

Election: Thomas-Nededog finishes second

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With a low turnout — 16 percent of registered voters came out — the Guam Election Commission's final count came in before midnight. That's ahead of the commission's earlier projection that counting could take until 3 a.m. because votes were being hand-counted.

Thomas-Nededog, executive director of Sanctuary Inc., said she, too, noticed the low voter participation yesterday.

"There seemed to be some resentment and apathy over the whole process and situation," she said, referring to the events leading to then-Sen. Matt Rector's resignation.

Rector resigned over his non-disclosure of a burglary conviction when he ran for public office.

Even with the low turnout, Thomas-Nededog noted it was encouraging when people came up to her to thank her for running in the election.

Campaign headquarters

Before the count was over, Tony Ada and his wife, Annette, were nervous — their anxiety shrouded by the smoke from the barbecue pit and playful shrieks of children scurrying around the home of family friend Wil Castro last night.

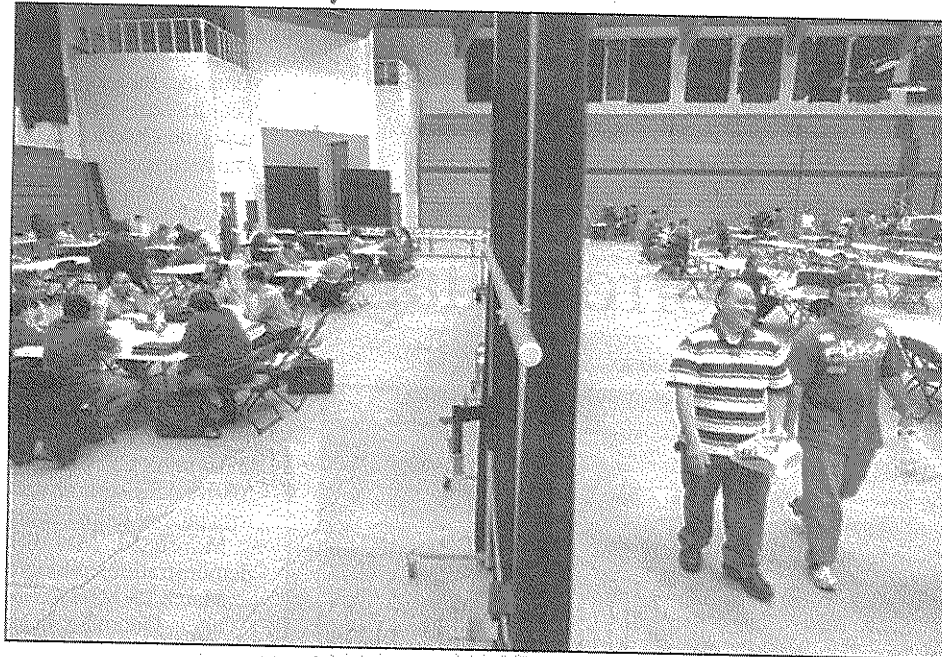
A slide show of pictures from Tony Ada's six weeks of campaigning played on a projector as guests chatted away under tents and around the tables of fruits, chicken, and drinks.

Ada said he wasn't surprised by the low voter turnout because he said people didn't want a special election. He said many voters preferred that the candidate who placed 16th from the last senatorial election should have automatically filled the seat.

In polling places Tony Ada visited yesterday, he said he got lots of thumbs-up from voters as if to say, "good luck."

Annette Ada said she and her husband, the former vice president and funeral director of Ada's Mortuary, also stopped at four funerals yesterday, and even there they were well-supported.

If declared the winner, Tony Ada said his focus would be to get a good outcome for the



Masako Watanabe/Pacific Sunday News/mwatanabe@guampdn.com

Count time: Precinct workers prepare to count election ballots manually at the University of Guam field house in Mangilao last night.

island in terms of the military buildup.

He said he hopes the businesses that come here for the buildup will pay their fair share of taxes.

Tony Ada said his team sent out e-mails, text messages and placed advertisements as part of his campaign. He also attended forums.

He agreed his current position as director of the Department of Youth Affairs gave him an edge over the opponents. Tony Ada is also the son of former Sen. Vicente "Ben" Diaz and is an Army veteran.

'I almost forgot'

There was no camp or party for Democratic candidate Martin C. Benavente.

By the time he called it a night around 10 p.m. after shuttling between Dededo and Yigo, he had a sunburn from a day spent outdoors.

Benavente said he'd started visiting the polls by 8 a.m. yesterday.

His day was so busy that less than two

hours before the polls closed, he realized he'd forgotten to cast his own vote.

"I almost forgot because I was over in Asutumbo, then all of a sudden I realized at 6:30," he said, laughing.

While he was out campaigning, he said he got a very nice response from the voters, but he was disappointed in the low voter turnout.

'Heart and soul'

Instead of hitting the polls and waving on street sides, William Sarmiento spent yesterday supervising back-to-back games for the Southern Guam Little League.

The league held its opening ceremony yesterday, and Sarmiento, the league's president, said baseball came before politics.

"I couldn't turn my back on the kids and let them down," he said.

The Santa Rita resident ran unsuccessfully for village mayor in 2004.

Sarmiento said he plans to run in September's Primary Election.

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Tough decisions

Making his final campaign push was the priority of Art De Oro's agenda yesterday, but there were other events the educator said he couldn't miss, even on the day of the special election.

The Mangilao resident attended a relative's funeral, the American Studies Association of Japan's annual research conference that featured a member of Japan's parliament, and the Guam Community College's open house.

Democratic candidate Roque Aguan couldn't be reached for comment yesterday despite several calls to his cell phone and also to his campaign manager.

Low turnout

Election Commission Executive Director John Blas said he visited 13 of the 21 voting locations yesterday and saw the same inactivity everywhere.

Instead of long lines and excitement, Blas saw empty parking lots and bored election staff searching for something to do.

In the last General Election, voter turnout was about 73 percent, Blas said.

Turnout was especially low in Dededo, Guam's largest village, where less than 10 percent of the registered voters went to the polls, according to election results. Only 76 people voted in Umatac.

"It's really difficult to come up with a reason why people don't come out to the polls," Blas said.

Hand count

About two dozen tabulators spent hours hand-counting each ballot last night.

The commission was unable to use the vote-counting machines because it has not paid off a debt to a vendor.

Instead, tabulators counted each ballot three times to ensure there were no mistakes, Blas said.

Pacific Sunday News reporter Dionesis Tamondong and Projects/Data Editor Steve Lintaco contributed to this report.