Street Artists are trying to plug some of those gaps.

“I want to inspire art in the community and support artists,” she says. “Because of budgets cuts and loss of art programs, opportunities are not as robust in the community.”

Parker has several jobs. She’s an architectural photographer, a Web site designer and a computer teacher. Those are just the jobs she gets paid for.

Her true passion, though, is art — particularly when it comes to having a community of artists. That’s why she created Side Street Artists last year. The group puts on indoor art shows at Bonita Shores Club once a month to give artists more local exposure.

“My whole goal is to inspire art in the community and support artists,” she says. “I have a belief that a strong art community makes a stronger community.”

Now Parker and the Side Street Artists are looking toward the future of the art community. The group is offering free space to student artists to display and sell work at the monthly exhibitions. Parker

IF YOU GO

SIDE STREET ARTISTS EXHIBIT
■ When: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 12.
■ Where: Shores Club, West and 3rd Street, Bonita Springs.
■ Info: www.sidestreetartists.org or call 498-0480

says the goal is to give young artists the experience of trying to sell art, while also getting the chance to interact with experienced, professional artists.

Parker credits Side Street member Francine Garson, a glass artist and retired school teacher, for helping inspire the decision.

Garson says there are plenty of students in high school and college who are flirting with the idea of becoming professional artists. But there are few opportunities for them to try to sell their work and experience the business side of becoming an artist.

“If we could give them the opportunity to work and sell their wares, hopefully they may get a chance to see what it’s like as a possibility for a profession,” Garson says.

Leigh Herndon, a fiber artist with Side Street, is a former art teacher. She says that she’s found art, especially confidence for young people, especially when there is an experienced

artist to help push the student. “I think a lot of times it’s hard to know how to begin your work,” Herndon says. “I’ve learned to just jump in and do it. I think students need that encouragement.”

For her part, Parker already has some experience serving as a mentor. She’s taken Matthew Milligan, a 14-year-old photographer, under her wing.

Milligan said Parker has given him tips on shooting, helped him build a photo Web site and taught him how to gain community exposure and sell his work.

And showing work at the exhibitions has been helpful for Milligan as well. He recalls during his first exhibition, he sold several hundred dollars in art.

“She’s encouraged me and helped me take better shots,” Milligan said. “I wouldn’t be at this point without M.E.’s help.”

Milligan is now a contributing photographer for The Banner. He submits an original photograph and caption once a week for a photo column named “A Closer Look.”

To reach more students, Parker is using social networking tools, such as Facebook, to try to connect with more artists. She is also in the process of contacting art liaisons in Collier and Lee County schools, as well as those in Edison College in FGCU, to see how her group may be

■ see Artists on 6A

COLLIER EDUCATION

School Board votes to rezone Naples elementary and high schools

KATHERINE ALBERS
Daily News Staff Writer

Some Gulf Coast High School Sharks need to prepare to call themselves Golden Gate Titans.

The Collier County School Board voted 4 to 1 to rezone Naples elementary and high schools Thursday. Board member Pat Carroll was the lone dissenter.

The board also voted unanimously to use a combination of rezoning and portables in Immokalee to accommodate overcrowding.

However, the School Board decided to keep the school-choice and out-of-zone policies for students as they are. That means a student can go to a school other than the one they are zoned for if they present a valid reason, such as child care issues at the elementary level or because they attend an academy at one of the high schools.

The decision goes against a recommendation from the School Board’s operations subcommittee, which voted Tuesday to recommend bringing in portables instead of rezoning schools to meet class size amendment requirements.

Collier County’s middle schools were not included in the decision because they have enough space to meet the class size requirements.

Superintendent Dennis Thompson has argued that rezoning schools would allow schools that are currently half occupied to be fully used while not committing the district to costs that it cannot get back. The district has estimated that portables could cost more than \$3 million to purchase and operate.

Board Chairwoman Kathleen Curatolo said cost was a big factor in her vote. She said she could not in good conscience vote to bring in portables at a cost of \$50,000 per portable when the district has

■ see Rezone on 6A

SPOTLIGHT

Members have the money to buy The Commons and Shadow Wood Country clubs

LAURA LAYDEN
Daily News Staff Writer

Members have raised enough money to buy The Commons and Shadow Country clubs in Estero.

More than 90 percent have agreed to join the new member-owned clubs, allowing the sale to move ahead.

The purchase price is \$8.25 million for the two clubs and members will assume the liability of refunds owed to resigned members.

The sale includes three golf and country clubs, a tennis center, three golf courses, a sales center, fitness and enrichment centers, a restaurant and a private beach club on the Gulf of Mexico.

“We are confident the purchase agreement is the best possible deal for our members and the new club,” Dave English, president of the Shadow Wood Country Club’s advisory board, in a statement. “Member control not only allows us to direct the operation of the club, but also preserves the community’s lifestyle, protects property values and removes the uncertainty of future changes in club ownership.”

The turnover of the two clubs and The Club at

■ see Members on 6A

