

EARLY VOTING

Don't forget, early voting in the Democratic Primary continues through April 26 at the DeKalb County Courthouse

Making their case

Candidates address voters at *Review* forum

**DUANE SHERRILL**  
News/Sports Smithville Review  
Smithville, Tennessee

An attempted boycott of the inaugural *Smithville Review* candidate forum amid rumors of question-fixing fell flat this past week with numerous candidates, including all three men vying for the county mayor nomination, sharing their ideas with voters at the forum.

“We appreciate this time to get to speak directly to the voters,” said Sheriff Patrick Ray, incumbent and Republican nominee for the office, who attended the forum held Thursday at the County Complex.

The forum, held in front of an audience of about 40 people, included county mayor Democratic hopefuls Tim Stribling, Bradley Hendrix and Mike Foster, along with Democratic commission hopefuls Joe Johnson, Beth Pafford and Independent William Rutherford, Sheriff Ray and aldermen Gayla Hendrix and Josh Miller, the latter who is seeking the office of Smithville mayor.

The event happened despite a call by Democratic Party Chairman Jordan Wilkins, on the eve of the forum, for candidates not to show up for the forum amid rumors that the list of questions to be asked candidates had leaked out.

“There is a rumor going around that someone has seen the questions,” Wilkins maintained, defending his mass text calling for the boycott.

While told during his conversation with the *Review* that the questions could not have leaked because the questions had not been created by that point, Wilkins held to the advice he sent to the party faithful, warning them not to participate. The questions asked at the event included “why did you decide to run for office and what area needs more funding in the county?”

Wilkins also wondered why he had not been consulted about the forum. The forum was an independent forum held by the *Review* with no input from either party or any candidates since it was to be an impartial event.

During the main event of the forum which featured the three coun-

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Smithville alderman and mayoral candidate Josh Miller addresses the audience during the inaugural *Smithville Review* candidate forum. He was one of several candidates to attend the event last week.

Duane Sherrill photo

Future of school buildings examined

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Eyeing an ambitious building program, the school board is hoping the county commission will share its vision of the future of learning in DeKalb County.

With potential prices ranging anywhere from \$17 million to \$45 million, according to what course is followed, the evaluation of current and future needs for the school system was shared Monday evening during a work session which commissioners were invited to attend. The meeting was held after the board of education met with representatives from Upland Design of Crossville to get an idea of what the county is looking at in the area of building, renovation and price.

The immediate finding was that Smithville Elementary, which is the oldest school in the county, built in 1959, needs to be replaced. The study found the school has a mold problem, it is difficult to secure and is in a bad location. The study also found that DeKalb High and Middle School and North Elementary need work while West was rated as the best school. In the case of North, expansion and updating is an option. While DeKalb Middle, built in 1971, has challenges about security and has too small of an auditorium.

Derrick Clemow of Upland Design has shared six options the county may want to choose from when it comes to updating the county's schools. The number of ideas will be vetted before a formal presentation is brought before the entire commission.

Nearby DeKalb High, built in 1963, which is school to over 850 students, is also in need of updating and repair and is tough to secure.

The plan the county adopts will be decided after a series of meetings on the matter.

‘A Day at the Park’ coming April 21

Free event aims to educate about child abuse prevention

The DeKalb Prevention Coalition (DPC) and DeKalb Community Advisory Board (CAB) are hosting “A Day at the Park” on April 21 from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. at Greenbrook Park in Smithville.

The day is designed to be a Child Abuse Prevention and Foster Family Recruitment Event. It is a free event for families and individuals designed to educate the community about child abuse prevention and to also provide families with information about becoming Foster Parents. Food, games and activities will be available for children and speakers and vendors will be at the park.

The CAB's mission is to identify, utilize and create resources to help families and the community as a whole. While the DPC works to promote a safe, healthy and productive environment that prevents destructive opportunities among the youth and

adults of our community. The DPC and CAB meet together the last Tuesday of each month at noon. For information on meeting location, check the DPC facebook page at [www.facebook.com/DeKalbPreventionCoalition](http://www.facebook.com/DeKalbPreventionCoalition). April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month.

This month, and throughout the year, the DeKalb Prevention Coalition and DeKalb Community Advisory Board encourage all individuals and organizations to play a role in making DeKalb County a better place for children and families. By ensuring that parents have the knowledge, skills, and resources they need to care for their children, we can help prevent child abuse and neglect by making meaningful connections with children, youth and families in our communities.

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Duane Sherrill photo

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month. As part of the observance, A Day at the Park will be held Saturday from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. at Greenwood Park. There will be food, games and activities for children at the free event.



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