



PHOTO BY BOBE KING

*9th District school board member and candidate Amber Rountree addresses a large crowd at the South Knox Alliance candidate forum last week at Dogwood Elementary School.*

despite being the final speaker of the evening, Amber Rountree radiated enthusiasm as she discussed her accomplishments and her vision for Knox County Schools.

Amber Rountree, who currently represents the 9th District and is serving a second term as vice chair of the Knox County Board of Education, returned to Dogwood Elementary for the candidate forum. As the school board member representing the Community

Learning Zone, Rountree thanked those who came to attend the schools closest to them. "I feel that neighborhood support is so important to our kids," she emphasized.

Rountree talked about the benefit of the community school program such as Dogwood. "This model brings services, partnerships and mentors to our school, which has contributed to our students' success."

Another recent success she mentioned has been

the selection of the community school program which she says has brought an increased positive school culture and morale. She is also proud of the work accomplished by the educational disparity in educational outcome task force of which she was a member.

Rountree believes that there is still much to be done and said she has great plans for the future of Knox County Schools and the schools in South Knoxville. A top priority that she

wants to see this extremely successful early literacy program continue to expand throughout Knox County.

Candidates for county commission at-large seat present were Ronnie Rochelle, Larry Smith, Justin Biggs and Tori Griffin. Daniel Gerke was represented by Danny Wilhoit and Larsen Jay was represented by Scott Broyles. The candidates were asked to

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# Questions answered at mayoral candidate debate

**By Mike Steely**  
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Campaign supporters and interested citizens packed the auditorium at Jewelry Television's major-

that money is "better in your pocket than in some politician's hands."

Thomas said "No" and said that the county needs to "use business sense"

Jacobs agreed some departments could be consolidated and said he "lives in the county and don't want it."

Thomas said he "can't

system, safety, teachers pay and the need for drug education at an earlier age.

The candidates were also asked about neighborhood safety, pay raises for

# Early voting starts Wednesday

**By Mike Steely**  
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Early voting in Knox County begins Wednesday and the races for sheriff and county mayor seem to be driving the turnout. There are lots of other offices on the ballot, everything from commission races to non-partisan school board races.

All in all whichever party primary you vote for,