

# Civil rights leaders honored by overpass signs

By Pete Gawda

Three Knoxville champions of the civil rights movement were honored Saturday by having interstate overpasses named for them. Harold Middlebrook, Theotis Robinson and Diane Jordan were honored at the official overpass naming ceremony held at the Beck Cultural Exchange Center by members of the Tennessee Black Caucus of State Legislators.

Rev. Renee Kessler, in her welcoming remarks, said she was grateful for history being unveiled that day. She said that Knoxville has scores of the best people who do the best things. "You are always welcome at the Beck," she told the around 75 guests including elected officials, Tennessee Democratic Party officials and candidates for city council.



PHOTO BY PETE GAWDA.

*Civil rights leader Harold Middlebrook, right, was honored Saturday by having a interstate underpass named for him. On the left is State Representative Rick Staples who introduced the honorees at the naming ceremony.*

1994 to 2007 and was the first female African American to serve in that position. Staples noted that when he decided to run for office

Jordan said she was never nervous but that this was a nervous occasion. She noted that she successfully ran in four elections and thanked

the I-275 overpass on Hill Avenue.

Staples said Middlebrook "is" a civil rights activist, meaning that the retired

## Lonsdale youth center, paintball, and sports tourism

By Mike Steely  
steelym@knoxfocus.com

The Emerald Youth Center's hopes to build a \$9 million facility in Lonsdale came one step closer to a reality recently when the Knox County Commission agreed to give the city a portion of the Sam E. Hill School Property.

The commission voted unanimously to pass a "no recommendation" of the gift, located at 1725 Delaware Avenue, on to today's regular meeting with some stipulations. The donated empty lot from the Board of Education, coupled with the city's promise of \$1 million, means plans for the community center can move ahead.

"Thank you for all you do," Commissioner Brad Anders told Steve Diggs, who briefly addressed the commission's work session. Knoxville Public Works Director David Brace said, "This is a community with real needs for youth" in speaking of Lonsdale.

"Our initiative is to bring about transformation of youth and it's unlike any project I've been involved with," Diggs told the commissioners.

Chairman Dave Wright said the resolution allows the law department to back out of the agreement until the contract is signed and explained that the property would not be transferred until both the