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TerraBella Athens to Honor Legacy of Former Mayor Burkett L. Witt



The life and legacy of former Athens Mayor Burkett L. Witt will be celebrated later this month during a special Black History Month event in Athens.

TerraBella Athens will host "Honor a Legacy of Leadership" on Friday, Feb. 28, from noon to 3 p.m. at its community located at 120 Keith Lane. The event will pay tribute to Witt's decades of public service and lasting impact on Athens and McMinn County.

Witt, who died Aug. 11, 2023, at the age of 97, was a trailblazer in local government. In 1971, he became the first Black member of the Athens City Council. Twelve years later, in 1983, he was elected mayor by his fellow council members, becoming the city's first Black mayor. After serving a four-year term as mayor, he returned to the council and continued serving for more than three additional decades, totaling over 30 years in public office.

Beyond his civic leadership, Witt devoted much of his life to the food industry. He worked for decades at Tennessee Wesleyan University and also owned and operated his own restaurant and catering service. In recognition of his contributions, the university awarded him an honorary doctorate in public service and plans to name a room in his honor at its new campus center.

The Feb. 28 event will include a special presentation reflecting on Witt's life and leadership, as well as samples of family-inspired recipes connected to his restaurant legacy. Guests will also have the opportunity to tour the TerraBella Athens senior living community. **Organizers encourage those wishing to attend to RSVP by Feb. 21 by calling 423-922-7684.**

Community members are invited to gather in remembrance of a leader whose influence helped shape Athens for generations.

Source: [City of Athens Facebook](#), Photo Courtesy of Local 3 News

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McMinn County Living Heritage Museum

Upcoming Spring Events

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\$5 OR FREE WITH MEMBERSHIP

HERITAGE SCHOOL: RUSTIC FLAG ART
SATURDAY, MARCH 14TH @ 11:00 AM
\$5 OR FREE WITH MEMBERSHIP
BRING YOUR OWN CANVAS (12X18 OR 16X22) OR PURCHASE ONE AT THE MUSEUM (\$16 OR \$20). ALL OTHER MATERIALS WILL BE PROVIDED.

Programs sponsored by C. Scott & Muriel S. Mayfield Family Foundation, Tennessee Arts Commission, Hugh M. Willson Family Foundation, and City of Athens

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

Admission:
Adults: \$5.00
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Thursday, Feb. 19, 2026 Morning Fax®...Today's News This Morning Page 2 **Athens, Tennessee**

Bluegrass Tradition Continues with 31st Annual Cousin Jake Tullock Memorial Festival



Bluegrass fans from across East Tennessee will gather March 6–7 at the historic Gem Theater for the 31st Annual Cousin Jake Tullock Memorial Bluegrass Festival.

The festival honors the life and legacy of Cousin Jake Tullock, a beloved East Tennessee performer known for his time as bassist and comedian with Flatt & Scruggs. Remembered for his humor, storytelling and Appalachian charm, Tullock helped introduce bluegrass music to national audiences and was later inducted into the Bluegrass Music Hall of Fame.

The weekend begins Friday, March 6, at 7 p.m. with the John C. Studdard Memorial Concert featuring Just Us and Lakeside Bluegrass. Admission to Friday night's concert is free.

Music resumes Saturday, March 7, beginning at 1 p.m., with a full day of live performances by Just Us, Lakeside Bluegrass, Wilson & Cross, Valley Grass Express and Seth Mulder & Midnight Run, who will close out the evening.

In addition to the main stage performances, "Pickin' at the Depot" will take place from 1–4 p.m. Saturday just across the street, offering informal jam sessions with local musicians. Food trucks will be set up at the Depot, and concessions will be available inside the theater.

Saturday admission is \$10, and children 12 and under are admitted free.

Organizers invite families and music lovers to come enjoy a weekend celebrating the rich bluegrass heritage of Etowah and the enduring influence of Cousin Jake Tullock.

Source: [Etowah Arts Commission](#)

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New Turf Fields Ready for Play at Regional Park



The new turf fields at Regional Park are officially complete and ready for use following a final walk-through by city officials.

Tournament play on the upgraded fields is set to begin Feb. 28, with the facilities opening for daily rentals starting March 2. City leaders say the project marks a significant enhancement to the park's athletic amenities and is expected to draw teams and visitors to Athens for tournaments and other events.

Information about the new fields and rental registration is available through the Athens Parks and Recreation Department's online catalog.

McMinn County Arrest Reports

February 17, 2026

- Christian Carlberg**, 19 of Decatur, charged with simple possession, casual exchange, and drug paraphernalia, Bond \$14,000.
 - Bobby Bailey**, 42, of Etowah, charged with criminal trespassing and criminal impersonation, Bond \$2,000.
 - Savannah Epps**, 29 of Athens, charged with state violation of probation for reckless endangerment with a deadly weapon.
 - Anthony Harper**, 50 of Athens, charged with failure to appear for schedule II cocaine over five grams, Bond \$300,000.
 - Angel Alvarez**, 42 of Athens, charged with violation of probation for drug paraphernalia, and drug paraphernalia, Bond \$2,301.45.
 - Justin Fairbanks**, 44 of Athens, charged with state violation of probation for forgery, \$1,000 to \$2,500, and casual exchange, and possession of meth.
 - Alyssa Kahn**, 26 of Athens, charged with simple possession, casual exchange of schedule 6 and simple possession casual exchange of schedule 2.
- Those accused are considered innocent until proven guilty in a court of law. Information gathered from Public Sources.**

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AACA to Showcase Student Talent and Holocaust Memorial Exhibit in March



The Athens Area Council for the Arts will host its annual Student Art Show alongside a powerful regional exhibit, *The Stars of David Project*, from March 13 through April 10 at The Arts Center in Athens.

The Student Art Show features work from middle school, high school and college students in McMinn County and surrounding communities, highlighting emerging artistic talent from across the region. An opening reception and awards ceremony will be held Friday, March 27, at 5 p.m.

Also on display during the same period is *The Stars of David Project*, an exhibit by Chattanooga-based mixed-media artist Jen Lewis. An opening reception for Lewis' exhibit is scheduled for Friday, March 20, at 5 p.m. Lewis' project is a large-scale memorial effort consisting of six million hand-drawn Stars of David, each representing a Jewish life lost during the Holocaust. The work is intended to transform an overwhelming historical statistic into a personal and reflective experience for viewers, emphasizing remembrance and human dignity.

"The Stars of David Project is an important body of work and its strength relies on engagement with community," said Holly Doucette, program director for AACA, noting the organization's desire to share the exhibit with the Athens community.

The Stars of David Project will be displayed on the Gallery Wall in the Peggy Dow Performance Center, while the Student Art Show will be featured in the Willson Exhibit Room and Hallway Gallery. Exhibits are open to the public Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., as well as during special events.

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