

McKeynolds said, "Dis-
covery Dash is both a foot and
wheelchair race open to chil-
dren 12 and younger.

Following the race, partici-
pants received a medal and there
was a trophy ceremony before
the birthday celebration began.

The museum offered all of its
regular activities, but it added
a bounce house, archery, mini
classes on martial arts and sta-
tions for kids to get pizza and
cake.

olds said, "and that is complete-
ly hands on."

For Melissa Kempsmith, who
spends Saturday mornings with
her 3-year-old grandson, the
hands-on aspect of the museum
appeals to them.

"He really likes to build
things, he's very inventive about
putting things together," Kemp-
smith said. "We also really en-
joyed the wet room."

They were drawn to the mu-
seum after hearing about the

event and Kempsmith said they
should come more often than
they do.

"Originally we started going
when they were at Washington
Square Mall," she said. "We
kind of came with them to here"
at the Downtown Evansville lo-
cation on Fifth Street.

Kempsmith said there isn't
anything in Evansville that

offers the same type of experi-
ence cMoe does.

"I think anything Evansville
can and does do that is multigen-
erational is very important for
the city's growth and for provid-
ing opportunities to everybody
among all age groups," she said.
"I think it's really important for
the Downtown area to have this
and more things like it."

County rolls filled with 'tenants'

Occupants may not know tax status of home

By Jessie Higgins
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Scattered throughout
the city are hundreds of
unkept, blighted proper-
ties with one thing in com-
mon: they are owned by
the Vanderburgh County
Board of Commissioners.

Each year, the county
takes title to hundreds of
tax-delinquent proper-
ties and auctions them to
recoup the lost revenue,
and get the properties in
the hands of people who
will pay their taxes. The
county holds the titles to
the properties for several
months before the auction
without ever visiting them.

"We're taking these
(properties) by law, we
really don't even want the
properties," said Vander-
burgh County Commis-
sioner Joe Kiefer. "Unless
there's a funding mecha-
nism to hire somebody to
go out and inspect every
property, which we don't



ONLINE EXTRAS

VIDEO: Watch
as reporters find
people squatting
in county-owned
homes.

WHO OWNS THAT?

discovered wild, unkept
yards or lots strewn with
trash, dilapidated struc-
tures, and squatters.

At 1100 Adams Ave., a
man burst out of the coun-
ty-owned home after the
reporters knocked. With
a pit bull barking loudly
from inside the house, the
man claimed at first to be
the owner.
"Actually," he added,
"let's just say I'm the prop-
erty manager."

TAX EXEMPT?

At 1728 Riverside Drive,
a man lived in a county-
owned home with no wa-
ter or electricity. The man,
who was mostly incoher-
ent when reporters tried to
talk with him, eventually
claimed the house was tax-
exempt.

And at 707 North Fifth
Ave., Ronald Kisner had
no idea the commission-
ers took title to the house
he has lived in since his fa-
ther died. He gave report-
ers a tour of the seriously

blighted house — with its
sloped floor, rotting walls
and leaky roof — in an
attempt to sell it to them
before learning the county
owned it.

He had never paid taxes.
Is the county concerned
with the liability of people
living in these structures?
"We do have appropri-
ate insurance," Kiefer said.

At the auction, the coun-
ty does warn potential bid-
ders that people may live
in the structures they are
selling.

In some cases, they are
not former owners, but
renters whose landlords
lost the building.

That is the case at 1018
S. Bedford Ave., and also
at 417 Bellemeade Ave.,
where Shanice Barnes
lives with her husband and
one-year-old child.

Barnes said she and her
husband had a rent-to-own
contract with the former
owner for the last year
and had paid her roughly
\$10,000 thinking they

were buying the home. She
didn't learn the owner had
stopped paying the taxes
until it was too late.

"We, personally, nev-
er got any papers about
taxes," Barnes said. "It's
just stressful. I wrote the
commissioners to see what
they could do about it, they
said it would be on the auc-
tion list on the 27th."

County Attorney Joe
Harrison Jr. confirmed
last week that the county
would hold its "buyer be-
ware" auction on Oct. 27.

Several city officials
had hoped the county
would cancel its auction
this year and instead hand
the most blighted proper-
ties to the city-run non-
profit Brownfields Corp.,
which would demolish
and care for the proper-
ties, acting as a land bank
until appropriate owners
could be identified.

Several of the homes the
Courier & Press visited
last week had been sold by
the county at auction two
to three times.

"It's been that way for
100 years," Harrison said.

word. So, Bass said, even if
a fraudster steals card data
and creates a fake card, the
chip and its unique tokeni-
zation can't be reproduced.
Without that extra data,
the transaction won't be
approved.

But, Bass and other say,
the shift to a chip-card
system won't happen all
at once, and it's not the ul-
timate fix for fraud.

"This is a step in im-
proving card security.
This will not be the last
step for the industry," said
Clay Barrett, vice presi-
dent of digital banking
and electronic payments at
German American Bank.

New cards will include
both chip technology and
magnetic stripes, Barrett
said. Having both chip and
stripe allows the cards to
be read in either the old or
the new style card readers
as merchants make the
transition.

"This is going to take
a while to migrate away
from the magnetic stripe."

Barrett said German
American has already
started rolling out chip
cards to its credit-card
customers. But it has not
started issuing chipped
debit cards. The bank still
is testing to make sure the
cards work properly.

October 1 is the industry
deadline by which retail-
ers are supposed to have
their chip-enabled card
readers in place. Begin-
ning on that date, retailers
without the new chip-card
readers could be held lia-
ble for fraudulent card use.
Right now, that liability is
borne by the card issuer.

Some local merchants