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MCMINN COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT CLERK
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PAID FOR BY THE COMMITTEE TO ELECT STEPHANIE SWAFFORD

Friday, February 20, 2026

Page 1

Athens, Tennessee

Honorees recognized at Annual United Way Award Ceremony



(Left to Right) Larae Graves with Bowater Credit Union, Spirit of the Community Award; Michelle Crafton, Dick Dyer Community Service Award; Todd Farrell, Meigs County Volunteer of the Year Award; Alicia Rose, United Way CEO/President; Pam Purdue, Joseph T Frye Award; Nick Brakebill, James H Willson Award and Campaign Chair Award. Not pictured Joyce and Frank Snyder, President's Council Co-Chair Award, and Robin Rollins, Campaign Chair Award recipient. *More pictures from ceremony on Page 6.* *Photos by Stephanie Devine Morning Fax Staff*

The United Way of McMinn & Meigs County presented their Annual Award Ceremony on Thursday. Award winners were recognized for their leadership and service to the community and honored with plaques adorned with their recognition. The award ceremony is an annual occurrence and is a time-honored tradition in Meigs and McMinn Counties to give back to individuals that stand out in the community. Alicia Rose, President/CEO

of United Way of McMinn & Meigs County announced that they exceeded their fund raising goal of \$750,000 and over \$753,000 was actually raised as shown on the thermometer.



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Friday, Feb. 20, 2026

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

Athens, Tennessee

ACT Announces Auditions for 'Steel Magnolias'



Athens Community Theatre will hold one night of auditions for *Steel Magnolias* on Tuesday, Feb. 24, at 6 p.m. at The Arts Center. The production, directed by G. David Brown, is part of ACT's Mainstage Series and will run April 17-26 in the Sue E. Trotter Black Box Theater.

The director is seeking six women, ages 18 and older, with roles ranging from characters in their 20s to 60s and beyond. Those auditioning should be prepared to read from the script and take simple direction. Callbacks will be held Wednesday, Feb. 25. Anyone unable to attend Tuesday's audition should contact the director or The Arts Center about attending callbacks.

All who are interested in performing or helping with the production are encouraged to attend auditions and should bring their work, school and family schedules covering Feb. 25 through April 26.

Set in Truvy's beauty salon in Chinquapin, Louisiana, *Steel Magnolias* centers on a close-knit group of women whose humor, friendship and resilience carry them through life's joys and heartbreaks. ACT tickets typically range from \$15 to \$25, and patrons are encouraged to purchase early as performances often sell out.

Community News You Can Use

- The City of Athens Public Works Department has announced a temporary street closure on Hill Street from Washington Avenue to Hornsby Street. The closure will be in effect daily from 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. beginning Monday, Feb. 23, 2026, through Friday, Feb. 27, 2026, to allow for fire service tap installation. Detours will be posted. Motorists are urged to use caution, watch for signage, workers and pedestrians, and allow extra travel time in the area. For more information, contact the Public Works Department at 423-744-2745.
- The Athens City Council and the Athens City School Board of Education will hold a joint meeting on Monday, February 23, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. at the Athens City School Administration Building, 943 Crestway Drive, Athens. This is an open public meeting for discussion only. No formal action will be taken.

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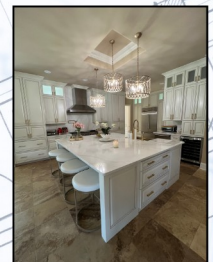
Hoodies are
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donors from
Feb. 23 - 27.

No appointment
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June 6, 2026



Saturday, June 6th – Cole Sitzlar
Saturday, June 13th – September Song
Saturday, July 4th – Mendingwall
7:00 PM Before the Fireworks at Regional Park!
Saturday, July 18th – Dexter Thomas Band
Saturday, August 8th – Scenic City Sound
Saturday, August 15th – Confederate Railroad

Oct 10, 2026



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UPCOMING CHURCH NEWS & EVENTS

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THIS WEEK
NEXT WEEK
EVERY WEEK

Friday, Feb. 20, 2026

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

Athens, Tennessee

Church News & Events

- Lane's Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church in Niota will host its Annual Black History Tea on Sunday, Feb. 22, 2026, at 4 p.m. The event will feature a fashion show and performances of spiritual songs as part of the celebration. Pastor Hugh Dixon and the congregation invite the community to attend.
- The next Christian Men's Prayer Breakfast, sponsored by New Hope Methodist Church, will be held Thursday, March 5, at 8 a.m. at Maddi Mae's Cafe in downtown Athens. This ecumenical gathering is open to all men of the Christian faith, regardless of church affiliation, as well as those seeking to establish a relationship with Jesus. For more information, contact Marcus Guinn at marcusguinn@gmail.com or 423-507-7769.
- Athens Lutheran Church, located at 710 Forrest Ave., invites the community to attend Lenten Worship services on Wednesdays at 7 p.m. through April 1. A potluck fellowship meal will be held each week at 6 p.m. prior to the service. The congregation welcomes all who wish to observe the Lenten season of repentance and reflection. More information is available at athenslutheranchurch.org.
- [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. 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
- [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.



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**Community Food
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5:00 PM
last Sunday of every month

3 meals provided per family
Extra canned goods for children

First Come, First Served

First Baptist Church of Niota
6 E. Main Street, Niota, TN 37826

ATHENS PARKS & RECREATION

**40TH ANNUAL DADDY DAUGHTER
DANCE**

AN EVENING OF TIMELESS MAGIC AND OLD
HOLLYWOOD VIBES

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 27TH AT 7:30PM
SATURDAY FEBRUARY 28TH AT 1PM, 4PM & 7:30PM
AT McMINN COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL

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Date: Every Sunday
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Time: 11am-1:30pm
Location: Sherman Dining Hall
204 E College Street, Athens TN 37303

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FEBRUARY 26 • 5-7PM
ATHENS CITY PRIMARY

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Friday, Feb. 20, 2026

Morning Fax®...Today's News This Morning Page 5

Athens, Tennessee

March Programs in McMinn County Focus on Health, Caregiving and Community Connection

A variety of free educational and wellness programs will be offered in March and early April through UT Extension- McMinn, giving residents opportunities to improve physical health, strengthen brain function and support family caregivers.

The **Arthritis Foundation Exercise Program** will meet March 2–25 on Mondays and Wednesdays from 10 to 11 a.m. at First Baptist Church, 305 Ingleside Ave., Athens. Designed specifically for individuals with arthritis, the class accommodates pain and limited mobility while teaching joint protection and proper body mechanics. Arthritis affects an estimated 70 million Americans, including 1 in 3 adults in Tennessee. Immediately afterward, **WITS Workout** will be held from 11 to 11:30 a.m. at the same location. This interactive brain health program features activities aimed at strengthening memory, focus and recall. Registration for both programs is required by calling 423-745-2852.

Grandparents can attend the **Grandparent Club** on March 4 from 1 to 2 p.m. at the McMinn County Higher Education Center, 2345 Denso Drive. The free session will include refreshments and a presentation on personal health, along with activities designed to promote connection and wellness.

Family & Community Education Clubs continue meeting monthly across the county. In March, Extension Agent Sarah Kite will present “Care for the Caregiver,” focusing on stress management and practical self-care strategies. The clubs, formerly known as Home Demonstration Clubs and Extension Homemakers, have served Tennessee communities for more than 75 years through research-based education.

Youth Mental Health First Aid certification training will be offered April 1 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the McMinn County Higher Education Center. The class, limited to 20 grandparents, teaches participants how to recognize and respond to teens facing mental health or substance use challenges. Valued at \$170, the course is free thanks to funding from the Woods Memorial Grant. Lunch and materials are provided. Registration is available at mcminn.tennessee.edu. For more information, contact UT Extension-McMinn at 423-745-2852.

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Women's Conference

March 7, 2026
10:00am-2:00pm

Join us for a powerful time of testimony, uplifting music, and delicious food as women come together to share, grow and celebrate faith and sisterhood.

Guest Speakers: Stephanie Dunn
Brittany Duggan
Singer: Cayci Leamon

Union McMinn Baptist Church
314 County Road 316
Niota TN 37826



Annual United Way Award Ceremony Photos



Alicia Rose presenting the Spirit of the Community Award to Larae Graves of Bowater Credit Union.



Alicia Rose presenting the President's Council Co-Chair Award to Joyce Snyder. Frank Snyder, not pictured, was also a recipient of this award.



Alicia Rose presenting the Outstanding Service and Dedication Award to Blake McCaslin who served as Chairman of the Board.



Alicia Rose presenting the Joseph T. Frye Award to Pam Purdue.



Alicia Rose presenting for Paige Zabo the James H Willson Award to Nick Brakebill. Nick also received an award for outstanding service and dedication as Campaign Chair along with Robin Rollins not pictured.



Jordan Campbell presenting the Meigs County Volunteer of the year Award to Todd Farrell.



Steve McCaslin presenting the Dick Dyer Community Service Award to Michelle Crafton.



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Friday, Feb. 20, 2026

Morning Fax®...Today's News This Morning Page 7

Athens, Tennessee

McMinn County Arrest Reports

February 18, 2026

Robin Teague, 56 of Athens, charged with DUI and drug paraphernalia, Bond \$2,000.

Michael Brakebill, 47 of Niota, charged with child support, Bond \$1,500.

Megan Ellison, 38 of Etowah, charged with child support, Bond \$5,000.

Kelvin Wells, 30 of Riceville, charged with assault, violation of probation, failure to appear for assault on a first responder, vandalism, and attempted escape, Bond \$24,500.

Thomas Ricard, 50 of Sweetwater, charged with aggravated assault, Bond \$60,000.

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

On This Day in History

1839 - U.S. Congress made [dueling](#) in Washington, D.C., a [felony](#) punishable by up to 10 years of hard labor. The tipping point for the bill had come in 1838: Kentucky Rep. William Graves and Maine Rep. Jonathan Cilley had dueled, which had led to Cilley's death by Grave's hand.

1872 - The [Metropolitan Museum of Art](#) in New York City opened to the public.

1902 - [Ansel Adams](#), one of the foremost landscape [photographers](#) of the 20th century, was born in San Francisco.

1929 - [U.S. Congress](#) formally accepted the deeds of cession of eastern Samoa, forming [American Samoa](#).

1962 - [John H. Glenn, Jr.](#) became the first American to orbit [Earth](#), doing so three times. He was the oldest of seven astronauts selected by [NASA](#) for [Project Mercury](#) spaceflight training and later served as a U.S. senator.

1986 - The [Soviet Union](#) launched the core module of the space station [Mir](#), which remained active as a space laboratory for more than 14 years.



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