



This is our last community newsletter until the new year. We are working hard not only to provide good services to our citizens, but to let you know about all that is going on in Knox County government. I think you'll find some very encouraging news in this issue, both with a meeting I had in Washington and with our [knoxAchieves](#) program. Also, I want to encourage you to go out to the Cove at Concord Park during the holidays and enjoy the wonderful Festival of Lights and to have some family fun at the First Night® celebration.

Mike Ragsdale

## Ragsdale meets with Obama transition team

### County executives push for speedy economic recovery plan

As the new Chair of the County Executives of America (CEA), Knox County Mayor Mike Ragsdale met with President-Elect Obama's Head of Public Liaison Michael Strautmanis last week in Washington, D.C. During the issues-filled discussion, Mayor Ragsdale pressed the need for the President-Elect to pursue the economic recovery plan with deliberate speed.

Specifically, Ragsdale asked for consideration of a plan to inject billions of dollars into budgets for roads, bridges and school construction, telling the Obama team, "If the money is allocated, county governments across the nation are prepared to act immediately." This discussion continued for over an hour and ended with an agreement between Strautmanis and the CEA to work cooperatively on the problems facing America and its counties.

The CEA represents over 700 elected chief executives from county and municipal governments and over 50% of the nation's population. Prior to being sworn in as CEA President, Ragsdale concluded a two-year term as president of the Tennessee Association of County Mayors, an affiliate organization of the County Services Association with members representing all 95 counties in Tennessee.

~500 students apply for [knoxAchieves](#) support  
**188 trained volunteer mentors ready to begin in January**

When the deadline fell on December 15th, some 500 applications were in



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## Vision for Knox County Schools

Superintendent Jim McIntyre's vision, "Building on Strength: Excellence for All Children," is available from the Schools' website at [knoxschools.org](http://knoxschools.org).

Knox County Calendar

hand from students from every Knox County public high school, the adult high school and Richard Yoakley Alternative School. Of those applications, 72% were from families whose total annual income is less than \$50,000.

According to KnoxAchieves Board member Rich Ray, co-founder and CFO of 21st Mortgage, "We are so excited to see the broad response to the program, not only from the students, but from this wonderful group of volunteers who have come forward to serve as mentors."

Over the next two weeks, KnoxAchieves staff and Board of Directors will work through the applications to match students and mentors. In January, mentors will receive the names of their assigned students and make the initial contact to begin the college application process.

## County anticipates significant energy cost savings

### Energy savings are self-funding

Knox County is anticipating savings of nearly \$1.5 million in utility costs in 2009 as a result of energy audits that are being conducted in all county buildings, including Knox County schools. In November, the Knox County School system authorized the County's energy services company, Trane, to begin another round of what are proving to be very cost-effective energy audits. These savings pay for, and are the direct result of, the improvements the County is making at the facilities. According to Knox County Mayor Mike Ragsdale, "It is a win-win for the County and many of our local work-force. We are creating 'green jobs' and there is little-to-no risk to the County."

The energy audits were initiated in December 2006 with a group of the 10 Knox County schools that were the biggest energy consumers. The County Government and School System worked together with Trane to identify energy-savings opportunities and strategies. Ultimately, a \$10.2 M infrastructure-improvement scope was developed and is expected to save the schools more than \$16 M over a 15-year term. An added benefit is that the project is 100% funded by the utility savings, which is guaranteed by Trane.

## Knoxville hosts family-friendly New Year's fest

### 2nd annual First Night® adds children's festival



If you are looking for a family-friendly and alcohol-free New Year's Eve event, you might want to check out Knoxville's 2nd annual First Night® celebration. First Night® is a community celebration of the arts similar to those held in over 100 cities across the country and around the world.

This year's event will include multiple entertainment venues throughout downtown with musicians, storytellers, magicians, dance groups, and puppeteers. First Night® admission buttons are on [sale online](#) or at several local vendors through December 30th. The \$10 button serves as admission to all the entertainment venues associated with First Night® and provides discounts on New Year's Eve and throughout January.

**December 19-28**  
Holiday Festival of Lights  
at The Cove

**December 24**  
Convenience centers  
closed

**December 25**  
County holiday  
\*  
Convenience centers  
closed

**December 26**  
County holiday

**December 31**  
First Night® Knoxville

**January 1**  
County holiday  
\*  
Convenience centers  
closed

**January 6**  
Back to school for  
students

### 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](#)

New this year is an afternoon Children's Festival leading into the First Night®. Processional. There will be an early countdown for the youngest children, with fireworks around 9:00pm. For more information and the schedule of events, visit [www.firstnightknoxville.com](http://www.firstnightknoxville.com).

## Karns tech ed students create display for Holiday Festival of Lights

### Giant tricycle, singing choir of angels featured

Students from the Byington-Solway Career and Technical Education Center at Karns High School have created a lighted display to add to Knox County Parks and Recreation's Holiday Festival of Lights at The Cove at Concord Park.



Teacher Bill Warwick said high school students in carpentry, welding, automotive and cosmetology classes, as well as the Health Occupations club, assisted in building the display. Carpentry student Jeff Wallace built a Christmas tree, and Zach Craft welded a giant tricycle to put under the tree. Other projects included building present boxes and a singing choir of angels, and painting and decorating the display. Over 30 students participated in the construction.

The Holiday Festival of Lights begins with complimentary horse-drawn wagon rides through the park on Friday and Saturday, December 19 and 20, from 6:30 until 9 p.m. From Sunday, December 21, until Sunday, December 28, excluding Christmas Day, the park will be open for pedestrian traffic. Walking and pets are not allowed on wagon ride nights, but are welcome the remainder of the event.

The wagon rides are sponsored by Pimento's and Lenoir City Utilities Board this year. Pimento's will be offering desserts and hot cider, and other vendors will be on site with kettle corn, coffee and hot chocolate. Media sponsors include WVLT-Volunteer TV, The Knoxville News Sentinel, B97.5 and Comcast.

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!**

**Sincerely,**

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