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Monday, July 14, 2025**Page 1****Athens, Tennessee**

Southeast Tennessee Drug Bust Includes Locals

A series of investigations by the 10th Judicial District Drug Task Force and others beginning in early 2024 has come to an end recently with Federal indictments being obtained on fourteen individuals.

The investigation began in the 10th Judicial District and led to indictments and arrests in areas across the Southeast that include Athens, Etowah, Sweetwater, Chattanooga, Atlanta, and even into Mexico. During these investigations approximately 22 pounds of Methamphetamine, 13,900 Fentanyl pills, 136 grams of Fentanyl powder, 56 firearms, 4 vehicles, and \$60,453 in US currency was seized.

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The 14 individuals below were all indicted in the Eastern District Federal Court of Tennessee for various charges relating to methamphetamine, fentanyl, and firearms. Arrested in Indictments:

Trevor Hawkins - Athens TN, Gerard Birk - Athens TN, Marc Blair - Sweetwater TN, Saralyn Miller - Athens TN, Jason Lemke - Athens TN, Corey Peters - Chattanooga TN, Trevor Heater - Etowah TN, Tinzelle Buchanan - Chattanooga TN, Jimmy Pike - Etowah TN, Ashley Roderick - Athens TN, Stephen Wattenbarger - Etowah TN and Daniel Buis - Athens TN.

Indictments remain outstanding on one suspect from Atlanta Georgia and one suspect from Mexico. Those names are being withheld until arrests are made. This case shows what can happen when local, state, and federal agencies work together for a common goal," says DTF Director Bill Cherry. Director Cherry wished to mention and thank the following agencies who cooperated in the investigation and subsequent operations: 10th Judicial District Drug Task Force, US Drug Enforcement Agency, US Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, US Marshal Service, Tennessee Bureau of Investigations, Athens Police Department, McMinn County Sheriff's Department, Monroe County Sheriff's Department, Sweetwater Police Department, Cleveland Police Department, Bradley County Sheriff's Department. Those arrested are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

Source: DTF Director Bill Cherry and Sheriff Joe Guy



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Monday, July 14, 2025

Morning Fax®...Today's News This Morning Page 2

Athens, Tennessee

Athens Street Closures this Week

The City of Athens Public Works Department announces the following street closures:

Crestway Dr. from *Madison Ave.*, *Hillendale Dr.*, and the **eastbound lane of Madison Ave.** from *Old Madison Ave.* to *Sage St.* Crestway Drive will be closed to thru traffic. Flaggers will be in place on Madison Avenue. These closings will be from **Wednesday, July 16** at 7:00 a.m. until **Friday, July 18** at 4:00 p.m. The purpose of this closure is for storm-water drainage repairs.

Jackson St. from *Green St.* to *Washington Ave.* and **Madison Ave.** from *White St.* to *Green St.* These closures will be on Saturday, July 19 from 4:00 p.m. until 9:00 p.m. The purpose of this closing is for the Athens Travelers Car Club Cruise-In event.

Drivers should exercise caution, watch for work crews and detours, as well as give themselves additional time for traffic delays when traveling in this area. For more information, please contact the Office of the Public Works Department at 423-744-2745.

Starr Regional's Sandy Haynie named 2025 Mercy Award Winner



Starr Regional Medical Center has recognized **Sandy Haynie** as its **2025 Mercy Award** winner, honoring her outstanding compassion, service, and dedication to the hospital's mission of improving community health.

The **Mercy Award** is the highest honor given by **Lifepoint Health**, celebrating one employee from each facility who best embodies the values and spirit of the company's late founder, **Scott Mercy**. Haynie is now a **semifinalist for Lifepoint's companywide Mercy Award**, which will be announced in **August** during a ceremony in **Nashville**.

Haynie recently celebrated **45 years of service** at Starr Regional. She began her career in the **Emergency Department** as a registration clerk and later served in roles including business office staff, director of accounting, and controller before becoming **assistant chief financial officer**. Her actions regularly go beyond her job description—from helping patients navigate the facility to encouraging employees across departments—demonstrating a deep culture of care and compassion. Her long-standing commitment to excellence and community support make her a standout among this year's honorees.

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Monday, July 14, 2025

Page 3

Athens, Tennessee

City Council to Discuss Park Upgrades, Public Safety, and Downtown Planning



The Athens City Council will convene for its regular meeting on **Tuesday, July 15 at 6 p.m.** in the Burkett L. Witt Council Chambers.

The meeting will include a **special recognition for the late Randy Sliger**, who will be honored posthumously with the VIVID Award for his service to the community.

Several key items on the agenda include:

- Land and engineering approvals** to support infrastructure projects like stormwater upgrades and the View Street extension.
- Major investments in public facilities**, including new police and public works vehicles, and IT system updates.
- Downtown revitalization planning**, with consultants preparing new schematic designs and a pattern book to guide future growth.
- Parks improvements**, including plans to turf five infields and renovate a house at Regional Park for office space.
- Public safety initiatives**, such as a grant for the School Resource Officer program and updates to fire and building codes.

Additional business includes sidewalk planning on Hammerhill Road, new benches and banners for local parks, and the reappointment of Sam Stephens to the city planning commission.

City officials will also present departmental reports and updates on ongoing projects, with time set aside for public comment.

The meeting is open to the public.



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Monday, July 14, 2025

Morning Fax®...Today's News This Morning Page 4

Athens, Tennessee

Sales Tax Holiday Coming Up Soon

Tennessee shoppers will have the chance to save on back-to-school essentials during the state's annual sales tax holiday, which begins at **12:01 a.m. on Friday, July 25, and ends at 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, July 27, 2025.** The tax-free weekend allows consumers to purchase **clothing, school supplies, and computers** without paying state or local sales tax — with some restrictions. The holiday is aimed at helping families prepare for the upcoming school year while saving money on essential items. Purchases made **online** also qualify, provided they are for **personal use** and not for business or resale. What's Covered? **Clothing:** Tax-exempt items include general apparel priced at **\$100 or less per item**, such as shirts, pants, socks, shoes, and dresses. However, luxury or specialty items like **jewelry, handbags, and sports equipment** are not eligible. Items that are normally sold together, like shoe pairs, must be under the \$100 threshold in total to qualify. **School Supplies:** Common school and art supplies such as **binders, backpacks, crayons, pens, paper, and paintbrushes** are tax-free if priced at **\$100 or less per item**. The exemption does not apply to supplies exceeding this amount or bundled items that surpass the limit. **Computers:** Personal-use **desktop, laptop, and tablet computers** priced at **\$1,500 or less** are included in the holiday. However, **computer accessories** like flash drives, printers, software, and printer ink do not qualify. Tennessee's tax-free weekend occurs annually before the start of the school year. Shoppers are encouraged to check receipts, shop early, and review full guidelines at <https://www.tn.gov/revenue> for complete details and eligibility information.

Obituaries

Chucky Charles Hammontree, 73 of Greenback, passed away on Friday, July 11. Chucky had a passion for the outdoors and loved to hunt and fish. The family will receive friends Friday, July 18 from 5 p.m. - 7 p.m. at Niles Ferry Baptist Church, (6895 US 411 S, Greenback, TN) with a service to follow at 7 p.m. Good Samaritan Funeral Home of Athens is in charge of arrangements.

Scott M. Burris of Madisonville passed away on Wednesday, July 9. Good Samaritan Funeral Home of Athens is in charge of arrangements.

Gene Kitchens, 71 of Riceville, passed away on Friday, July 11. There are no formal services scheduled. Good Samaritan Funeral Home of Athens is in charge of arrangements.



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