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Early voting turnout low, but up over four years ago

By Mike Steely
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About 8,000 voters have taken advantage of early voting as of Thursday and Chris Davis, Assistant Administrator of Elections, told The Focus the participation is actually an increase over the last commission election.

"We're actually up 609 voters over the same period in time four years ago," Davis said.

"Some of the local contested races may be driving a little bit of the increase, particularly in Farragut," he explained. That race has a county school board contest and a Farragut alderman election. The race for 19th District House seat has four Republican candidates and that may be adding to the increase.

Davis said that if the count continues the Election Commission is

planning for about 40,000 total voters. The August election falls between the Presidential Primary and the Presidential General Election and is traditionally a low-turnout event.

"This one does not appear as though it will be any different," he said.

The early voting precincts of Downtown West, Farragut each had more than 1,500 voters as

of Thursday. Precincts with 400 or more voters included the City-County Building, Halls, New Harvest Park, and South.

Turnout below 400 voters included Carter, Clinton Highway, Hardin Valley, and the Love Kitchen.

Early voting ended Saturday and the General Election is August 4th.

On the ballot are Primary

elections for both the Republican and Democratic federal and state offices, Knox County Commission races in the 1st, 2nd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 8th and 9th Districts, Farragut Municipal seats, Knox County Law Director, Assessor of Property, and four school board seats.

THE SOUND OF PREP FOOTBALL



PHOTO BY STEVE WILLIAMS

As local high school football teams prepare for the start of the 2016 season, sometimes the school's marching band can be heard nearby. Such was the case Thursday as the West High band ended its second full week of camp under its new band director, Rodney Brown. "I've inherited a great group of kids who have been working really hard and I couldn't be prouder of them," said Brown, who was band director at Union County High the past four years. Brown pointed out that the school's administration, headed by new principal Ashley Jessie, added "yard lines presenting a football field from the 30 to 30" in the area between the back of the school and the baseball field this year, which allowed the West band to have camp and practice on its own campus. The Focus continues high school football previews in this week's Sports section.

MPC holding meetings on Southwest County Sector Plan updates

Staff from the Knoxville-Knox County Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC) will hold two public meetings to discuss updates to the Southwest County Sector Plan.

The first meeting will be held on Monday, August 1, in the cafeteria of Northshore Elementary School, 1889 Thunderhead Rd., at 6:30 p.m. The second meeting will be held on Thursday, August 4, at West Emory Presbyterian Church, 1025 Emory Church Rd., at 6:30 p.m. The meetings will focus on proposed land use, community facilities, and transportation recommendations. After a short presentation, staff will be available at stations to answer questions and to gather input.

The Southwest County Sector has been one of the fastest growing areas of Knox County for several decades. Since the plan was last updated in 2005, more than 30,000 new residents have moved into the area. With all this growth, future needs for land use, transportation, and community facilities are being carefully considered. The feedback received from previous meetings, presentations, and an online survey have helped form the current draft.

A draft of the plan is underway, and public feedback has helped shaped it. So far, community members have asked for more sidewalks and greenways, more neighborhood parks, better zoning and development standards, and no additional commercial development in low-density neighborhoods. MPC staff encourages community members to stay engaged throughout the process to make sure their vision for the Southwest County Sector is realized.

Continued on page 4

The Buzz from Buzz July Edition

By Sally Absher
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A few weeks ago, The Focus had an opportunity to spend a few minutes chatting with Interim Superintendent Buzz Thomas. We talked about the new school year, administrative appointments, and some announced and rumored changes in Central Office staff.

Thomas plans to continue the tradition of visiting schools across the district during the first few weeks of the school year. The first day of school he will be visiting Halls High, Rocky Hill, Maynard, and South Doyle Middle. Thomas gave a shout out to Halls, saying, "I feel like Halls High School is

one of the best kept secrets - not in Halls, but in Knox County." He added, "Halls is right up there with Hardin Valley, West High School, the Stem Academy, Farragut, and Bearden, in terms of student achievement and graduation rates."

Summer is a time of both excitement and uncertainty for school administrators, as they "serve at the pleasure of the Superintendent" and can be moved at his/her will. Thomas told us that most of the administrative appointments were made by outgoing Superintendent Jim McIntyre, but that he was involved with several appointments, including principals at Farragut High School and South Doyle

Middle School.

"I felt like the faculty at Farragut wanted a change... my philosophy is you listen to teachers, and I was heavily involved in the decision at Farragut and I drove the decision at South Doyle Middle." Thomas said that more than 90% of the decisions were made by Jim McIntyre and his leadership team.

"I'm not a quick to move principals around as Jim was... My sense is the chemistry of getting the right administrator in a particular building is a very precise kind of thing. When we find success - a principal who creates a great culture, has a great team, the community loves...the last thing in the world I'm going to do is

move that principal. When I find somebody in the right seat on the bus, I'm going to leave them alone," Thomas said.

We also talked about changes in Central Office Staff. You may recall that several weeks before his official start date of July 8, the newly appointed Interim Superintendent clearly laid out his plans for the first 90 days in an open letter to the community. Two of the priorities Thomas identified concerned Central Office:

- Making our schools and central office more transparent, collaborative and customer focused. Knox County's public schools belong to you - the students, parents

Continued on page 3



PHOTO BY DAN ANDREWS

Interim Superintendent Buzz Thomas speaks at the Knox County Retired Teachers Annual Legislative luncheon last Thursday. Betty Berry, the KCRTA legislative chair, introduced the following representatives of the Tennessee Assembly who were invited guests for the July legislative meeting: Senators Richard Briggs and Becky Massey and Representatives Martin Daniels, Jason Zachary and Roger Cain.

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What to do when suspected of DUI

Okay, so you have been pulled over by a police officer, probably late at night, and probably shortly after you've left an establishment that serves alcoholic beverages. The officer has already asked



By **Jedidiah McKeenan**
attorneyknoxville@gmail.com

you do not have to tell the officer how many drinks you had (or tell him you only had 2, which is what everyone says). You do not have to answer the interrogating questions. If you are afraid that

pull you over. The officer doesn't know if you are armed or what your intentions are when you suddenly flee your vehicle, therefore it is not wise to give them the wrong idea or a reason to draw their weapon on you. The officer is likely experiencing some amount of nervousness (albeit not as much as you) when they pull you over. Don't make it worse! If the officer orders you to get out of the car and asks you to perform any number of field sobriety tests, you are not required to complete any of these tests.

Field sobriety tests are NOT the same as chemical testing which is discussed below. Field sobriety tests check for coordination and balance--acts people don't normally perform sober or drunk--can set you up for failure. You are not required by law to complete these tests and

refusal to comply cannot be held against you. While these strange exercises are called "tests" to give them the feel of authority, they are merely subjective tests which are performed to give the police officer more "proof" that you are under the influence. No matter how well you perform these "tests" they can be manipulated and used against you in a court of law and officers can arrest you even if you feel that you passed the tests because they are based on the officer's subjective opinion. Why incriminate yourself by trying to stand on one foot and touching your nose when you can barely do that stone sober? If you are charged with DUI based on failing sobriety tests, a review of the field sobriety test video will be critical to the validity of the test.

The breathalyzer is a device used by the police

to determine your blood alcohol content. Although these tests are widely used, they do not always provide correct information about one's level of intoxication. However, all states have what is called an Implied Consent Law. The government has decided that when you obtain a driver's license, it is a privilege that comes with certain implicit obligations. By obtaining a license, you (unknowingly) have agreed to submit to chemical testing of your blood, breath, or urine, at the request of a police officer. If you refuse to comply with chemical testing, such as the Breathalyzer, you will receive automatic vehicle sanctions. Usually your license will be automatically suspended for failure to comply with chemical testing. If a chemical test shows that you have a blood alcohol level of 0.08 or greater, this is enough

to prove that you are legally intoxicated and you may be arrested on criminal DUI charges.

While you must submit to chemical testing, these tests are not infallible and do not necessarily mean you will be convicted of a DUI.

In Tennessee, a DUI is a Class A misdemeanor charge with a minimum sentence for a first conviction of DUI is 48 hours in jail, but can be as much as 11 months, 29 days in jail with fines, court costs, loss of license for a year and community service assessed. A second DUI conviction carries a sentence of a minimum 45 days in jail, but can be as much as 11 months, 29 days in jail with fines, court costs, loss of license for 2 years and community service assessed. Never drive drunk, get a taxi or have a designated driver.

you might slur your words or fear your nervousness will cause your speech to stumble, you have the right to remain completely silent or cite your right to refrain from speaking. If you do not say anything, the officer can't testify later in court that you were slurring when he pulled you over. Your refusal to speak cannot be held against you.

STOP AND THINK!!! Because the Fifth Amendment protects you from self-incrimination, you have the right to refrain from answering any and all questions that the police officer asks you. This means that

Do NOT get out of your car unless the officer asks you to do so. First of all, police officers tend to get very defensive if you jump out of the car when they

ask you. This means that

PTAs contribute to their schools

By **Mike Steely**
steelym@knoxfocus.com

Among the many requests from Knox County Schools routinely approved by the County Commission are several resolutions to approve donations to the schools. Some of these go unnoticed but the contributions of local PTAs are notable.

For instance, Pond Gap is in the midst of construction as the modular classrooms are being replaced with brick and mortar classrooms. The playground there is pretty bare. The Pond Gap PTA raised and donated \$47,600 for playground equipment. The resolution came through the school system and was among three such items passed last week by the commission.

Pond Gap's Principal Shelly McGill told The Focus



PHOTO BY MIKE STEELY

Construction is underway at Pond Gap Elementary School to add brick and mortar classrooms. The school's PTA has also donated \$ 47,600 to purchase playground equipment.

that Charlie Biggs of the Bearden Rotary Club came to her to discuss building a playground the children deserve. The playground currently only has a rusty swing and basketball goals.

"Charlie and I met with the PTA President," she said, adding that after a Rotary Club meeting three club

members came forward and "We are now building an \$80,000 playground!"

The funding that includes the PTA contribution comes from the Rotary Club, Knox County Schools funds for relocating one playground, fundraising, a Read-a-Ton, a Carnival, and donations from parents and friends.

"We've learned a lot about the playground scene and even more about the power of a community rallying around a common mission," she said.

Playground equipment, mulch and a shade structure were the subject of funds approved for Amherst Elementary School from a

donation by the PTA there.

The Northshore Elementary School PTA raised \$39,200 from donations from the First Utility District, Sentinel Builders, Bryant Fence Company, Carolina Green Corporation and Concord Tile. The money goes to purchase Bermuda grass, irrigation and fencing behind

the school there.

Other donations to schools included \$150,000 from Lift Life Foundation to renovate and provide exercise equipment for Fulton High School, \$1,012,390 in a grant from Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education from the state Department of Education for the Knox County Schools Career and Technical Education Program, and a Focus School grant from the state for \$81,884 for Chilhowee Intermediate and \$59,809 for Mooreland Heights. The money supports a "gap closure" for the Title One Focus Schools.

The Commission also approved a \$10,000 grant donation from the East Tennessee Foundations in support of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library program.

"I will continue to work hard for you in Nashville. I will be honored to have your vote for re-election to the State Senate."

-Becky

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The Buzz from Buzz

Continued from page 1

and taxpayers; and

- Getting our own operations in order. The Knox County Schools has declared its intention to provide "excellence for every child," yet recent studies by outside individuals and organizations suggest that we have not held ourselves to that same standard of excellence when it comes to managing our own operations. We have experienced significant problems with transportation, public information and human resources, for example. We have asked our students and teachers to meet the highest standards of accountability. Those same standards will be applied to those of us in the central office.

What surprised some, however, was how quickly Thomas began implementing changes to address these priorities, particularly with regard to Central Office personnel. By the end of July, key staff in the transportation, public information, human resources, and curriculum and instruction departments had resigned or will be leaving KCS in the next month or two.

But given the priorities listed above, this really shouldn't be surprising. There were "significant problems with transportation, public information, and human resources." In his first month as interim Superintendent, Thomas has shown that he is serious about holding his staff accountable as much as our students and teachers.

The current BOE majority (Gloria Deathridge, Tracie Sanger, Doug Harris, Lynn Fugate, and Karen Carson) frequently compared former superintendent Dr. Jim McIntyre to a football coach. When a new coach comes to town, he brings in his own coaching team. Butch Jones didn't keep Derek Dooley's staff, and Dooley didn't keep Lane Kiffin's staff.

Thomas was a bit surprised to hear that not everyone supports his efforts to clean house, particularly some current and former teachers, who decried the lack of transparency and "due process." Thomas said, "The last thing I want is for teachers to be nervous. They need to know that we've got their back, and we are listening to them."

Perhaps Thomas felt some members of McIntyre's executive team just don't "fit the vision" of Knox County Schools' new leadership - something many non-renewed teachers were told over the past several years.

It's School Time in Tennessee! A hearty "Welcome back" to all of Knox County's wonderful teachers and school administrators as you return to school this week! We wish you the very best for the 2016-2017 school year! Check The Focus often for news and updates you may not find in the other newspaper in town!



By Sally Absher
sallyabsher@knoxfocus.com

Back to School Bash - August 8, 2016

Knox County Mayor Tim Burchett will host the 5th annual "Back to School Bash" next Monday, August 8 at the Knoxville Expo Center, 5441 Clinton Highway.

The event is scheduled from 3-6 p.m., and will provide area families with free school supplies and health screenings. There will be activities, games, free food, and special programs. The event is free and open to the public.

KCS 6th and 9th Grade Orientations August 5

This Friday, August 5, from 8:30 a.m. until noon, KCS will hold student orientations for rising sixth and ninth graders to help transition those students into middle and high school. Orientations will be held at all middle and high schools where the students are based. Bus service will be provided. Please note that the Career Magnet Academy at Pellissippi State will hold its

9th grade orientation from 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. (bus service provided).

During orientation, transitioning students will have the opportunity to become acclimated to their new school environment, meet friends and review schedules and other information while being in a small-group setting prior to the return of the entire student body.

Students officially return to the Knox County Schools on Monday, Aug. 8, which is a half-day session for students.

Beaumont Magnet Academy Announces the First Elementary Theater Program

Windy Clayton, principal at Beaumont Magnet Academy is proud to announce that for the 2016-2017 school year, students will participate in the first elementary theater program in the Knox County Schools. Beaumont Magnet Academy is a magnet school that offers students across the county an opportunity to participate in a unique fine and performing arts program along with the standard KCS curriculums. The new theater program comes as an addition to an instrumental music class and dance class. Students in grades kindergarten through fifth grade will rotate weekly through each of the performing arts classes.

The vision for the theater program is multi-faceted. It will include student exposure to plays and musicals, performances at three Exhibit Nights during the school year, and ideally, a musical production as the culmination of the school year. Students will also be instructed in vocal music as it relates to the theatre. Theatre and vocal music will connect to social studies and literature standards taught in the regular education classrooms, helping students make connections between content areas and to the world around them.

The Beaumont staff is thrilled to open this opportunity to students in Knox County and look forward to seeing all benefits that will develop from the introduction of the theater program.

Back to School at Emerald Academy

While most Knox County students are enjoying their last two weeks of summer vacation, Emerald Academy, Knoxville's first and only public charter school, kicked off the 2016-2017 school year on July 27, as approximately 250 kindergarten, first, second, and sixth grade students headed back to school.

The school will eventually house more than 500 students - known as "scholars" - from kindergarten through eighth grade.

"From the time we began the application process for the school, our goal was always to get to middle school as quickly as possible to help close

academic gaps for children in the city," said Emerald Charter Schools board president Steve Diggs. "We had a very successful first year at Emerald Academy, and we are particularly excited to expand that growth to sixth grade scholars.

Emerald Academy is a tuition-free, publically funded but independently operated K-8 college preparatory school launched by Emerald Charter Schools and Emerald Youth Foundation. The school is located in Mechanicsville at the historic Moses School Building.

Hardin Valley Elementary First Day Tradition

Hardin Valley Elementary principal Dr. Sunny Poe reports that the annual Hardin Valley Elementary tradition for the first day of school will take place this year on Tuesday, August 9, at 9:30 a.m. (August 9 is the first FULL day of school for KCS students).

The entire student body gathers in the front parking lot to watch the ringing of the original school bell from the old Hardin Valley School. A group of 5th graders are selected to assist with pulling the rope for the bell ringing, which signifies the start of the new school year.

See C2 this week for Knox County Schools' 2016-2017 Calendar!



Richard "Bud" Armstrong
Candidate for
County Law Director



John Whitehead
Candidate for
Assessor of Property

The Knox County Republican Party encourages you to vote for these Republican candidates. Election Day is August 4.

Candidates for County Commission



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District 1 Candidate



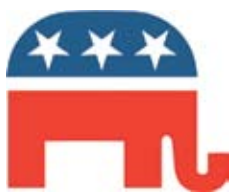
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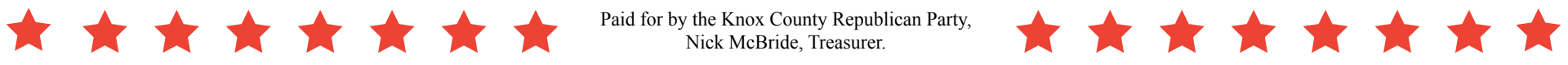
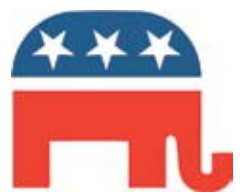
Brad Anders
District 6 Candidate



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Carson Dailey
District 9 Candidate



County Commission

School grants questioned, lower fire rates, military leave

By Mike Steely
steelym@knoxfocus.com

Routinely approving expenditures and grants to the school system brought a request last week from one commissioner during the regular meeting of the Knox County Commission.

Commissioner Charles Busler said that in the past a \$600,000 grant was approved and resulted in the hiring of six additional county employees. Busler said the new employees put the county liable for their insurance. He asked that any grant the commission authorizes in the future for the system include information on if it involves hiring new people with the funds.

The brief commission meeting also heard Rural Metro Chief Jerry Harnish report the county's fire rating has been improved thanks to things like the new fire station in Choto and an improved communications system.

Chief Harnish said his company is working in partnership with the County Fire Bureau.

Commissioner John Schoonmaker encouraged county residents to contact their insurance companies about new savings the new fire rating might bring. He said one Northshore resident did so and found they are saving \$400 each year over the past rate. On a

personal note Schoonmaker said he contacted his insurance company after he renewed his coverage in June and found out he has to wait another 11 months to see the new savings.

Clerk of Courts Mike Hammond presented the commission with another check from his office, for \$100,000, and said that over the past two years he has collected more than \$2 million in new revenue.

Travis Gardner, Director of the 2016 Smoky Mountain Air Show, and Jennifer Giffin, Assistant Manager of the Metro Airport Authority, presented the county with an illustration of the Blue Angels who performed during the April show, including the jet of Captain Jeff Kuss who was later killed when his plane crashed during the Smyrna air show.

Gardner announced that the Smoky Mountain Air Show has donated \$350,000 to Honor Air and has also given \$25,000 to the family of Captain Kuss.

After some discussion four people were named to the Industrial Development Board. They are Greg McWhorter, Julie Wheeler, Rick Gentry and Dr. Anthony Wise.

The commission also finalized a change in county regulations expanding the number of days allowed for



PHOTO BY MIKE STEELY

Knox County Mayor Tim Burchett looks on as Travis Gardner and Jennifer Giffin present an illustration of the Blue Angels to the county. Gardner also announced that the Smoky Mountain Air Show presented \$ 300,000 to Honor Air and \$ 25,000 to the family of the pilot killed in a plane crash at the Smyrna air show.

military leave for county employees from 20 to 30 days.

Commission Chairman Dave Wright announced that winners of the August 4th Commission Election will be sworn in September 1st, which means that the commission's August meeting on August 22st will be the final session of the current members. Commissioner Busler, who will not be present for that meeting and whose term doesn't expire this year, told the four departing members it was "a pleasure" to work with them. Commissioners Sam

McKenzie, Amy Broyles, Jeff Ownby and Mike Brown are not on the August 4th ballot.

Wright also announced that the county's Financial Report received a certificate of excellence for the 20th straight year and applauded Finance Director Chris Caldwell and his staff for their work.

City Council

Neighbors oppose car lot on Parkside

By Mike Steely
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A rezoning of three acres along Parkside Drive may see continued objection as the matter comes before the Knoxville City Council Tuesday evening.

Samuel J. Furrow, owner of Land Rover of Knoxville, wants to use an empty lot across Parkside Drive from his dealership to park vehicles for sale. He's asking the City Council to approve a change from Commercial and Office to C-6, General Commercial Park. Residents in the Cogdill Road neighborhood, just behind the proposed lot, have opposed the idea.

The rezoning request passed the planning commission on a 9-5 vote and changing the sector plan there to allow the zoning was even closer when the MPC voted 8-6 to approve.

Neighborhood opposition at the MPC meeting may continue during the council meeting with Sam McGhee, Dr. Kim Quigley and others appearing to speak.

The 3.1-acre open tract stretches from Parkside

Drive down along Cogdill Drive. The area is one of the "finger annexations" the city took in years ago. The MPC's approval did restrict usage of the lot, require a buffer between it and the neighborhood and authorize indirect lighting on the car lot.

In other business the council may authorize a \$1,000 donation from Community Improvement funds for the East Tennessee Design Center on behalf of Lake Forest Neighborhood Association for an entrance sign to Hastie Natural Area.

They will also hear a proposal to move the city primary elections from the last Tuesday in September to the last Tuesday in August in odd-numbered years, talk about updating the city's pension within the city charter, approve an agreement with UT's College of Social Work to provide support for the Office of Homelessness and increase a contract amount with Renascent Inc. involving the Lake-shore Park Demolition Project by \$33,225.

MPC holding meetings

Cont. from page 1

Current draft recommendations include:

- Mixed use development along Kingston Pike, Parkside Drive, and S. Peters Road to accommodate the projected future growth that is likely to occur
- Development of a Planned Office Zone
- Inclusion of a landscape ordinance
- Improved off-street parking standards
- Tools to allow for clustered residential

subdivisions

- Extension of Ten Mile Creek Greenway
- Making Dunn Park into a neighborhood park
- Improving sidewalks around schools
- Widening both Canton Hollow Road and Concord Road

The current draft of the Southwest County Sector Plan, additional documents, maps and an online survey are available online at <http://knoxmpc.org/southwestcounty/>.



For information about 2016 Pink Ribbon Celebration or to donate please contact Jillian or Donna at 865-545-3805.

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Things we want you to know: New Shared Connect Plan and Retail Installment Contract required. Device Protection+, Smartphone turn-in and credit approval also required. A \$25 Device Activation Fee applies. A Regulatory Cost Recovery Fee (currently \$1.82/line/month) applies; this is not a tax or gvmr. required charge. Additional fees (including Device Connection Charges), taxes, terms, conditions and coverage areas apply and may vary by plan, service and phone. Offers valid at participating locations only and cannot be combined. See store or uscellular.com for details. **50% Off Smartphones Promo:** 50%-off rebate on select Smartphone devices. Rebate shall be equal to either 50% of device price before taxes or \$396, whichever is lower. Rebate fulfilled in the form of a U.S. Cellular® Promotional Card issued by MetaBank® Member FDIC, pursuant to a license from Visa U.S.A. Inc. Valid only for purchases at U.S. Cellular stores and uscellular.com. Allow 8-10 weeks for processing after final submission. **Turned-in Smartphone** must be in fully functional, working condition without any liquid damage or broken components, including, but not limited to, a cracked housing. Smartphone must power on and cannot be pin locked. Cracked screens allowed. **Device Protection+:** Enrollment in Device Protection+ required. The monthly charge for Device Protection+ is \$8.99 for Smartphones. A deductible per approved claim applies. You may cancel Device Protection+ anytime. Insurance underwritten by American Bankers Insurance Company of Florida. Service Contract Obligor is Federal Warranty Service Corporation, except in CA (Sureway, Inc.) and OK (Assurant Service Protection, Inc.). Limitations and exclusions apply. For complete details, see an associate for a Device Protection+ brochure. **Kansas Customers:** In areas in which U.S. Cellular receives support from the Federal Universal Service Fund, all reasonable requests for service must be met. Unresolved questions concerning services availability can be directed to the Kansas Corporation Commission Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Protection at 1-800-662-0027. Limited-time offer. Trademarks and trade names are the property of their respective owners. ©2016 U.S. Cellular