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Knox County's 'Safe Babies Court' Is Working

By Focus Staff

Few people pay much attention to the court system until or unless they have a legal problem. Folks are too busy from day to day to give much thought to such things, nor do people much care about the variety of local courts --- the small claims court, the criminal courts,



Juvenile Court Judge Tim Irwin

the circuit, chancery and juvenile courts. The juvenile court is headed by perhaps the most widely recognized judge in Knox County: Tim Irwin. Judge Irwin is still remembered fondly by many Knox Countians from his days playing football at the University of Tennessee before going pro and playing with the Minnesota Vikings.

An Academic All-American who is in the Minnesota Vikings Hall of Fame, Tim Irwin planned for the day when one career was over and had prepared for another. Irwin went to law school, starting when he was still playing football and obtained his law degree and began a legal practice. When Juvenile Court Judge Carey Garrett passed away, Tim Irwin was appointed by the Knox County Commission and ran for a full term unopposed to succeed him.

Irwin is an imposing man and a no-nonsense dispenser of the law, a conservative Republican who manages to be fair and compassionate. It was this same imposing man who has invited dogs into the court to comfort children, as well as keeping a warehouse full of stuffed animals for youngsters. It is a heartwarming and memorable sight to literally see Judge Irwin handing out teddy bears with a grin to a child who is confused and frightened.

Irwin runs the administrative side of the juvenile court operation, which includes representatives from several other state and local offices including the sheriff's department, the attorney general's office, the public defender's office, and the department of children's services, all the while maintaining a heavy court docket.

The juvenile court has its very own clerk of the courts, who

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MANNIS CAMPAIGN OPENS EAST KNOX OFFICE



Campaign consultant Gary Driscoll, volunteers Linda Conner and Linda Freeman, and mayoral candidate Eddie Mannis relax after putting some finishing touches on the Mannis Campaign's Downtown/East Knoxville office. Stop by and visit 900 East Hill Ave Suite 110!

Knox County, Pension Board circling wagons

By Mike Steely
steelym@knoxfocus.com

In what began as a routine meeting of the Knox County Retirement and Pension Board stopped abruptly ten minutes into the session when pension board attorney John Owings stood and declared the board was going into executive. Anyone not a member of the board or an authorized county official was told to leave the meeting.

Like Old West settlers the Knox County Pension Board, Mayor and County Commission have begun circling their wagons in preparation of an attack.

The private session between the board, the attorney, and county administration last Monday lasted almost an hour. During the executive session Knox County Mayor Glenn Jacobs entered the meeting, stayed for a brief time, and left again heading back to his office in Room 640.

The Knoxville Focus waited outside the closed doors until invited back in. The pension board reconvened its meeting and Owings addressed the members. It became obvious that his remarks had already been heard during the private session. He said the new class action lawsuit against the county was related to the pension board's allowing vacation pay to be included in the sheriff department employees' retirement. It became obvious that a decision was made in the executive session but had to be "public" with a request and vote by the board members in an open session.

Owings called the suit "unnecessary" and said it "lacks merit," adding that he feels the matter was settled in a former lawsuit.

He then asked the board to authorize him to "intervene" as their representative. Although the pension board was not named in the lawsuit the board members

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UGO holds children's hospital benefit



PHOTO BY MIKE STEELY

Joining the Ghostbusters at the UGO Fundraiser for East Tennessee Children's Hospital were Angie Howell of the hospital, John Hickman who organized the event, and Andrea Thrasher of UGO. The Chapman Highway UGO Epic Event Saturday drew hundreds of parents and children who bought raffle tickets to support the Children's Hospital and chatted with various mascots and comic book and movie characters.

Many questions remain about relocating the school offices

By Mike Steely
steelym@knoxfocus.com

Why are the county mayor and some members of commission rushing the approval of a lease of the TVA East Tower for the Knox County School system? What's the actual value of the Andrew Johnson Building, where the school system is currently housed?

What's the actual projection of moving expenses and upkeep at the Towers compared with maintenance and operation at the AJ Building over the next several years? Who supplied the figures on the value of the AJ Building and the expenses the county will need to pay at the Towers?

Why haven't the school superintendent or the school board been asked if they want to move to the

TVA Towers? Why is the superintendent being treated so roughly because he has questions?

How does the parking at the Towers compare to parking at the AJ Building? Is there a problem with the public visiting the TVA-owned building and what about TVA supplying the security there instead of the Public Building Authority?

These are all questions that came up during and after the Knox County Commission meeting last week. Commissioner Larsen Jay had a discussion about the agenda "regarding the potential location move of Knox County Schools." Jay called the proposed move "an opportunity to save \$29 to \$30 million and build more schools." He called the proposal to sell

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