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KnoxFocus 24/7

March 10, 2014

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FOCUS Weekly Poll*

Should state government personnel or private contractors operate Tennessee's State Parks?

STATE EMPLOYEES 84.75% PRIVATE CONTRACTORS 15.25%

Survey conducted March 6, 2014.

* Focus Weekly Polls are conducted by an independent, professional polling company.

Emerald Charter Schools Hosts March Meetings

Emerald Charter Schools will host public meetings on March 11 and March 25 about its proposed public charter school, Emerald Academy. The meetings are open, but some require advance registration.

The first group of meetings, on Tuesday, March 11, will be in focus group format, allowing the public to provide input about the key components of Emerald Academy's educational model. The focus groups will be at Emerald Youth Foundation, 1718 N. Central Street, at 9:00 am, 1:00 p.m., 4:00 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. Each focus group will last 90 minutes and cover the same topics. Advance registration is required to participate in the focus groups. Register online at www.emeraldcharterschools.org or call Kevin DuBose at (865) 637-3227 ext. 121.

The final meeting will be a presentation to the community at Emerald Youth Foundation on Tuesday, March 25, at 6:30 p.m. Emerald Charter Schools representatives will report on how community feedback is being incorporated into the charter school application.

Rountree Kicks Off Campaign For School Board

By Focus Staff

Amber Rountree kicked off her campaign for the Knox County Board of Education last Tuesday night at the Round Up Restaurant in South Knoxville.

The Round Up is known for really good home-style food and is a very popular local landmark in the South Knoxville community. The Round Up was packed with a crowd that included community leaders and educators.

Rountree is a Librarian at Halls Elementary School and has earned a reputation as being hard working and highly intelligent.

A first time candidate for public office, Rountree was spurred to run for office after seeing just how many incumbents on the Board of Education seemed to be "rubber stamps" for Superintendent Jim McIntyre.

"South Knoxville needs a Board member who is absolutely dedicated to serving the citizens

of South Knoxville, our school children and our schools," Rountree said. "Our community needs and deserves good schools just as much or more than any other community.

"A Board member who merely is a rubber stamp is serving no one but Dr. McIntyre."

Rountree will be facing incumbent Pam Trainor who has been a solid backer of Superintendent McIntyre.

Every incumbent Board member seeking reelection has drawn opposition and the race in South Knoxville is expected to be one of the most hotly contested.

Rountree is already moving all across South Knoxville and has been knocking on doors.

"I'm very thankful for just how good the response is and I intend to run a positive campaign and hope the voters are looking for a change.

"There's nothing more important than educating our children."



PHOTO BY DAN ANDREWS.

Amber Rountree, left, is pictured with Sam Tobeia, owner of South Knoxville's Round Up Restaurant.

Snow Days, House Bill get attention

By Mike Steely steelym@knoxfocus.com

Adding an extra day or two to the end of the Knox County school year received no support from the Board of Education last Wednesday, but the idea of using two in-service teacher days to make up for recent snow days was accepted.

Superintendent James McIntyre said that March 14, this Friday, has been chosen as a full-school make-good day. Many parents are not happy with classes on the 14th because they have family plans on what would have been the first day of Spring Break.

McIntyre said that administration has also selected Monday, April 21, as an alternative make-up day in case of future school cancellations because of bad weather.

Board member Mike McMillan asked McIntyre why not ask the state for a waiver of the make-up days and the superintendent said that is a formal process and the answer is generally "No."

Lucille Greer, the student representative present, told the board that she agreed with the dates but added that she knows another student who had plans to leave for the Bahamas on Friday. McIntyre said students out for family matters should get a note from their parents but, "We expect our students to be in school, every school day."

Indya Kincannon encouraged McIntyre to be lenient with absentees, adding, "Students are tired of snow days, and parents are too."

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PHOTO BY GINNY BYRD.

Kara McKamey with two happy children at Mud Pies and Music

Mud Pies and Music

By Mike Steely steelym@knoxfocus.com

You would be really surprised at Mud Pies and Music on Clinton Highway in Powell.

The daycare is much more than just a daycare. Founded in 1994 by Kara McKamey, the building was once medical offices owned by the Oak Ridge Hospital. It now has six classrooms and cares for children from six weeks old and up and provides after school care for older children. There is one room for infants, two for toddlers, two for pre-school, and one for after school.

From 6:30 a.m. until 6 p.m., Mrs. McKamey and her staff of more than 15 employees care for 65 full enrollment children. She said many of her employees

have been students at Crown College and "that's been a very good coop for us." She added, "Lots of moms work here also."

On January 4, Mud Pies and Music celebrated 20 years at the 7600 Clinton Highway location.

"We offer really good, quality care. We're not in the business for the money; we truly care for the children. My gift is to work with children and I'll always put the children first," she told *The Focus*.

Kara and her husband, Randy, have four children, one a special needs child. She says having a special needs child changed her philosophy and she was encouraged to have him "mainstreamed." Randy McKamey is head coach at Grace Christian

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