



KNOX COUNTY A Great American Community



Knox County News

Good news from one of our bond rating agencies this week. Standard and Poor's reaffirmed our AA+ rating, which continues to be the highest in Knox County's history. That underscores our belief that the County continues to stand on solid financial footing as we close in on a final budget to present to County Commission on April 28th. At the end of March, we found ourselves very much on budget for this year with spending matching revenues. That is just where we need to be.

Even in this tough economic climate, sales tax collections are still 95% of what they were last year. Property tax collections are 4% ahead of last year. All of these factors indicate we are on course to meet budget projections at year's end.

Mike Ragsdale

County bond rating reaffirmed by Standard & Poor's AA+ bond rating highest in County's history

County Mayor Mike Ragsdale and Chief Financial Officer John Troyer have been advised that the bond rating agency Standard and Poor's have reaffirmed Knox County's AA+ rating. The AA+ rating represents the highest rating in the history of the county.

The bond rating agency considers a variety of variables in determining how a local government will be rated, including debt levels, per capita income and area unemployment rates. The S&P report noted that their agency deemed the County's financial management practices "good" and the overall net debt burden "low" at \$1,939 per capita.

The report cited the County's balanced budget approach as a contributing factor to the rating. Troyer noted that producing a lean, balanced budget for presentation to County Commission has never been more important. "Although we are in better shape than most, Knox County has its own fiscal challenges," Troyer noted. "As we come to a final budget for presentation to County Commission, we are asking departments to continue to use the same financial restraint in managing the public's money that allowed us to reach this point," he added.



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KNOX COUNTY HAPPENINGS

on FACEBOOK

Become a fan!

Together! Healthy Knox: You tell us how

Make your voice count in health planning

What are the major health concerns in your neighborhood? What needs to happen to improve health and quality of life in Knox County? We need your answers to these questions and more. The Knox County Health

Department is launching **Together! Healthy Knox** and anyone who lives, works, worships or plays in Knox County can take part. The ultimate goal is to achieve a community in



which every person is a healthy person.

The first step toward a healthier community is to get as many people as possible to take our **Together! Healthy Knox** survey. Please visit www.healthyknox.org today and take the survey. You can also sign up for a focus group or participate in a discussion board. We need your help to identify the top health issues in Knox County. In the coming months, a community-wide partnership will be formed to develop an action plan to make a lasting and positive impact on the health priorities you identify.

To make our community healthy will take us all working together! Your participation is important to the success of **Together! Healthy Knox**. Visit www.healthyknox.org or call 215-5549 for more information, to provide your input, and to get involved in this community approach to better health.

Urban schools forum

[Agenda online](#)

Superintendent of Schools McIntyre will host a public forum Saturday, April 25, at 10:00 a.m. at Fulton High School to discuss what urban schools need and where they fit into the overall strategy of the Knox County Schools.

Season Opening:

New Harvest Park
Farmers Market

Thursday, April 23

3:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.

**4775 New Harvest
Lane**

[More information?](#)

Ragsdale, Biden discuss stimulus funds

In an teleconference with Vice President Joe Biden about the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) earlier this week, Knox County Mayor Mike Ragsdale asked the White House to clarify how stimulus monies for education can be used. Specifically, the Mayor asked whether those education dollars that are targeted to Title I and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act can be used for providing technology and building additional classrooms. [Biden's office is providing clarification]

Mayors from six other counties joined the discussion with the Vice President about transit and energy projects, community development block grants and neighborhood stabilization funds. The mayors complimented the Vice President on the Recovery.gov website and the administration's intent for it to provide accountability and transparency to the citizenry.

Biden spoke bluntly with the mayors, indicating that the original intent of the package had been to provide much more local control of the dollars to ensure local job growth. He repeatedly stressed the need for transparency and accountability in the success of the ARRA and asked the

Essay contest: Get Involved

Deadline:
Friday, April 27

Who?
Knox County high school seniors (public, private or home schooled)

Topic:
How can citizens make a positive impact on local government?

First Prize:
\$1,000 scholarship donated by Knox County government officials

Guidelines:

mayors to keep projects moving forward as quickly as possible to help get our economy moving back in the right direction.

Join Knox County at EarthFest 2009

Free, zero-waste event scheduled April 18 at Pellissippi State

Knox County Solid Waste Department invites you to join them for the EarthFest 2009 10th Anniversary, Saturday, April 18 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. at Pellissippi State Technical Community College off Hardin Valley Road. As always, EarthFest is a FREE event with FREE parking.



EarthFest is a "Zero-Waste Event," meaning all exhibitors and food vendors will be required to control the types of materials they sell or distribute. With no trash cans on site, EarthFest 2008 and its 10

thousand attendees recycled or composted over 940 pounds of materials with only 3.85 pounds of trash going to the landfill!

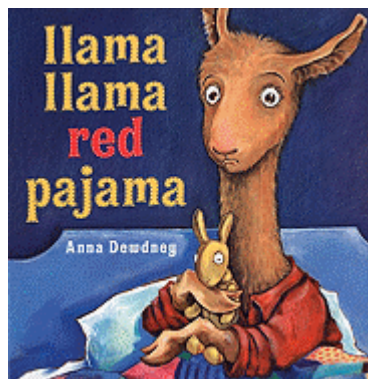
EarthFest has had a major impact on our community promoting awareness and opportunities for individuals to reduce their environmental footprint on East Tennessee. In addition to food, fun, and music, environmental events include a kids environmental learning area, compact fluorescent light bulb exchange, environmental exhibitors, mercury thermometer exchange, used printer ink cartridge collection, clean fuels vehicles, cell phone recycling, rain barrel sale and more! Also, for the first 200 visitors, KUB's booth is exchanging a new compact fluorescent light bulb (CFL) for an old light bulb. Limit one CFL per household.

Major sponsors along with Knox County Solid Waste include: City of Knoxville Public Service Department, WUOT 91.9, WATE-6, Advanced Polymer Recycling, WJXB B97.5, Event Rentals, Alcoa, WUTK 90.3, and Waste Connections, UT Make Orange Green and EarthFare.

For more up-to-date information about EarthFest visit www.knox-earthfest.org.

Penguin Players bring *Llama, Llama* to life at Knox libraries

Popular children's book hits the stage later this month



If you don't know about baby llama whining for his mama, you just don't know what you are missing! But Knox County Public Library and Dollywood's Imagination Playhouse's Penguin Players are about to solve that mystery for you. Beginning April 27th, the Players will delight audiences of all ages with a musical adaptation of the Anna Dewdney bedtime tale, *llama, llama red pajama*.

Any parent who has ever tucked a child

Knox County Calendar

April 15

Close Read discussion - Burlington Library

April 17

Close Read discussion - UT University Center *

Earth Fest 2009

April 18

May Hill Arbuthnot Honor Lecture at Alex Haley Farm (free and open to public) *

Earth Fest 2009

April 20

Commission's Finance Committee *

Rainy Day Brush-off begins

April 21

Commission's Intergovernmental Committee

April 22

Board of Zoning Appeals

April 25

Urban Schools Forum *

Adopt-a-stream training session

April 27

Pre-kindergarten Round-up *

County Commission *

Llama, llama shows

begin

April 28
State of the
Community address

Suggestions or comments?

We'd love to get your
input. Send your
comments or
questions to our
[newsletter editor](#).

Quick Links

[Knox County
Office of Neighborhoods
Public Library
Public Schools
Parks & Recreation
Health Department](#)

into bed and heard the call for a glass of water, another tuck into bed, and other whinings and moanings of children who wonder where parents have disappeared at bedtime will relate to Mama Llama. Baby Llama works himself into a terrible tizzy that every child and parent can appreciate. Come see how Mama Llama handles her frightened baby llama with love and humor. Show times and locations are available on the [Knox County Public Library website](#).

On May 30th, Anna Dewdney is the featured author at the 5th annual Children's Festival of Reading, where there will be a special bonus performance!

Expanding Your Business Around the Globe **Knox Small Businesses Can Explore International Trade Opportunities**

All small business persons interested in international trade opportunities are invited to attend a free event on April 23rd called *Expanding Your Business Around the Globe*. Knox County Government Supplier Diversity, in conjunction with SunTrust Bank; USDA Smoky Mountain RC&D; the Kingsport Office of Small Business Enterprise (KOSBE); and the State of Tennessee Business Enterprise Resource Office, have designed the half-day interactive symposium especially for businesses interested in/or already exporting. The event is being held at 8:00 a.m. on Thursday, April 23rd, at the Sarah Simpson Building located at 801 Tipton Avenue.

Presenters will review the many products and services available from SunTrust Global Trade Solutions Division, Export-Import Bank of the United States, Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC), U.S. Small Business Administration Export Assistance Office (SBA) and the U.S. Department of Commerce International Trade Administration.

Other agencies participating in the event are: ETSU Innovation Lab, Knoxville Chamber of Commerce and Innovation Laboratory, Inc., U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) Tennessee District Office, and the UT Procurement Technical Assistance Center.

Although the event is free, registration is required at www.formdesk.com/kosbe/export or calling (888) 936-1221.

Get Outdoors Festival moves to The Cove at Concord Park

June 13th date announced for 2009 festival

Knox County and the City of Knoxville announce the **2009 Get Outdoors Festival!** Join us June 13th, from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. at The Cove at Concord Park for a celebration of all there is to do outdoors in our community. The family-friendly event will feature an afternoon full of exhibits, demonstrations and challenges ranging from fishing and rowing to skateboarding and disc golf.

Proceeds from the event benefit the [Legacy Parks Foundation](#).

- Get on the Trail with Missy Kane at 1 p.m.
- Enter your team in the coed sand volleyball



tournament.

- Stay for the Second Saturday Concert.
- You won't want to miss this day of celebrating the outdoors!

[Exhibitor applications available here.](#)

Rain barrel art all around Knox County

Rainy Day Brush-Off features

What catches the rain and the eye of passersby? People living in Knox County now know the answer--an artistic rain barrel! This spring, the Water Quality Forum kicked off its Second Annual Rainy Day Brush-Off event. Local artists have created beautiful works of art on 55-gallon rain barrels to help us raise awareness about water conservation and water pollution.

WHY RAIN BARRELS?? Over 1,000 gallons of water runs off of the average roof (1,700 ft²) in every normal rain storm event? Just think what you could do with all of that **FREE WATER!** Normally, when it rains, water runs off of your roof into your gutters and eventually into the storm drain system. Once it stops raining, that water is no longer available. Rain barrels are an ideal way for homeowners to conserve water by collecting rain water and reusing it for watering flowers, gardens and lawns, particularly in this time of drought. Rain barrels are also a great way to help protect our local waterways from polluted storm water runoff.

Join us in our efforts to make Knox County *A Great American Community*. **Become a part of the conversation.** Tell us about our programs and services that are working for you, and the ones that aren't. **Support our teachers** and the great work they are doing to educate our children. **Get involved** with the workforce development effort. **Participate** in the great events our libraries and parks offer. County government starts with you, the citizen, so **join in!**

Best regards,

Mike Ragsdale, County Mayor
Knox County, A Great American Community