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# Knoxville NEWS SENTINEL

TUESDAY, MARCH 10, 2026 | KNOXNEWS.COM

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## APPALACHIAN BEAR RESCUE



Executive director Greg Grieco shows off the entrance to the new \$325,000 bear enclosure at the Appalachian Bear Rescue in Townsend. CAITIE MCKEIN/NEWS SENTINEL

# Bear rescuers aiming to help cubs again

### Rehab center must first meet state's stricter mandates

Allison Kiehl | Knoxville News Sentinel | USA TODAY NETWORK – TENNESSEE

It's been nearly a year since Appalachian Bear Rescue housed any bears. But that might change soon. • The Townsend bear rehabilitation center could receive orphaned bear cubs from the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency as soon as late March, according to ABR's Executive Director Greg Grieco. First, however, the nonprofit must meet the state's demanding expectations. • "We're going to hopefully receive spring cubs in some capacity," Grieco said. • TWRA is requiring ABR to designate more land for every rescued bear and to undergo an in-depth soil sample test to ensure that the facility is fit to house bears, among other stipulations.

The nonprofit is undergoing construction and operation changes to accommodate the state's mandates, as defined in the July 2025 contract between ABR and the state government agency. The nonprofit has built a new bear enclosure, renovated its existing habitats and upgraded the water infrastructure so far, according to Grieco.

"We've been working our tails off to meet and exceed every recommendation we've been given," Grieco said. "We're trying to address long-term maintenance concerns."

Appalachian Bear Rescue has not

See BEARS, Page 7A

"We've been working our tails off to meet and exceed every recommendation we've been given."

Appalachian Bear Rescue Executive Director Greg Grieco

# Plowman focusing on six-year grad rate

### Chancellor says metric is key to UT's success

Keenan Thomas  
Knoxville News Sentinel  
USA TODAY NETWORK – TENNESSEE

Along with building out research space in planned innovation districts, Chancellor Donde Plowman is setting her sights on one metric as "the key" to improving the University of Tennessee at Knoxville's student experience and national rankings positions through 2030.

She's focusing on the six-year graduation rate, a figure encapsulating the number of students who finish their degrees even if it takes a little longer.

Since she started as UT chancellor in 2019, the rate has remained stagnant in the mid-70% range with a marginal increase as of 2025.

By contrast, she's led UT in raising the retention rate to a historic 92.4%

See UT, Page 7A

## TOP WORKPLACES

# Nominations are days away from closing

Ryan Wilusz  
Knoxville News Sentinel  
USA TODAY NETWORK – TENNESSEE

This is the second and final reminder about your second and final chance: The extended Top Workplaces deadline is almost here.

Don't miss the opportunity to nominate East Tennessee employers for the outstanding work they do.

You have until March 13 to complete the nomination process, and it's an easy one. Just visit [knoxnews.com/twnominate](http://knoxnews.com/twnominate) and follow the onscreen instructions or call 865-407-5068.

This will be Knox News' 10th iteration

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