



# The Knoxville Focus

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March 25, 2019

## Safety Center turns one year old

By Mike Steely  
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The Behavioral Health Urgent Care Center, often called the "Safety Center," marked its first year since opening at 5302 Ball Camp Pike on March 19, 2018. The state, county and city-funded facility is the product of a long effort by supporters and is treating mentally ill patients delivered there by city and county law enforcement. Many of those patients also have a drug or alcohol problem. The Focus got an early glimpse at the report on the center's first year of operation last week.

Jerry Vagnier, vice president

of Helen Ross McNabb Center, oversees the program and told The Knoxville Focus Wednesday that some 400 people have been treated at the facility and a surprising number, about 75 percent, have followed up with after-care services. He said that more than 55% of those admitted have alcohol or drug addictions.

He said that less than 20% of the patients have been readmitted for the 72 hours of urgent treatment which begins with 23 hours of observation. Most of the patients, who volunteer for care following being apprehended by law enforcement and given the option of the center or jail, are

admitted to the 12-bed facility. The center also has four observation rooms.

Vagnier says the center has a 24 hour staff of 35 professional personnel and that most of the patients, about 94 percent, are delivered there by Knoxville City Police. The police or sheriff's department also picks up and returns people to either their homes, to the City-County Building downtown or to other treatment facilities.

"About 60 percent of those coming to the center don't have a home," Vagnier told The Focus, adding, "and wouldn't have

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PHOTO BY MIKE STEELY

Open since March 2018, the Behavioral Health Urgent Care Center provides 72 hours of diversion from jail for mentally ill and drug offenders.

## BMX supporters seek help from commission

By Mike Steely  
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The Knox County mayor got an earful last week when supporters of a BMX track in South Knox County spoke before the county commission's work session.

Wendy Edwards of Knoxville BMX said the mayor didn't want them to attend a meeting on the project and that said that more than \$487,000 has already been spent on preparing the former athletic field at South-Doyle Middle School for the BMX races.

She added that the organization had been promised three years of national BMX races which could have resulted in an investment return of about \$6 million.

"Six years of work and we want to be heard," Edwards said as Mayor Glenn Jacobs watched her plead with the commissioners to continue to support building the track.

Jacobs had killed the project after seeing estimates projecting the total cost to be about \$2.5 million. Edwards said that estimate was too high because the Public Service Commission sought a bid from an outside firm that inflated the figures.

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## Full of spirit!



Emily Stout (left) and Hannah Hobby cheer for Fulton at this season's TSSAA boys state basketball tournament at MTSU's Monte Hale Arena in Murfreesboro. Please see a photo of the entire Fulton cheer squad, which received the Spirit Award in Class AA, in this week's Sports & Recreation, Section B.

## Over 220 volunteers expected for 2019 South Knoxville Community Cleanup

On Saturday, March 30, Keep Knoxville Beautiful will be hosting its third annual community-wide South Knoxville Cleanup from 9:00 a.m. - noon. The event will be kicking off from Sam Duff Park located at 4060 Chapman Highway.

Participating community leaders from various neighborhoods will meet at the kick-off event, pick up supplies, and then disperse into their own South Knoxville neighborhoods to start cleaning.

The community groups participating include Wildlife Habitat of South Woodlawn, LMU Environmental Law, Gamma Sigma Sigma, South-Doyle High School, UTK College of Law BLSA, CrossFit Knoxville, Boy Scout Troop 36, Alliance for Young Nonprofit Professionals, Old Sevier Community Group, South Haven Neighborhood Community Group, South Doyle Neighborhood Association, and Bland Home.

The South Knoxville Community Cleanup began back in 2017, when South Knoxville was KKB's "community of the year." Over 300 volunteers participated and this made it one of KKB's largest events ever. Over 200 volunteers are expected to participate this Saturday.

Keep Knoxville Beautiful recommends wearing long pants and closed-toed shoes for the event. Please bring your own sunscreen, bug protection and water.

## Norwood Library renaming, animal control, bond issues

By Mike Steely  
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When the Knox County Commission meets today in its regular monthly meeting they will probably finalize the re-naming of the Norwood Public Library in honor of Lynn Redmon. The community leader has passed away but his activism, attitude and political wisdom would be honored for all to see at the Merchant Drive Library. The commission may also

finalize two multi-million dollar bond issues and accept a contribution of funds from Seniors for Creating Learning for the Truancy Reduction Bike Program for elementary students with perfect attendance.

The first of two readings concerning changes in the animal control policies at the Young-Williams Animal Shelter is also on the agenda. The trap-neuter and return policy has already been adopted by

the city and Janet Testerman, CEO of Young-Williams Animal Center, said the new policy in the city is working well during last week's work session.

Lisa Chassy, the Young-Williams veterinarian, said stray cats are vaccinated and returned back to their locations healthier.

The first reading passed with Commissioner Evelyn Gill passing on the vote. A discussion with parks

and recreation Senior Director Paul White concerning youth baseball fields has been delayed for one month.

The commission will also hear the health department's reappointment of Lara Fleming to the Community Health Council. The members may also give final approval on the issuance of two multi-million general obligation bonds and vote on changes to the county's personnel plan in first reading.



### Historic Wedding Venue

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Last Saturday of each month: February 23, March 30, April 27, May 25 at 10 a.m.

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Questions? Please call 865-687-6622