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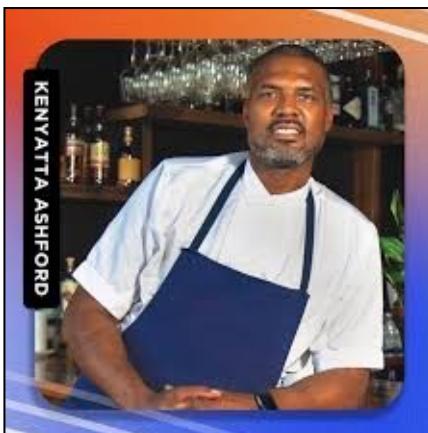
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Tuesday, February 10, 2026

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Athens, Tennessee

Main Street Athens to Host “A Taste of Mardi Gras” Dining Experience



Main Street Athens will bring the flavors and traditions of New Orleans to downtown Athens next week with [A Taste of Mardi Gras](#), an intimate three-course dining experience curated by Chef [Kenyatta Ashford](#). The private dinner will take place Tuesday, **Feb. 17**, beginning at **6:30 p.m.** in the **White Street Market** event space at the **Food Hub**.

Designed as a community-centered culinary event, the evening will showcase classic Mardi Gras and Creole cuisine through a thoughtfully prepared three-course menu. Guests will be served Dirty Jollof hand pies filled with seasoned rice, pork sausage and chicken liver; Catfish Court Bouillon, a Creole-style fish stew featuring oysters, shrimp and Carolina Gold rice; and a traditional Creole bread pudding topped with brown sugar rum sauce and candied pecans.

Ashford is the founder of **Neutral Ground**, a food concept rooted in cultural storytelling, community connection and culinary tradition. Through Neutral Ground, he creates dining experiences that explore the shared histories of Southern, Creole and West African cuisines, emphasizing heritage, intentional sourcing and the role of food as a connector across communities.

The event is intended to offer guests a unique opportunity to experience Ashford’s culturally inspired approach to cuisine in a private, seasonal celebration setting. Tickets are **\$65 per person**.

The event will be held at the Food Hub, a food business incubator operated by Main Street Athens that provides entrepreneurs with access to commercial kitchen space, equipment and opportunities to grow food-based businesses while strengthening the local economy. *Source: [Main Street Athens](#)*

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Athens, Tennessee

Healing Hearts Grief Camp Offers Support and Healing for Local Children



Guidance counselors, caregivers and community volunteers came together this weekend to support the **third annual Healing Hearts Grief Camp**, a program designed to help children cope with the loss of a significant family member.

The camp provides a safe and supportive environment for students in **kindergarten through eighth grade** who are experiencing grief. Through age-appropriate activities, participants are given the opportunity to process their emotions, connect with peers who share similar experiences and begin their healing journeys.

Camp activities included art sessions, journaling exercises, time with therapy animals and group experiences focused on encouraging hope and emotional expression. Organizers said the program is designed to help children feel understood and supported while gently guiding them toward renewed confidence and joy.



Special recognition was given to **Shelly Tullier of Calhoun Elementary School** for her dedication and passion in supporting children during times of crisis.

The **McMinn County Education Foundation** has served as a proud sponsor of the Healing Hearts Grief Camp for the past two years. Families interested in learning more about the program or seeking support for a child in need are encouraged to contact mcmincef@gmail.com.

Source: Ginger R. Robinson, Ed.S., Executive Director of the McMinn County Education Foundation



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Athens, Tennessee

McMinn County Arrest Reports

February 01, 2026

Brittany Phoebus, 36 of Niota, charged with failure to appear for driving on a suspended license, state violation of probation for two counts of identity theft, bringing contraband into a penal facility, tampering with evidence, and drug paraphernalia. Bond \$18,000.

Akeem Smith, 26 of Chattanooga, charged with aggravated burglary, non-domestic assault, schedule II resale, drug paraphernalia, and armed and dangerous felonies, Bond \$120,000.

Taurus Moore, 27 of Chattanooga, charged with felony evading arrest, reckless endangerment, resisting stop, simple possession casual exchange of schedule 6, Bond \$60,000.

Lindsay Newland, 23 of Decatur, charged with failure to appear for drug paraphernalia, Bond \$4,000.

Charles Sherlin, 42 of Cleveland, charged with state violation of probation for theft of property, \$2,500 to \$10,000, Bond \$2,700.

David Hensley, 45 of Etowah, charged with domestic assault, Bond \$1,000.

Isaiah Linder, 22 of Athens, charged with felony aggravated domestic assault, Bond \$15,000.

Autumn Cox, 39 of Decatur, charged with casual exchange, and possession of meth, Bond \$6,000.

Justin McCrary, 42 of Riceville, charged with driving on a suspended license, Bond \$1,000.

Those accused are considered innocent until proven guilty in a court of law. Information gathered using public sources.

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Athens, Tennessee

Obituaries

Carolyn Ruth Kincaid Newman, 74 of Athens, passed away on Friday, February 6. She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in English at Tennessee Wesleyan College by working summers at Athens Stove Works. Carolyn knew from early childhood that she wanted to be a teacher and would go on to impact hundreds of lives over 39 years at Westside Elementary in Athens. She served Mount Harmony Baptist Church as a devoted Sunday School and VBS teacher, organist, and pianist. Visitation will be held from 5:00 to 7:00 PM on Wednesday, February 11 at Ziegler Funeral Home. Funeral services will be held at 1:00 PM on Thursday, February 12 at the funeral home. Interment will follow at 2:00 PM at McMinn Memory Gardens. Ziegler Funeral Home has been entrusted with the care of Carolyn Ruth Kincaid Newman.

James Dennis Woods, a lifelong resident of Cleveland, went to be with the Lord on Thursday, January 29. Dennis enjoyed a 47-year career as a Medical Laboratory Technologist. Most of that time he was employed by Erlanger Health Systems. His greatest joy in life was in studying and sharing the Word of God. A private memorial service was held on Sunday, February 8. Bordwine Funeral Home of Etowah was in charge of arrangements.

Betty Jo Benson Blair, 89 of Etowah, died on Sunday, February 8 at Etowah Health Care. She was a member of Brookhill Baptist Church. A Graveside Service will be held on Tuesday, February 10 at Goodsprings Cemetery in Etowah, at 4:00pm. Companion Funeral Home of Athens and the Cody family are honored to assist the family with these arrangements.

Olliema Morgan Rayburn, 88 of Etowah, passed away at her residence on Sunday, February 8. Olliema devoted many years of her life to her career, having worked at Woods Hospital before retiring from Etowah Health Care. She was a member of Conasauga Baptist Church. life, a graveside service will be held on Tuesday, February 10 at 3:00 p.m. at Green Hill Cemetery in Etowah. Bordwine Funeral Home of Etowah is in charge of arrangements.

Charles "Charlie" Edmund Couch, 78, of Niota, went to be with the Lord on Thursday, February 5. He sang gospel music for more than 35 years, appeared on a television program, and even recorded an album in Nashville. Charlie proudly served his country as a veteran of the United States Army with B Company, 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry, Mongoose Bravo. He later retired after many years as a dedicated truck driver. A Funeral Service will be held on Thursday, February 12 at 12:00pm at Companion Funeral Home of Athens, TN. A Visitation will be held prior from 10:00am-12:00pm. A Graveside Service will follow at Citico Baptist Church Cemetery in Vonore, TN. Companion Funeral Home of Athens and the Cody family are honored to assist the family with these arrangements.

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