

# Residents oppose proposed location of Safety Center

By Ken Lay

City and county leaders and the Helen Ross McNabb Center held a community meeting to discuss the proposed location of a Behavior Health Urgent Care Center and some of the neighborhood residents are unhappy with the proposed location.

They voiced their concerns at a meeting last Thursday at Cumberland Baptist Church.

The facility, which will be intended to treat non-

violent offenders, is planned for 3343 Dewine Road off Western Avenue.

Some residents not only aired their objections to the location but were also upset about the meeting's format.

"This whole meeting is a farce as far as I'm concerned," said neighborhood resident Susan Acevedo. "I think they're trying to fiddle-faddle with us. They're trying to pull the wool over our eyes."

"I'm all for helping

people. I just don't want this here."

Other residents said that they felt "rail-roaded" by their leaders and by the Helen Ross McNabb Center, which will run the proposed facility if it is built. Others said that Thursday night's meeting wasn't what they were promised.

"We were promised a public forum where we could voice our concerns," said resident Jerry Baker, who started a petition objecting to Thursday

night's proceedings.

Helen Ross McNabb Chief Executive Officer Jerry Vagnier listened to residents and attempted to re-assure them that the new facility would not house violent criminals.

"These are not violent felons," he said. "They will not be allowed to just roam around the neighborhood."

"We will have security and people to care for these people 24/7. These are our neighbors, friends and members of our family

who need our help."

Knox County Commissioner Bob Thomas was present at the meeting and said that he felt that the residents' concerns could be resolved.

"I think, for most people, they've heard bits and pieces of things and they've heard rumors and with their busy lives, that's what they hear."

"I think once the truth gets out, people's attitude will change. This is not the first time that we've had a

facility like this [in a residential neighborhood]. We had it at Lakeshore and that was in Rocky Hill."

While city and county leaders favor the proposed location, residents remained opposed to it. "They've intentionally separated people so that nobody can voice their concerns or get answers," Connie Hughes said.

Resident Katie Helms isn't so sure that all will be non-violent offenders.

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**Teachers of the Year (L-R) Heather Palmer, Mary Sue Pruitt and Karen Latus are pictured with Board of Education Vice Chair/District 9 Representative Amber Rountree**

## Knox County Schools Celebrates Teachers of the Year, Tenure Recipients

Knox County Schools honored nearly 200 teachers during its 2017-2018 Teacher of the Year celebration at the Holiday Inn Downtown on Tuesday, Feb. 21. The event was sponsored by Kroger and Partners in Education.

The Teacher of the Year celebration is held each year to recognize outstanding educators from Knox County Schools. To be considered, a candidate must be a full-time, certified PreK-12 teacher who has taught five or more years and spends the majority of the day instructing students. Candidates must also show dedication to teaching and possess a variety of positive personal attributes. School-level recipients are nominated by their colleagues for this annual award and the number of recipients per school is determined by the number of faculty at the school.

From the group of school-level winners,

the following three Knox County Teacher of the Year recipients were selected using the Tennessee Department of Education guidelines.

- Heather Palmer from Dogwood Elementary. Ms. Palmer has been with Knox County Schools since 2009 and prior to that served as a substitute teacher for five years. As a librarian, she sees students in all grade levels.

- Mary Sue Pruitt from Farragut Middle School. Ms. Pruitt has been with Knox County Schools for 13 years. She has served as a middle school assistant principal and a teacher. Her tenure in education, though, goes back to 1988.

- Karen Latus from Bearden High School. Ms. Latus has served Knox County Schools for eight years as a track and field coach/cross country coach, a Spanish teacher and a health center clinician. Prior to joining Knox County

Schools, she was with Loudon County Schools and other public high schools in Michigan.

On Tuesday, March 21, at the Sarah Simpson Professional Development Center, Knox County Schools will honor even more employees—150 educators who have earned tenure effective this school year. This number represents 50 more than last year. The event, rescheduled from last month, will include dinner and special guest speaker WATE 6 On Your Side Anchor Lori Tucker.

Academic tenure is a professional status granted to employees after serving five school years and receiving performance evaluations "above expectations" or "significantly above expectations" with regard to effectiveness of teaching based on the evaluation guideline set forth by the Tennessee Board of Education.

## Northwest BPA Why is there more litter along county roads?

By Mike Steely  
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What do jail inmates have to do with the increasing amount of litter on county roads?

The connection was explained earlier this month by Drew Thurman, Contract Compliance Manager with the County Engineering and Public Works Department. He said that until last year picking up trash for three days was part of a sentence for a driving while intoxicated conviction. Thurman spoke recently at the monthly meeting of the Northwest Business and Professional Association in Karns.

Thurman said people shouldn't blame the county for not picking up trash given the declining number of laborers available because a change in state law took away the prisoners from litter collection. He basically said that there is not more people littering but fewer people picking it up.

"Roadside litter is getting worse and worse every day," he said. He said that people either litter intentionally or things blow out from cars or trucks. Thurman said that the county doesn't pick up litter on routes declared as state highways and that includes not only Oak Ridge Highway through Karns but routes like Chapman Highway, Maynardville Pike, Andrew Johnson Highway and Rutledge Pike.

Because DWI offenders are no longer required to pick up trash the county has dropped from a standard crew of 15 to about two people performing the service.

"We are competing with other agencies to get volunteers," he said, asking that people contact their state representatives and senators to change the law and include trash pickup as part of a conviction.

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