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PHOTO BY ROSE KING

Chris Blue, winner of season 12 of The Voice, honored Donna Smith with the Humanitarian Hero Award. Smith works year-round holding purse sales, basket raffles and rummage sells to raise funds for the annual event. This year those funds sponsored the Survivor VIP Room.

Voting totals could surpass 2016 numbers in Knox County

By Mike Steely
steelym@knoxfocus.com

"This is unheard of for a mid-term," Knox County Election Administrator Cliff Rodgers told The Focus.

Tuesday is Election Day in Tennessee and across the country as voters cast their ballots for their picks to hold public office. The turnout in the state has already seen more than 1 million voters and after Election Day the unusually high number of people voting may surpass the number of people who voted in the 2016 presidential election.

Tennessee has been one of the bottom four states in turnout. The Trump vs. Clinton election saw about 51% of registered voters making their choice of candidates.

There are 16,799,476 eligible voters in our state. In the 2014 off-year election only 28 percent bothered to vote. The Knox County Election Commission has forecast that this year about 70% of those who planned to vote probably voted early. That might mean that this off-year election turnout would be equal to the turnout in the presidential election.

Thursday was the final day to vote early and 11,110 people voted that day, bringing the final total number of voters at the ballot places to 113,736, according to information from Rodgers.

On the ballot locally are state representative and senate races, the governorship, and U.S. Congress and Senate seats. Since the Republican Party controls the state and Knox County it isn't unusual that that party's candidates are listed as the first name on each ballot, followed by the Democrat candidate and then the Independent candidates.

The expected close races include the race for U.S. Senate, pitting Congresswoman Marsha Blackburn against former Governor Phil Bredesen. A local close race between incumbent State Representative Eddie Smith and former State Representative Gloria Johnson is also getting some attention. Smith and Johnson faced

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Survivors celebrated at 10th Pink Ribbon Celebration

By Rose King

The Grande Event Center was a sea of pink Tuesday for Compassion In Action's 10th Annual Gala, The Pink Ribbon Celebration. Of the well over 500 attendees, more than 200 breast cancer survivors were given VIP treatment with champagne punch, appetizers and goodie bags in the Survivor Room before being ushered to their seats in the Grand Ballroom.

"The event began 10 years ago to honor breast cancer survivors and raise funds for the Compassion in Action fund and has grown each year since. It's just amazing!" said Janine Mingle, founder of the organization and celebration. "This just wouldn't be possible without an amazing team of volunteers, who meet and plan for months, table decorators who help make the ballroom so beautiful and the sponsorship from local businesses, media outlets and donors."

Games, prizes, silent auction and raffles brought excitement while raising funds to help uninsured and under-insured women receive breast imaging and meet some of the

unexpected financial needs that arise while patients are undergoing treatment.

Chris Blue headlined, bringing songs of encouragement and words of hope along with some hits from the past that brought the packed house to their feet. In addition to an energetic and inspirational show, he presented his Humanitarian Hero Award to Donna Smith who led her team to sponsor this year's VIP Survivor Room.

"When Chris asked us for a nomination for the award, there was no doubt who our hero is," said Mingle. "Donna works tirelessly all year long to raise money and help people through Compassion in Action. She also helps in nursing homes, volunteers with homeless and provides baskets for the homebound. She's like a little stick of dynamite working and giving all over the community. She's certainly one of my heroes!"

Contributions to Compassion in Action, a non-profit organization, can be made to Compassion in Action Corporation, 3201 Chantilly Drive, Knoxville, TN 37917. You may also find them on Facebook or online at www.pinkribboncelebration.com.



PHOTO BY MIKE STEELY

Comedienne Leanne Morgan entertains the packed house at the Grande Event Center during last Tuesday's celebration. Morgan appeared for the 10th year, reminding all that even through serious circumstances, fun and laughter are good medicine. WBIR's Robin Wilhoit returned as well to emcee the event.

Chancellor rules in favor of mayor, county commission

By Mike Steely
steelym@knoxfocus.com

After several hours of legal arguments before Chancellor John Weaver last Monday the judge responded that he will make a ruling within the week on whether or not the Knox County Law Director has the power to sue the pension board.

That ruling came on Friday afternoon when Weaver stated that the law director's clients are the Knox County Mayor and Commission. The judge ruled that, as the mayor and the commission had directed Law Director Richard (Bud) Armstrong to drop the lawsuit against the pension board and several retiring deputies, the lawsuit must be dropped.

Following the ruling The Focus asked Armstrong who has the authority or standing to enforce the government entities to abide by the charter?

"The law director does," Armstrong replied, adding, "Until his clients directly tell him to stop. That's what just happened."

He said the county doesn't want to know if the pension plan is being legally applied but he'll follow the mayor and commission's direction.

Where does that leave the "settlement" of the lawsuit? Will it be decided in the November 5 hearing before Weaver?

"It's over," the law director said. He added that this morning's 9:30 a.m. hearing before Judge Weaver

may dismiss the class action suit and the case will be completed.

"My power is there but it's not absolute," he said.

Asked if he could pursue future violations of the charter or handle cases involving county officials he said he could until ordered not to do so.

Mayor Jacobs issued the following statement:

"I believe the Law Director Armstrong was acting in what he believed was the public's best interest, but there are better ways of resolving this issue without resorting to an expensive and divisive lawsuit. The Chancellor's ruling defines a path of resolution for this lawsuit and sets a precedent for how Knox

County proceeds with litigation in the future. I'm glad to have this in place now and am excited to move forward."

Last week's hearing

Several attorneys gave various opinions on the power of the law director inside the packed courtroom last Monday. Attorney Melissa Carrasco, hired by the law director to pursue the case on his behalf, countered most of the arguments and cited, time and again, the county charter and the 2007 referendum setting the language on pensions the Uniformed Officers of the Sheriff's

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