Knox County Commission

AMY BROYLES
COMMISSIONER, SECOND DISTRICT

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:

Tennessee Women of Vision and Courage:
Celebrating the Rich History of Tennessee Women

Tuesday, April 29th, 2014
5:30pm - 7:30pm
Bearden Branch, Knox County Library
Community Room
100 Golfclub Road, Knoxville, TN 37919
865-588-8813

Many women have contributed significantly to the rich heritage of Tennessee during its more than 200 years of state history. However, only a small number of these women are included in our written history. Through their new book, *Tennessee Women of Vision and Courage,* the Tennessee Women Project recognizes Tennessee women from frontier days through the twentieth century, who faced hardship and challenges with courage and vision; they are a source of inspiration to women and girls of this twenty-first century.

Edited by Charlotte Crawford and Ruth Johnson Smiley of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) of Tennessee, the book *Tennessee Women of Vision and Courage* is a compilation of profiles of twenty-two historic Tennessee women written and researched by twenty contemporary Tennessee women.

A one-act play of a woman suffrage rally in 1913 resounds with the voices of women in winning the right to vote and highlights the important place of Tennessee women in that battle. Historical accounts from across the state reflect the achievements of these remarkable women. Brenda Vineyard Runyon opened the nation's first woman's bank in Clarksville. Elizabeth Rona of Oak Ridge was a pioneer in nuclear chemistry and physics. Julia Britton Hooks, a talented African American musician, founded a music school and elementary school for African American children in Memphis. These accounts of historic Tennessee women, written by contemporary Tennessee women, vividly reflect events in Tennessee history.

Women's organizations from across the state submitted nominations of historic women who made an impact on life in Tennessee. Over one hundred nominations were proposed. An Advisory Council of representatives from sponsoring organizations, such as the Tennessee Economic Council on Women and the YWCA, along with other key individuals, assisted in selecting the twenty-two women included. Each woman was carefully chosen based on her influence on life in Tennessee, the era in which she lived, and her geographic location, ethnicity, and vocation. These women represent the wide influence of many Tennessee women.

316 East Scott Avenue • Knoxville, Tennessee 37917
(865) 237-6538 (Cell) • (865) 523-6986 (Home)

Twenty women from Tennessee, all with writing experience and from a variety of professional backgrounds, volunteered to research, document, and create original profiles of the twenty-two historic Tennessee women included in the book. Each contributor drew from her own unique knowledge and experience to connect with her subject and make history come alive. Several of the contributing writers are Knoxvillians, including Kathy Owens Duggan and Margie Humphrey LeCoultre, EdD, both of the Knox County School System; Sherri Gardner Howell and Pam Strickland, columnists for the Knoxville News Sentinel; and Margaret B. Emmett, a retired scientist from Oak Ridge National Laboratory. Hannah Seay, a high school student athlete and a member of the class of 2014 at the Webb School of Knoxville, authored the profile of Elma Neal Roane, who championed women's athletics.

Another local woman, Anne Loy, Past President of the AAUW of Tennessee, served on the Advisory Council for the book, as did Knoxvillian Sara Baker, a writer, editor, and consultant specializing in gender justice. Additional Knox County women who supported the publication of the book include Katherine Gooch, Emma J. Huddleston, Norma Kelley, and Judy Poulson. Patricia Pierce of Harriman was also a supporter.

Volunteers did all aspects of the work on the book, from researching and writing the articles, to editing the manuscript, to marshaling the book through the publication process, to designing the website. Proceeds from the sale of this book go toward supplying each public high school in Tennessee with a copy of the book. Once that is accomplished, the AAUW of Tennessee scholarship fund will provide scholarships for Tennessee college women to attend the National Conference of College Women Student Leaders (NCCWSL).

Commissioner Broyles has used a portion of her Commission discretionary funds to purchase copies for each public, middle and high school library in Knox County, in addition to 20 copies for the Knox County Library System. The books will be presented during Tuesday's event.

Cherel Henderson, Director of the East Tennessee Historical Society in Knoxville, considers this book, "an important contribution to an oft-neglected subject. *Tennessee Women of Vision and Courage* is a well-researched guide to the accomplishments of a diverse group of Tennessee women across two centuries. It will inspire women of all ages and backgrounds."

Tuesday's event will feature editors Charlotte Crawford, who lives in Farragut, and Ruth Johnson Smiley, PhD, who resides in Oak Ridge, who will discuss the origins of the book and the collaboration with other women's organizations that made it possible. There will be copies available for purchase to the public ($16.99), and some of the contributing authors will be on hand to sign purchased copies. "Celebrity Readers," women leaders from across Knox County, will be reading aloud excerpts from the book. Refreshments will also be provided.

"This is a wonderful opportunity for women and girls in Knox County to come out and learn more about some of the outstanding women who came before them, and to listen and discuss with one another, the editors and writers, and current women leaders, about women's history in Tennessee," says Commissioner Broyles. "I am delighted to be able to provide so many copies for our Knox County School Libraries and our Knox County Public Libraries. These women's stories are an important part of our state's history, and the entire book is an enthralling and gratifying read."

For more information on *Tennessee Women of Vision and Courage,* please visit http://www.tnwomenproject.com/.

"Men are also welcome at this event!" adds Commissioner Broyles, "I hope to have a good turnout of all genders and ages Tuesday evening."

Commissioner Broyles can be reached by phone at 237-6538, or email at amy.broyles@knoxcounty.org.

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