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Now Open: Gibbs and Hardin Valley Middle Schools



PHOTO BY BOB KING

Bystanders snap pictures with their phones as county officials and students cut the ribbon to open the new Gibbs Middle School Tuesday. Pictured from left, Knox County 2nd District School Board representative Jennifer Owen, Law Director Bud Armstrong, 6th District BoE member Terry Hill, County Commissioners Bob Thomas and Charles Busler, BoE Chair Patti Bounds, 8th District BoE representative Mike McMillan, Mayor Tim Burchett, Gibbs Middle School principal Cindy White, Superintendent Bob Thomas and Commissioner Dave Wright.

A Triumph of Convictions

27-year wait ends as ribbon is cut on new Gibbs Middle School

By Richie Beeler

Desire is one thing. Conviction is quite another. When Knox County officials cut the ribbon on the new Gibbs Middle School

last Tuesday, it was much more than the dedication of a building. For the Gibbs community it was the celebration of a victory.

The opening of the facility marks the first time a

middle school has existed in the Corryton zip code since 1991, when Gibbs Middle was closed as part of a system-wide desegregation plan by Knox County Schools. Although 27 years was far too long for Gibbs residents to endure its absence, the new state of

the art building made some feel like it was almost worth the wait.

It was the election of Mike McMillan to the Knox County Board of Education in 2010 that restarted the fight to build a new Gibbs Middle School. Mayor Tim Burchett cheerfully admits

without Mike McMillan "there would be no new Gibbs Middle School." It was easy to see McMillan was especially happy at the ribbon cutting ceremony and his eyes twinkled with delight as he greeted friends and neighbors.

The new school is

everything one could have hoped for, the first room one encounters after entering the building is the gymnasium. Spacious, fully equipped, and adorned with everything "Gibbs" including the giant 'G' on the wall, the gym is

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Hardin Valley Middle School opens its doors with ribbon-cutting

By Ken Lay

Hardin Valley Middle School officially opened Tuesday afternoon. The school had its ribbon-cutting just hours after Gibbs Middle had its opening ceremony.

Boy Scouts from Troop 246 raised the flag on one of Knox County's newest campuses, which will open its doors to students on August 8 and will house 1,200 students on the first day of the fall semester.

The school's cheer squad cut the ribbon and led the Pledge of Allegiance. Several school board members were in attendance along with a number of elected officials, including Knox County Mayor Tim Burchett and two county commissioners.

Knox County Schools Superintendent Bob Thomas said he was excited to see both Gibbs and Hardin Valley open their doors to a combined 2,000 middle school students.

"This is a unique and exciting day for us because we have a chance to open



PHOTO BY KEN LAY

Hardin Valley Middle School cheerleaders cut the ribbon to officially open one of two new schools in Knox County. From left, Knox County Mayor Tim Burchett, County Commissioners Randy Smith and Brad Anders, 6th District BoE member Terry Hill, Superintendent Bob Thomas, Hardin Valley Middle School principal Cory Smith, BoE Chair Patti Bounds, 5th District BoE member Susan Horn, and Commissioners Evelyn Gill and Bob Thomas.

two new schools in one day," Thomas said. "It's nice to see our students here and excited. They look like they're ready to start school tomorrow, but we'll give them a few more weeks."

Hardin Valley Middle School, located behind Hardin Valley Academy, at 2280 Steele Road, features state-of-the-art technology, including a media center, acoustically designed

choral and band rooms and motion-detecting lights in all of its classrooms.

Burchett noted that Hardin Valley Middle School would complete the educational experience for students in one of Knox County's fastest growing communities.

"I'm a proponent of education. My parents were educators," Burchett said. "Hardin Valley is one of the

rapidly growing communities in Knox County. This school really rounds out the community."

Anders, who represents the community on the Knox County Commission, agreed.

"Now, students can go to elementary school, middle school and high school, and they can get a Master's Degree at King University," Anders said. "They can do

this, all in the same neighborhood."

Cory Smith was appointed principal of Hardin Valley Middle, and like Thomas, he's excited to see the new school open its doors.

"This is an exciting day for us," Smith said. "I would like to welcome everybody to Hardin Valley Middle School. This is an awesome facility. We have a great gym, great classrooms and a great

media center.

"But bricks don't make a school. It's the teachers, the students and the administration. We have some things to celebrate and I feel fortunate and thankful to have this opportunity. The physical building is now done. But we have a lot of work to do. Now, it's all about getting schedules and other things ready for our students."

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