

# Local

Phone: 865-342-6397 | email: news@knoxnews.com

Thursday, March 6, 2014

The Jacobs Agency  
your community insurance agency

In the business of protecting  
your family, home, auto  
& retirement



Jacobs Agency

865-219-2708



SAM  
VENABLE

## One more reason to be wary

First, a disclaimer:

The following critique of a new consumer product comes from the same guy who thought bottled water, social media and grocery store sushi would be flash-in-the-pan fads. You have been warned.

Nonetheless, I'm quite leery of computer-chip implants that allow users to activate computers, dial telephones, start car engines and unlock doors at — literally — the wave of their hands.

I am not making this up. The technology already exists. It is sure to be refined in the near future.

Already, a Seattle company called Dangerous Things (didn't make that up, either) is selling these gizmos. They're about the size of a grain of rice and are surgically tucked into a fold of skin between the thumb and forefinger, transforming the wearer into a sure-nuff Robert Robot.

No more keys. No more codes. No more passwords to remember — or forget, as the case more accurately may be.

Instead, you just wave your hand across a sensor and — presto — open sesame!

Some of this high-tech gadgetry has marvelous medical potential. Perhaps it could bring life back to withered limbs. Or allow the blind to see. In that regard, I say full speed ahead and don't spare the hosses.

But for everyday use by Me and Thee?

Yikes! Thanks, but no thanks.

I have enough trouble with the computers, large and small, that rule my life on a daily basis — such as the machine I'm typing on as we speak.

Most of the time, it performs its tasks without complaining. But "most" doesn't cut it any more than a human heart or set of lungs that work "most" of the time.

On those not-infrequent occasions when it does go on the fritz, my world turns into a personal hell.

The machine might freeze up. Or else it abruptly shuts down. Or else it suffers with any of 10,001 digitized ailments that, in geekspeak, means it has a migraine or the runs or the pukers. Or all three.

This condition is frustrating enough when I can tickle keys or push buttons. Imagine the angst if my only recourse is to keep waving my hands over and over, eliciting no more response than what happens in a public restroom when you're trying to activate one of those stupid "motion" paper towel dispensers.

(Why, pray tell, do different brands have sensors in different places? On some, you wave in front. On some, you wave in back. On some, you wave below. You wind up standing there, dripping, moving your hands around like the Village People singing "Y.M.C.A.")

Trust me: If God didn't want us to use our hands the old-fashioned way, he wouldn't have given us middle fingers.

Sam Venable's column appears Sunday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. He may be reached at 865-342-6272 or VenableS@knoxnews.com.

# Knox students in class March 14

## Switch made because of winter closures

By Lydia X. McCoy  
mccoyl@knoxnews.com  
865-342-6250

Knox County students planning to kick off their spring break a little early next week will now find themselves in school to make up for time lost to wintry weather.

The school board on Wednesday approved switching Friday, March 14, from a staff in-service day to a regular school day for students and teachers.

Entering this week, the school system already had used up its eight built-in

snow days. Monday's wintry weather caused schools to close for the ninth time and created the need for a school day to be made up. March 14, which is the Friday before the district's spring break, will be that day.

The board also approved switching April 21, which is a scheduled student holiday, into an instructional day in case schools are forced to close again this year.

Schools Superintendent Jim McIntyre said he hopes the district won't have to do that and that the two proposed dates were the best option.

"We've had quite a winter this year," he said. "The rationale for this is we think having the makeup

days in relatively short order and having them in March or April maximizes our impact on productivity and maximizes our impact on student learning in the time frame that we are talking about."

The superintendent told school board members that he realizes that March 14 is "right around the corner" and could create some inconvenience for families, but the date was the best option for student learning.

"There will be some situations where students will have to have an excused absence from their parents," he said. "They'll have to have a note from their parent that says that they were either plans made or circumstances

that couldn't be overcome."

School board member Karen Carson said that even if 3,000 students couldn't make it to class next Friday, they would still be allowing the district's remaining 55,000 students to have a full day of school.

"I think that's well worth it," she said. "What I shared with the parents that I talked to was this is one of those decisions you look at and say, 'What's best for most kids?' And I think it is to have that day in the classroom now rather than at the end of the year (when) it's just not as meaningful."

Board member Indya Kincannon agreed.

"While this is not ideal, this is the best of our hard

options given the circumstances," she said.

"I'd also encourage the superintendent to exercise good judgment if there are extenuating circumstances."

Kincannon said she talked about the proposed dates to teachers, who thought the March 14 date was ideal, as well as spoke with some third-graders at Belle Morris Elementary on Wednesday.

"They were almost unanimously in support of March 14 being a student day," she said. "They're tired of snow days, the students are, too."

Follow [www.twitter.com/mykidmyschool](http://www.twitter.com/mykidmyschool) for more updates on education in East Tennessee.

## East Tennessee Portfolio



ADAM LAU/NEWS SENTINEL

[knoxnews.com](http://knoxnews.com)  
Photo gallery: East Tennessee Portfolio images

Clouds enshroud a trail leading through the pine forest atop Mount LeConte in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park early one morning last month.

## Expert: US should show Pakistan a different face

### Diplomat offers views at Baker Center

By Maggie Jones  
maggie.jones@knoxnews.com  
865-342-6336

Former U.S. Ambassador Cameron Munter suggested that for the U.S. to forge a better relationship with Pakistan the focus on governmental relations needs to be dimmed.

"When we were in Pakistan, what Pakistanis didn't like about America was our focus on our own security and that we weren't looking at it from their point of view," Munter told attendees during Wednesday's Ashe Lecture at the Howard H. Baker Jr. Center for Public Policy on the University of Tennessee campus.

"What they admire about the U.S. is that we have great universities, is that we have businesses

[knoxnews.com](http://knoxnews.com)

Video: Cameron Munter speaks on Pakistan and Ukraine.

that they admire. They admire our culture. They admire those things we are best at."

Munter, the U.S. ambassador to Pakistan from 2010 to 2012, said America should stay engaged, "but in a different way led by universities, led by foundations, led by businesses. I think that's where we show the face that I'm most proud of in America and where the Pakistanis will respond."

It was during Munter's tenure in Pakistan that U.S. forces killed al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden in Abbottabad, an event that heavily contributed to the tension in American and Pakistani relations.

"We realized that even though it was really important to do (the Navy SEAL

operation) without telling the Pakistani government, there was a price to be paid and that meant the Pakistanis were upset about what happened," Munter said. "What we had to do at the embassy after the raid was to make sure that it was understood that we still wanted to work with Pakistan on matters of mutual benefit."

Munter also served as an ambassador to Serbia from 2007 to 2009. Because of his time in Europe, he discussed the current situation in the Crimea region of Ukraine and the impacts it may have.

"I think (Russian President Vladimir) Putin has sacrificed the idea that his Eurasian Union would be attractive to other people. And so, I think that even though this is a very dangerous time, and we have to be very careful to stand up to what we think is important and to avoid an incident, I think the big loser here is going to be Putin."

## Public meetings set on charter school

### Emerald Academy is planned name

News Sentinel staff

Emerald Charter Schools, which has filed a letter of intent to open a charter school in North Knoxville, will host two public meetings later this month about the school that will be named Emerald Academy.

The meetings are on March 11 and March 25 and will be held at the Emerald Youth Foundation, 1718 N. Central St.

The meetings on March 11, scheduled for 9 a.m., 1 p.m., 4 p.m. and 6:30 p.m., will allow the public to provide input about the "key components" of the proposed school's educational model. Each meeting will last 90 minutes and cover the same topics. The organization is requesting that the public register for the focus groups online at [www.emeraldcharterschools.org](http://www.emeraldcharterschools.org) or by calling Kevin DuBose at (865) 637-3227 ext. 121.

The second meeting at 6:30 p.m. March 25 will be a presentation to the community on the feedback the organization received and will be incorporating into its official application to Knox County Schools, which is due April 1.

The Emerald Academy is proposed as a school for kindergarten through 8th grade that would be in North Knoxville's Fulton High School zone.

It would be modeled after the Breakthrough Schools' E Prep Middle School and Village Prep Elementary School in Cleveland, Ohio.

In its first year, the charter school would open for 100 kindergarten and first-graders, and each subsequent year the school would add two more grades.

The total proposed school population would be 450 students.