



# NEWS RELEASE

KNOX COUNTY MAYOR MIKE RAGSDALE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Knox County Health Department Launches Community Health Initiative**

*Public is invited to participate in survey, discussion, focus groups*

As a community, what can we do to identify major health concerns and move toward improving health and quality of health? As an individual, what are the major health concerns in your family? Your neighborhood? Knox County Health Department is launching ***Together! Healthy Knox***. 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 name says it all. By working together as a community, we can make a bigger impact and use resources more efficiently than individuals or smaller groups could ever hope to accomplish,” said Knox County Mayor Mike Ragsdale. “As they’ve shown so many times in the past, the people of Knox County have the heart and the will to make health a reality for all community members.”

By the numbers, our health needs improvement. According to the World Health Organization, the United States, the richest, most powerful country in the world, ranks 37<sup>th</sup> in the world when it come to the health of our citizens — just behind Costa Rica. Tennessee rates 47<sup>th</sup> in the country, with Louisiana, Alabama and South Carolina rounding out the bottom ranks, according to United Health Foundations 2008 report. Within Tennessee, Knox County is among the top five healthiest counties, according to the Tennessee Institute of Public Health 2007 report, but we still face challenges. How those challenges are met locally ultimately impacts how healthy we are as a state and a nation.

“***Together! Healthy Knox*** incorporates a national strategic model developed by the National Organization of County and City Health Officials that has been very successful in other communities,” said Mark Jones, Knox County Health Department director. “The first step is to gather information and get input from the public, which will provide a baseline for moving forward.”

To get started on this path to better health for our community, the public is invited to visit [www.healthyknox.org](http://www.healthyknox.org) to take the ***Together! Healthy Knox*** survey. They also can sign up for one of several focus groups taking place around the county or participate in a discussion board.

“Citizens voices and opinions are key to helping identify the top health issues in Knox County,” said Stephanie Welch, director of Community Development and Planning for Knox County Health Department. “The surveys will be available online and even on computers in the Knox County libraries and senior centers. We’d like everyone to participate.”

In the coming months, ***Together! Healthy Knox*** will begin the second phase, forming a community partnership to look at the health priorities reflected in public feedback and using that information to develop an action plan to make a lasting and positive impact on health. Again, the public is invited to participate.

Visit [www.healthyknox.org](http://www.healthyknox.org) or call 215-5549 for more information, to provide input, and get involved in this community approach to better health.

Remember, there are three ways to participate:

1. Take the *Knox County Health & Quality of Life Survey* at [www.healthyknox.org/survey](http://www.healthyknox.org/survey)
2. Sign up to attend one of the upcoming *Health & Quality of Life Focus Groups*. Find one that fits your schedule at [www.healthyknox.org/focus\\_groups.html](http://www.healthyknox.org/focus_groups.html). Participants must pre-register by calling 215-5160 or 215-5180. Space is limited.
3. Join the discussion board at <http://www.healthyknox.blogspot.com>

Please participate. *All* our voices matter.

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