

## Bob Thomas feels at home anywhere in Knox County

By Mike Steely  
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"Everywhere I visit in Knox County, the people always make me feel so welcome and right at home," said Knox County mayor candidate Bob Thomas Thursday.

Thomas was addressing a large crowd of local citizens and political supporters at the Corryton Senior Center. On hand to support his candidacy were several elected county officials and candidates for local and state office.

"The next ten years can be some of the greatest years for Knox County. We're going to have growth but we need to do it correctly. We have a great opportunity for good jobs," Thomas said.

The Republican noted that military veterans "made our country and our county" and pledged to continue to support programs for them.

Currently Thomas serves as the At-Large Commissioner, Seat 10, which is a county-wide position. He

was elected three years ago along with his long-time radio personality friend Ed Brantley. The two hosted the "Ed and Bob Show" for many years in Knoxville. Thomas has served as chairman of the Knox County Cable TV Committee and the Disability Committee. He's served on the County's Pension and Retirement Committee, the Parks and Recreation Board, the Metro Drug Coalition Board and the Dogwoods Arts Festival Board.

He has also served on the Young-Williams Animal Center Board, the American Cancer Society Board, the Arts and Cultural Alliance and the Thompson-Boling Arena Use Committee.

He and his wife, Kim Simms Thomas, who was a local television news anchor, have three children and five grandchildren.

Thomas pledges to keep taxes low, get the most from our tax dollars, make sure our children receive the best possible education, keep our neighborhoods



PHOTO BY MIKE STEELY

Above, County Commissioner Bob Thomas' visit to the Corryton Senior Center drew a huge crowd Thursday. Thomas is running for Knox County Mayor and spoke briefly to the audience of local citizens and the many county elected officials who turned out to support him. Right, Candidate for Knox County Mayor, Bob Thomas, greets former Commissioner Jack Huddleston at last Thursday's event.



safe and, above all, listen to citizens.

"I have over 40 years of involvement in our community and I hope you'll join me

and help move the county forward. Together we can make great things happen for all of Knox County," Thomas said.

## Town Hall meeting hears about school security

By Pete Gauda

"Our primary role is to protect these children," said George Paidouas chief of security for Knox County Schools. "We do not get involved in school discipline." Paidouas made these remarks in a speech Monday evening, March 12 at a Town Hall East meeting.

Paidouas was appointed chief of security in 2013 by then superintendent Dr. Jim McIntyre after 30 years with the Knoxville Police Department (KPD).

Paidouas described the difference between school resource officers (SROs) and school safety officers (SSOs). He said that SROs in the Knoxville school system are full time police officers employed by either the KPD or the Knox County Sheriff's Office. (KCSO). The school system employs SSOs who are armed, uniformed security officers who only work 10 months a year during the school year.

"We could not do it without the KPD and the KCSO," Paidouas said. "We have a great partnership."

The school system is authorized 303 SSOs. However, Paidouas said it is hard to keep that number. He said security force is augmented by SROs. The SROs from the KPD provide security at a fixed point. The SROs from the KCSO work fixed points as well as having rotating assignments.

It is the goal of Paidouas to have two security people, either SSOs or SROs, at each high school, one at each middle school and one at each elementary school.

The school system's security division has a 24 hour a day dispatch system. The security division is the only component of the school system that has psychological screening, background checks by the KCSO and a required physical fitness level. In addition, SSOs have to qualify on firearms twice a year. Paidouas said his security force is made up of young people who are starting their careers as well as retired military and police officers.

"We evaluate our people four times a year," Paidouas said.

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PHOTO BY MIKE STEELY

Sometimes it "takes a village" to get something done and Friday's ribbon cutting at the Behavioral Health Urgent Care Center saw dozens of public official, citizens and health care professional help to cut the ribbon on the new facility.

## Behavioral Health Center opens today

By Mike Steely  
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The Behavioral Health Urgent Care Center takes in its first patient today as the doors open on a facility that took about 10 years to develop. The three-day treatment center for mentally ill offenders charged with minor offenses is the first in the state and resulted in a combined effort by the county, city, local and state elected officials, the governor and individuals who rallied the community.

Helen Ross McHabb Center President Jerry Vagnier hosted a ribbon cutting at the renovated facility just off Western Avenue Friday and speakers included Marie Williams, Commissioner of Tennessee's Mental

Health and Substance Abuse Services, and Mayors Tim Burchett and Madeline Rogers.

While many of those present were mentioned for their efforts to establish the facility Commissioner Williams specifically mentioned community activist Vivian Underwood Shipley for her success in rallying the community and public officials.

Also mentioned as principals in getting state and local funds to help renovate the facility were Sheriff J. J. Jones, Knoxville Police Captain Don Jones, District Attorney Charmie Allen, Stephanie Carter, Candace Allen, Lori Ramsey and Leann Human-Hilliard of Helen Ross McHabb.

Knox County Mayor Tim Burchett

told the story of a mentally ill friend who has prospered and Knoxville Mayor Madeline Rogers spoke of a relative with similar difficulties. Following the introductions, brief speeches and a prayer from Rev. George Doebler of the UT Medical Center, tours of the Care Center were given.

The Center has 16 beds and law enforcement officers can divert mentally ill offenders, including those with drug problems, there. Officers will bring the patients there and a sheriff's deputy will be present at all times. When discharged the patients will be assigned a case worker and treatment will continue beyond the care at the center.



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