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CITY OF KNOXVILLE

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City of Knoxville, Tennessee
Madeline Rogero, Mayor

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

City Presents Plaques at Ridley/Helton Field

January 28, 2008 - Mayor Haslam honored three of the most important figures in Knoxville's baseball history in a special ceremony at Ridley/Helton Field on Monday, January 28.

Plaques commemorating the contributions made to baseball in Knoxville by Neal Ridley, Todd Helton and Bill Meyer, were presented in the special ceremony.

Mayor Bill Haslam, Todd Helton, the Colorado Rockies first baseman and former University of Tennessee baseball star, and UT Broadcaster Bob Kesling spoke at the event.

Players from the Central High School Bobcats practiced on the Ridley/Helton ballfield which is at the location of the old Bill Meyer Stadium which was around from 1955 until 2001 and was preceded by Smithson Stadium and Caswell Park, which was around in 1921. The current site is now part of Caswell Park and it is the scene of high school and amateur games.

A few interesting facts about those honored are as follows:

Todd Helton - a former Central High School athlete, UT quarterback and the best baseball player to come out of Knoxville - made a significant financial contribution to renovating the current field, which is used by youth and recreational league players, after Bill Meyer Stadium was demolished in 2001. In Major League Baseball he has won three golden gloves, four silver slugger awards and so far is a five-time National League All-Star.

Neal Ridley - a local businessman who made considerable investments of time and money to keep minor league baseball alive in Knoxville. He partnered with some others including John Duncan Sr., to bring professional baseball back to this city in 1956. He owned the city's professional team, off and on, from 1956 until 1980. He and his wife, Bonnie, sold concessions, washed uniforms and sold tickets. They did whatever it took to make it work.

Bill Meyer - a Knoxville native who played for the A's (In Kansas City) and the White Sox and then managed the Pittsburgh Pirates. The baseball home of what was then the Knoxville Smokies was named after him in 1955. Some of the greatest players in the game played on this field, which was the home of the Knoxville Smokies, the Knoxville Sox, or the K-Sox, the Knoxville Jays and finally, fittingly and forever, the Knoxville Smokies again.



Mayor Haslam, Todd Helton and Helton's daughter Tierny reveal one of the two plaques presented in the ceremony at Ridley/Helton field



Mayor Haslam and Todd Helton pose with the Central High School Baseball Team - [click photo for a larger view](#)



Mayor Haslam shares a laugh with Todd Helton and his daughter Tierny

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