



NEWS FROM EMERALD YOUTH FOUNDATION OF KNOXVILLE



Emerald Youth, City of Knoxville give home to Urban Swim program



Cutting the ribbon at the restored E.V. Davidson Recreation Center pool are City Councilman Daniel Brown; Oscar Cruz, 7; Tank Strickland of the mayor's office; Fynal Barnes, 6; senior pastor of Faith Promise Church Chris Stephens; Knoxville Parks & Recreation director Joe Walsh; TaTiona Kaiser, 6; Emerald Youth president and CEO Steve Diggs and Terrance Rooks, 10.

The Emerald Youth girls' volleyball team, "White Lightning," took the championship title in the Emerald Youth recreational league tournament Dec. 6-7. They were among 120 middle and high school girls playing on 12 teams. Members of the winning team are (front) Camryn Cox, Sierra Smith; (back) Kayla Martin, Julia Kohlman, Maggie Lewis, Jackie Kohlman, coach Anthony Anderson, Mickaela Wilson, Brittany Blankenship and Ona Rippy. Not pictured: Jwila Blair.



Emerald children enjoy Variety holiday party

Pictured are Emerald participants (front) Jonathan Smith and Britton Reyes, (back) Caden Combs, Noel Vasquez, Variety executive director Carol Fusco, Lena Foster and Keyle Bookout.

More than 300 city children from Emerald Youth recently enjoyed a festive breakfast and showing of "The Penguins of Madagascar" at Regal Cinemas in Knoxville Center Mall. Each child had a picture made with Santa and Mrs. Claus and received a gift.

The occasion was the annual holiday party hosted Dec. 6 by Variety, The Children's Charity of Eastern Tennessee, and sponsored by Regal Entertainment Group. "It is one of the children's favorite events. It is just so fun," said one EYF ministry director.

Variety of Eastern Tennessee benefits a wide range of area children who are at risk. It is part of an international organization devoted to protecting the health and well-being of children around the world.

The pool at the E.V. Davidson Recreation Center in the heart of Knoxville now has new life as the site of a vibrant swimming program for city youth.

Emerald Youth Foundation and the City of Knoxville are partnering to reopen the Carl Cowan Pool at the E.V. Davidson Recreation Center, 3124 Wilson Avenue. Emerald's Swim School and Aquatics Program now provides up to 100 children with weekly swim lessons, totaling more than 350 youth each year.

The City of Knoxville

renovated and reopened the center, formerly the Eastside YMCA, in 2005 with gymnasium, fitness room, kitchen and community rooms with free library and computers for student use. Emerald Youth, which has provided swim lessons at sites around the city for years, has never before had a pool of its own.

Its summer swim team uses the Ed Cothren Pool at Malcolm Martin Park.

Thanks to the generosity of many in the community, including Faith Promise Church, Emerald Youth has

hired Justin Baxter as its full-time swim instructor. Baxter will also coach the Emerald Youth swim team, which competes regionally during the summer months.

"This is a great facility that is ideal to teach children how to swim and how to race," said Baxter, a longtime Knoxville swim coach. He cited the spacious deck and the generous dimensions of the five-lane pool: 30 x 75 feet, with a graduated depth ranging from three to nine feet.

"Nowadays, you don't often get these features in new pools because they are expensive. You don't get the depth and the deck space," he said.

"Emerald Youth does great work with children all across Knoxville," said mayor Madeline Rogero. "We are happy to partner with them at the E.V. Davidson Center, just as we have at the Sansom Sports Complex. These programs help children develop healthy habits for long, active lives."

"We are thrilled that this wonderful pool will be home to our swim program. Teaching city children to swim safely and be proficient in water sports has been a goal at Emerald Youth for many years," said Emerald Youth president and CEO Steve Diggs.

The pool will also serve as the offseason practice location for the Emerald Youth swim team.

Terrance Rooks, a fifth grader at Sarah Moore Greene, has taken lessons through Emerald Youth for three years. He is thrilled about the pool. "I feel great that we finally have a pool that is ours. I like that I get to hang out with my friends and have fun in the water learning how to swim."

Caring adults help urban youth discover faith

As Christians around the world eagerly awaited the celebration of Jesus' birth, Knoxville's urban youth made their own preparations for the joyful holiday.

K-12 city youth are using a weekly discipleship curriculum to grow deeper in their faith. This year's curriculum is called "Follow the Leader," and is written and produced specifically for Emerald Youth

Foundation.

During the Christmas season, lessons include discussions about eagerly waiting for something, and activities like building a nativity scene.

Small groups, which pair one or two adults with a handful of youth for deeper discussion, give kids a safe place to talk. Questions arise like:

Is Jesus still involved in our lives? After all, he left.

strong role models for youth, and lower levels of engagement at church and school than among suburban kids.

If I don't believe in God, can I still come to church?

"They teach about Jesus in a fun way. I like being in small groups. I like playing basketball too," said Ticquea Ager, a 10th grader at Fulton High School.

"We learn things about God that I didn't know," said Sarah McGhee, 10, a student at Westview Elementary. "When we go into our small groups, the leaders help us to understand. We learn we can help open people up to God's hands, which can hold everybody."

The weekly gatherings are an expression of the faith component of Emerald Youth Foundation. Since its founding, EYF has incorporated August-May devotionals, and another edition is utilized during the summer months.

Several things distinguish the EYF faith ministry.

The lessons take into account the realities of urban Knoxville, such as: higher rates of poverty and single parent households, fewer

A Message from Steve Diggs, Emerald Youth President and CEO



Steve Diggs

Advent is a time when I am filled with awe.

This year, I am brought to my knees at all that God is allowing Emerald Youth Foundation to shepherd. Consider:

In partnership with the City of Knoxville, Emerald has reopened the E.V. Davidson Recreation Center pool to house our

swim school for urban children.

The 14-acre Sansom Sports Complex, now under construction, will soon be home to more than 350 city kids playing soccer. Eventually it will host other field sports like lacrosse and flag football.

Emerald Charter Schools, a nonprofit started by Emerald Youth, will launch the city's first public charter school in July 2015.

In partnership with city churches and ministries, 50 small discipleship groups will take place throughout next year.

With these amazing new developments on behalf of Knoxville's kids, wonderful things are happening.

Our stewardship of these initiatives comes with great responsibility, including financial.

I want to tell you about one Emerald supporter's generous response to this need. The longtime donor, who prefers to remain anonymous, bought some property as an investment with the intention of giving the return to Emerald Youth. But the funny thing was, "the land did not turn out to be a good

investment."

I will let our friend speak: "I felt like God was saying, 'Why are you just giving the gain? Why not give out of the principal?' I felt like he was telling me that we need to give sacrificially."

So the donor gave Emerald the entire amount from the sale of the land - \$50,000 - with the hope that others in the Knoxville area would collectively match that amount. "I decided to trust God and let him worry about maximizing the dollar. It's his to begin with," our friend said.

I hope this donor's story inspires you to consider giving to Emerald this holiday season, and I trust you'll have a blessed and peaceful Christmas season!



**Neyland Stadium =
102,455
PEOPLE**



Shopper News =

**142,000
HOMES**