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**McMinn County Historical Society Monthly Meeting**

Sunday at 2:00 pm  
in Blueroom of Courthouse



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Friday, February 06, 2026

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Athens, Tennessee

## E.G. Fisher Library Noon Book Club to Discuss Frederick Douglass Autobiography



The E.G. Fisher Library Noon Book Club will meet at noon on Wednesday, Feb. 11, at the library.

The group's discussion will focus on *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, the first autobiography written by Frederick Douglass. The book chronicles Douglass' life as an enslaved person and his escape to freedom, as well as his rise as a powerful orator, writer, abolitionist, and social reformer.

The discussion will be facilitated by Frank Walker, Community Outreach Pastor at First Baptist Church of Cleveland. Walker is married to Yaquia Arnwine Walker and serves as his church's local missions pastor and is also the coordinator of Mission 423, an outreach initiative that partners with nonprofit organizations in Bradley County and surrounding areas.

Mission 423 works to help individuals facing challenging life situations take steps toward improving their lives.

The public is invited to attend the discussion. A light lunch will be provided by the Friends of the Library.

Source: Becky Coleman, E.G. Fisher Public Library

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Friday, Feb. 06, 2026

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

Athens, Tennessee

## Search Continues for Armed Suspect in Polk County



Law enforcement continued searching parts of Polk County on Thursday for **32-year-old David Rodriguez Cruz**, who is considered armed and dangerous.

Cruz is wanted in connection with a Jan. 21 stabbing at a home on Hamby Street in Athens and faces a charge of attempted first-degree murder. He is also wanted for assault on a law enforcement officer. The

victim was taken to a hospital, but officials have not released an update on their condition.

The search intensified after Cleveland Police followed a lead to the Kinser Road area off U.S. Highway 64, where officers made contact with an associate of the suspect. During the encounter, the driver of a white SUV allegedly drove aggressively toward officers before fleeing, prompting a multi-agency pursuit into Polk County.

The vehicle was later located in the 2400 block of Parksville Road in Benton, where officers searched nearby wooded areas. Authorities are urging residents to stay indoors, secure their property, and call 911 if they see anyone matching the suspect's description.

The search remains ongoing. *Source: [WTVC NewsChannel9](#)*

## AAA Urges Safe Driving Ahead of Game Day Celebrations

As fans prepare for Sunday's game-day celebrations, AAA – The Auto Club Group is reminding motorists to plan ahead and avoid impaired driving. AAA officials warn that alcohol consumption combined with parties and late-night travel significantly increases the risk of crashes. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, about 34 people die each day in the United States in drunk-driving crashes. In 2023 alone, alcohol-impaired driving claimed 12,429 lives nationwide.

AAA spokeswoman Megan Cooper said many people focus on planning their celebrations but overlook transportation, emphasizing that sober driving should always be part of the plan. She noted that impaired driving endangers not only the driver, but passengers and others on the road. Law enforcement agencies are expected to increase patrols on game day, and drivers can face serious consequences even without being involved in a crash. A DUI can result in \$10,000 or more in fines, legal fees, and increased insurance costs, along with possible license suspension.

AAA encourages anyone planning to drink to arrange a sober ride in advance and urges hosts to help keep guests safe by offering nonalcoholic options and ensuring no one drives while impaired.

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# UPCOMING CHURCH NEWS & EVENTS

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EVERY WEEK

Friday, Feb. 06, 2026

Morning Fax®...Today's News This Morning Page 3

Athens, Tennessee

## Church News & Events

- The gospel singing group [The Lawsons](#) will be featured in concert **THIS SUNDAY, February 8, at 6:00 p.m.** at Solid Rock Baptist Church, located at 4975 Highway 11 South in Calhoun. The event is open to the public, and everyone is welcome to attend.
- [St. Mary's Legacy Clinic](#) offers free mobile medical care for the uninsured. Anyone who is medically uninsured is eligible to receive care. *St. Mary's Catholic Church (1291 E Madison Ave, Athens) is the McMinn County location and accepts patients every 3rd Thursday of the month.*
- Are you grieving the loss of someone close to you? Clearwater Baptist Church (964 County Road 180, Athens) is starting a new session of GriefShare helping those grieving find hope, comfort, and guidance. Beginning on Thursday, February 5th from 6 pm - 7:30 pm there is an ongoing (in 13wk rotations) grief support group that you can join at any time and is open to the community. For more info or sign up visit: [clearwaterbc.org/grief-share](http://clearwaterbc.org/grief-share)
- [Celebrate Recovery](#) meets every **Tuesday** at 6:00pm at Woodward Ave. Church of God in Athens They also meet every **Thursday** at 6:00pm at Watts Bar Community Church in Decatur.
- First Baptist Church of Niota is looking for a new dynamic and dedicated worship leader. It is a paid, part-time position. If Interested, email [admin@niotabc.org](mailto:admin@niotabc.org) See their ad below with another link and info.
- Pastor Scott Martin and the Congregation of Solid Rock Baptist Church wish to invite community members to their Revival starting at 7:00pm on Monday, February 16. Revivals will continue nightly at 7:00pm through Thursday, February 19. Pastor Jonathan Smith will be preaching each night. Solid Rock Baptist Church is located at 4975 Highway 11 South, in Calhoun. See ad on page 4.

**We encourage you to e-mail results from local school sporting events for use in the Morning Fax. If you take a newsworthy photograph, send it to:**  
[wyxiradio@gmail.com](mailto:wyxiradio@gmail.com)



**Are you a musician that is passionate about leading worship?**

First Baptist Niota is seeking a dynamic and dedicated worship leader. This is a paid part-time position. If interested, please email us at [admin@niotafbc.org](mailto:admin@niotafbc.org)

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THE LAWSONS**



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Friday, Feb. 06, 2026

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

Athens, Tennessee

## Athens Arts Center to Feature Dual Exhibits by Bill Long and Calvin Walton



The Athens Area Council for the Arts (AACA) will present two new exhibits at The Arts Center showcasing the work of painter Bill Long and 3-D artist Calvin Walton. The exhibits will be on display now through March 7, 2026.

Long's exhibit, *Roots, Rocks, and Rivers*, will be featured on the Gallery Wall in the Peggy Dow Performance Center, while Walton's exhibit, *Unconfined*, will be displayed in the Willson Exhibit Room and Hallway Gallery. Viewing hours are Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., as well as during special events.

An artist reception for both exhibits will be held today, Friday, Feb. 6, at 5 p.m., allowing the public to meet the artists and learn more about their work.

Bill Long, a military veteran and 1974 graduate of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree and has been a practicing artist throughout his life. After retiring from a custom sign business in his hometown, Long devoted his time to expanding his artistic expression. Inspired by frequent travels through Appalachia, his recent work reflects natural realism drawn from mountain creeks and landscapes. His paintings blend abstract and realistic elements, moving toward a contemporary style influenced by light, emotion, and nature.

AACA Program Director Holly Doucette noted that Long's work captures the visual rhythm of Appalachia in two dimensions, while Walton's sculptures extend into three-dimensional space, encouraging active viewer engagement.

Calvin Walton's exhibit, *Unconfined*, features sculptural and mixed-media works that explore themes ranging from nature and music to the human experience and abstract form. Walton primarily works with acrylic on wood, mixed media, and occasional resin finishes, emphasizing bold color, texture, and form.

Born in Athens, Walton now resides in Stone Mountain, Georgia, with his wife, Michelle, and son, Caleb. His interest in art began at a young age and continued to develop throughout his school years, leading him to pursue visual arts and refine his own distinctive techniques and style.

Both exhibits are open to the public and offer visitors an opportunity to experience two distinct yet complementary artistic approaches at The Arts Center. **Source: Lauren Brown, Executive Director, AACA**

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Athens, Tennessee

## Sheriff's Office Warns Public of Phone Scam

The McMinn County Sheriff's Office is warning residents about a phone scam involving callers falsely claiming to be with law enforcement.

According to Sheriff Joe Guy, individuals have reported receiving phone calls from someone identifying himself as David Freeman with the McMinn County Sheriff's Office. The caller allegedly tells victims they must pay a fine to avoid jail time.

Officials emphasized that no one by that name is employed by the sheriff's office and that law enforcement agencies do not call citizens to demand payment of fines.

Residents who receive such calls are advised to hang up immediately and contact their local police department or sheriff's office to report the incident and confirm the call is fraudulent.

The sheriff's office urges the public to remain cautious and not fall victim to scams involving threats of arrest or demands for immediate payment.

## McMinn County Arrest Reports

### February 04, 2026

**Aaron Johnson**, 45 of Athens, charged with failure to appear,

**Shelby Hunt**, 29 of Cleveland, charged with failure to appear for driving without a license.

**Corey Smith**, 40 of Maryville, charged with violation of probation for driving on a suspended license, and for Child Support. Bond \$5,000.

**Destin Fairbanks**, 44 of Athens, charged with state violation of probation for forgery.

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



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