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# The Morning Fax®

## Today's News. This Morning.

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Thursday, February 05, 2026

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Athens, Tennessee

## Knight Confirmed as McMinn County Director of Schools



The McMinn County Board of Education has officially appointed Mela-sawn Knight as the new Director of Schools, voting unanimously to confirm her during a called meeting earlier this week.

Board members present voted 9-0 to name Knight to the position, ending her tenure as interim director and making her the permanent leader of the county school system.

Knight was first named interim Director of Schools following the passing of former Director Julie Goodin. At the time, Knight served as the system's Federal Programs Supervisor. The board later formalized that appointment in November, approving a contract that allowed Knight to serve as interim director through June 1, 2026 at the same salary Goodin had received. That vote was also unanimous. During earlier discussions, board members were

tasked with outlining a process to hire a permanent director, and it was publicly acknowledged that Knight would be a candidate. Timing became a key issue, as 2026 is an election year with half of the school board seats on the ballot. Board Chairman Jonathan Pierce noted that state law prohibits the hiring of a director within 45 days before or after an election, meaning a decision would need to be made well ahead of the August 2026 election if the current board were to act.

Support for Knight was evident during those earlier meetings, when multiple school system employees stood to verbally endorse her. The process concluded this week with the board's unanimous confirmation. Following the vote, Board Chairman Jonathan Pierce and Knight signed her contract, officially marking the transition. Knight now assumes full responsibilities as Director of Schools, leading the McMinn County school system forward on a permanent basis. *Photo courtesy of McMinn Co. Schools / Kim Bivens*



is accepting nominations for  
**Febb Burn**  
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Deadline: March 20

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P.O. Box 669, Niota or by email to:

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**Living Heritage Museum**



Upcoming February Events

**HERITAGE SCHOOL:**

**COOKING CHICKEN AND SAUSAGE GUMBO**

**WITH PAM & WARREN SEHER**

**SATURDAY, FEB 28<sup>TH</sup> @ 11:00 AM \$5 OR FREE WITH MEMBERSHIP**

**HISTORY FOR LUNCH:**

**THE HISTORY OF LITTLE DEBBIE WITH NATHAN MCKEE**

**THURSDAY, FEB 12<sup>TH</sup> @ NOON \*FREE ADMISSION\***

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**NEW HERITAGE TABLE:**  
**JAPANESE "SHABU SHABU" HOT POT DINNER**  
**SATURDAY, FEB 21<sup>ST</sup> @ 5:00 PM**  
**\$30 PER PERSON**  
**REGISTRATION DEADLINE - FEB 13**

**Museum Hours:**  
Tuesday - Friday: 10 AM - 5 PM  
Saturday: 10 AM - 1 PM  
Sunday - Monday: Closed

**Admission:**  
Adults: \$5.00  
Senior 60+: \$3.00  
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**More Information**

522 W Madison Ave.

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TUESDAY, MAY 5<sup>th</sup>, 2026

for **MCMINN COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT CLERK**



Thursday, Feb. 05, 2026

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

Athens, Tennessee

## One Injured in I-75 Crash Near Niota Exit



A single-vehicle crash Tuesday night sent one man to the hospital after a van left the roadway on Interstate 75 near Niota.

The accident occurred around 8 p.m. when a Mercedes van traveling northbound on I-75 ran off the right-hand shoulder just before the Niota exit. The driver, a 29-year-old male from Houston, Texas, was the sole occupant of the vehicle.

He was treated at the scene and transported by AMR ambulance to Sweetwater Emergency Room. His condition was not immediately released.

Niota Fire Department responded to the scene, with Christian Willis serving as incident commander. Additional assistance was provided by Athens Rural Fire Department, Clearwater Fire Department, and AMR. The Tennessee Highway Patrol is investigating the crash. Trooper DJ Taylor is leading the investigation.

*Photo courtesy of David Prater, Niota FD*

## Community News You Can Use

- The Athens City Schools Board of Education will meet on Monday, February 9 at 5:30pm at the ACS Administration Building. The draft agenda and packet for that meeting can be viewed online on the [Athens City Schools website](#).
- **Athens Area Council for the Arts (AACA) is pleased to announce its Annual Arts Gala on Saturday, March 7 from 6:30 to 11:00 PM, at The Arts Center.** Tickets are \$75 per person and patrons may purchase a seat, a group of seats, or an entire table. Tickets are available now, and advanced reservations are required. Proceeds from the silent and live auctions support arts and cultural programming for Athens, McMinn County, and the region. Seat and table reservations are available at The Arts Center, 320 North White Street in Athens, online at [athensartscouncil.org](http://athensartscouncil.org), or by phone at (423)745-8781.

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**Starr Regional Medical Center Recognizes Nurses for Clinical Ladder Achievement**



Starr Regional Medical Center announced recently the recognition of members of its nursing staff who have successfully completed the hospital's Clinical Ladder Program, an initiative designed to promote professional development while recognizing advanced clinical expertise and excellence in patient care.

The Clinical Ladder Program provides registered nurses with opportunities to expand their knowledge, enhance leadership skills, and advance their practice through education, evidence-based projects, and demonstrated clinical competency.

Nurses who completed the program were honored during a reception in recognition of their accomplishments. Those recognized include:

- Tracy Clark, RN, Cardiac Cath Lab
- Addie Cooley, RN, Labor & Delivery
- Courtney Deitrich, RN, Nursing Supervisor
- Jennifer Moates, RN, BSN, RNC-MNN, Nursery
- Jessica McCarter, RN, RNC-MNN, Nursery
- April Elkins, RN, RNC-OB, Labor & Delivery
- Macy Watson, RN, BSN, Labor & Delivery

*Pictured (left to right) are April Elkins, RN, RNC-OB, Labor & Delivery; Addie Cooley, RN, Labor & Delivery; Macy Watson, RN, BSN, Labor & Delivery; Jennifer Moates, RN, BSN, RNC-MNN, Nursery; and Jessica McCarter, RN, RNC-MNN, Nursery.*


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Thursday, Feb. 05, 2026

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Athens, Tennessee

## McMinn County Arrest Reports

### February 03, 2026

**Alexander Crawford**, 31 of Etowah, charged with failure to appear for driving on a revoked license.

**Elvis Perez**, 28 of Cleveland, charged with failure to appear for two counts of DUI.

**Nathan Hughes**, 45 of Niota, charged with simple possession of schedule II fentanyl.

**Michael Roberts**, 60 of Athens, charged with violation of probation for theft, Bond \$838.05.

**Joseph Burns**, 23 of Athens, charged with state violation of probation for theft, Bond \$1,000.

**Those accused are considered innocent until proven guilty in a court of law. Information gathered from Public Sources.**

## Obituaries

**Rev. James W. Parris**, 83, passed away on Wednesday, February 4 surrounded by his family in Greenwood, South Carolina. Survivors and funeral arrangements to be announced by M.D. Dotson and Sons Funeral Home - Cleveland, TN.

**Janet Davis (née Puryear)**, 86 of Thornton, Colorado, passed away on Monday, February 2. No services will be held at this time. Companion Funeral Home of Athens and the Cody family are honored to assist the family during this time.

We encourage you to e-mail community events, church news, or other items of interest for possible use in the Morning Fax. If you take a newsworthy photograph, send it to: [wyxiradio@gmail.com](mailto:wyxiradio@gmail.com)

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Adults/HS 6:30-8:30 p.m.

TN Wesleyan Univ. Sherman Hall

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