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Thursday, February 26, 2026

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Athens, Tennessee

## “The Lantern” to Host One-Mile Race Benefiting Morning Star Ministries



A local business is stepping up to support adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities through a community fundraiser next month.

On Saturday, March 7, The Lantern will host a one-mile race to raise money for Morning Star Ministries, a nonprofit organization that provides free day programming for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Morning Star offers instruction and activities focused on hygiene, health and fitness, crafts, and community engagement, helping participants build life skills and stay active in the community. Organizers say all proceeds from the race will directly benefit the organization's day program.

Race-day registration will begin at 8:45 a.m. at the McMinn County Director of Schools building, located next to Food City. The race is set to begin at 9 a.m.

Participants may register in advance by calling or stopping by The Lantern. Cost of registration is \$40 per person and may be paid by cash, check or card, and each paid entry includes a T-shirt.

For additional information, contact Tia at The Lantern at 423-252-0041.

If you'd like to donate separately from the race, please consider helping to further Morning Star Ministries mission at the link provided [HERE](#).

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### McMinn County Living Heritage Museum



#### Upcoming Spring Events



**HERITAGE SCHOOL: RUSTIC FLAG ART**  
SATURDAY, MARCH 14<sup>TH</sup> @ 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  
Senior 60+: \$3.00  
Students: \$3.00

**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



#### More Information

522 W Madison Ave.  
Athens, TN 37303  
423-745-0329

[www.livingheritagemuseum.org](http://www.livingheritagemuseum.org)

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PROGRAM  
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Thursday, Feb. 26, 2026

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Athens, Tennessee

## Early Morning Fire Destroys Benton Home



A vehicle fire quickly spread to a residence Tuesday morning, resulting in a total loss of a home on Parksville Road in Benton.

Emergency crews were dispatched around 7 a.m. after a car caught fire outside the home. According to officials, the homeowner had started her vehicle and returned inside the residence when the vehicle ignited. The flames spread from the car to the house.

West Polk Fire Department requested mutual aid as firefighters worked to contain the blaze.

Assisting agencies included Bradley County Fire Department, Englewood Rural Fire Department, Etowah Fire Department, Volunteer Energy Cooperative, the Polk County Sheriff's Office and AmeriPro EMS.

West Polk Fire Chief Keith Jeskee was in command of the scene. No additional information on injuries was immediately available.

*Photo by Lynn Ingram, Englewood Rural FD*

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**Sweetwater Police Accepting Applications for Citizens Police Academy**

The Sweetwater Police Department is accepting applications for its Spring 2026 Citizens Police Academy, with paperwork due no later than Monday, March 9.

The free, seven-week program offers participants a behind-the-scenes look at how the department operates and prepares officers for daily duties. Attendees will learn more about police training, criminal investigations and the services provided to community members and visitors. The academy also provides an opportunity for residents to engage directly with officers and discuss issues affecting the Sweetwater community.

Applicants must be at least 21 years old, complete and sign all required documents and pass a background check. Applications may be picked up at the Sweetwater Police Department, 101 N. Oak St., Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Individuals unable to pick up forms in person may request an application by emailing [vfrancis@sweetwatertn.gov](mailto:vfrancis@sweetwatertn.gov). Completed applications must be returned in person, by fax or by email no later than March 9.

Classes will be held at the department's training room from 6 to 8 p.m. on scheduled evenings during the seven-week academy.

**Daughter Files Lawsuit Over Father's Death at Monroe County Jail**

The daughter of a 74-year-old man who died in custody at the Monroe County Jail has filed a lawsuit alleging he was denied medical care and improperly restrained prior to his death.

Windy Duncan filed the suit on behalf of her father, Lester Isbill, who died Feb. 6, 2025, after spending approximately nine hours in a restraint chair at the jail. The complaint names officers with the Madisonville Police Department, along with Turn Key Health Clinics and several nurses, alleging they failed to provide adequate medical treatment.

According to the lawsuit, Isbill — who had a history of diabetes, high blood pressure and other medical conditions — was experiencing a medical emergency when he was arrested on a disorderly conduct charge. The suit claims his condition worsened in jail, where he was restrained for hours without proper monitoring. An autopsy cited hypertensive and atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease complicated by dehydration and restraint as the cause of death. Duncan is seeking damages and attorney fees. Related criminal cases involving former sheriff's office employees are pending.

Source: [WVLT.tv](http://WVLT.tv)

CAMP LIVING STONES ANNUAL



**PAN CAKE BREAKFAST**

**MARCH 7, 2026**

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**Arts Gala to Raise Funds for The Arts Center Programs on March 7**



The Athens Area Council for the Arts will host its Annual Arts Gala on Saturday, March 7, 2026, from 6:30 to 11 p.m. at The Arts Center.

The formal, 21-and-older event serves as a major fundraiser supporting arts and cultural programming in Athens and McMinn County. Proceeds from the evening — including both silent and live auctions — will benefit The Arts Center's operations, as well as school and community arts education programs.

The evening will open with a social hour featuring light hors d'oeuvres and refreshments as guests browse the silent auction. Attendees will then enjoy a catered dinner by Aramark Collegiate Hospitality, followed by a live auction offering original artwork and one-of-a-kind experiences. Entertainment for the night will be provided by Love, Peace & Happiness Band, with music and dancing rounding out the celebration.

Tickets are \$75 per person, with options to purchase individual seats, groups of seats or full tables. Reservations are required and seating is limited. Tickets are available at The Arts Center, 320 N. White St., online at [athensartscouncil.org](http://athensartscouncil.org), or by calling 423-745-8781. Organizers encourage patrons to reserve seats now.

Founded in 1979, the Athens Area Council for the Arts has presented thousands of performances, exhibitions and educational programs and has helped establish and supported numerous local arts organizations throughout the region. *Source:* [AthensArtsCouncil.org](http://AthensArtsCouncil.org)

**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  
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Thursday, Feb. 26, 2026

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Athens, Tennessee

## Obituaries

**William "Bill" McKinney**, 93, of Etowah, passed away on Monday, February 23. Bill retired from Bowater Paper Mill in Calhoun TN, after 40 years of dedicated service. He was an active member of Carlock Fellowship Church. A memorial service will be held at a later date. Bordwine Funeral Home of Etowah is in charge of arrangements.

**Avis Willene "Nannie" Mason**, 89 of Niota, passed away, Saturday, February 21. She was a former employee of Atomic Energy Commission in Oak Ridge until she moved to Athens in 1969. She was a member of East Athens Baptist Church. Funeral services will be at 7:00 PM on Wednesday, March 4, in the chapel of Laycock-Hobbs Funeral Home. Graveside services will be 11:00 AM Thursday, March 5 at McMinn Memory Gardens. The family will receive friends from 5-7 PM prior to the service at the funeral home. Laycock-Hobbs Funeral Home in Athens is in charge of the arrangements.

**Curtis "Scott" Nelson**, 77, passed away on Saturday, February 21. Scott was a veteran of the United States Army who served his country during the Vietnam War, spending most of his time in Germany. Scott was also a cherished member of Sunrise Assembly of God in Madisonville. A memorial service for Scott will be held at Sunrise Assembly of God (876 Englewood Rd., Madisonville, TN 37354) on Monday, March 9 at 11 a.m. The United States Army will be present for military honors. Companion Funeral Home of Athens and the Cody Family are honored to assist Scott's 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: [wyradio@gmail.com](mailto:wyradio@gmail.com)

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