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Wednesday, July 01, 2026

Page 1

Athens, Tennessee

\$300,000 in Downtown Grants Announced as Main Street Athens Marks 10 Years



(Left to right) Patti Greek, Ann Davis, and Missy Ford, Main Street Athens Founders

Downtown business owners and residents gathered June 25 at The Courtyard as Main Street Athens celebrated its 10th anniversary and announced \$300,000 in Downtown Improvement Grants awarded through the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development. Athens received the maximum funding after demonstrating both need and a strong plan for downtown revitalization.

Nine recipients were selected for façade upgrades, including Southern Homes Realty Group, Tennessee Wesleyan University's Sherman Fine Arts Building, Creekside Wellness, Dish Bistro, Hiwassee Builders Supply, and several residential and commercial property owners. Selection chair Meredith Willson said the improvements will boost economic vitality, enhance aesthetics, and attract new investment to historic downtown Athens.

The event also honored founders Ann Davis, Patti Greek, and Missy Ford, whose 2016 efforts launched Main Street Athens as an accredited Tennessee Main Street community. Since then, the program has secured more than \$700,000 in façade grants, expanded seasonal décor, and supported ongoing downtown revitalization. Chair Stuart Mason praised the founders for laying the groundwork for a decade of progress.

Attendees enjoyed refreshments from Pie Hound Pizza Company, with sponsorship from Simmons Bank, Southern Homes Realty, Universal Travel, and Jackie and Todd Newman. Mason said monthly community gatherings—revived in late 2025—will continue to strengthen connections among downtown businesses and partners.

Main Street Athens works alongside the City of Athens, Athens Chamber of Commerce, and McMinn County Economic Development Authority as part of the statewide Tennessee Main Street network. More information is available at athensmainstreet.com.

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Arson Suspected in Etowah House Fire; Multiple Agencies Respond



Neighbors on Eighth Street in Etowah reported smoke and flames coming from a residence just after noon Sunday, prompting a multi-agency fire response. Etowah City Fire arrived first, with Etowah Rural Fire and Englewood Rural Fire providing mutual aid. Firefighters quickly

brought the blaze under control.

Officials say the fire appeared to be intentionally set, with multiple ignition points found inside the home, which was currently under renovation. AMR and EUB assisted at the scene, while the investigation is being led by Etowah Police Department and TBI Arson & Bomb Unit. Captain Dustin Ruebush of Etowah City Fire commanded the incident.

Photos by Lynn Ingram, Englewood Rural FD

Community News You Can Use

- Athens Utilities Board will be closed Friday, July 3rd for the 250th Anniversary of American Independence. Standby crews from Power, Water, Natural Gas, and Wastewater will remain on call throughout the weekend for outages and emergencies. To report an issue, call 423-745-3131. AUB wishes the community a safe and patriotic Independence Day weekend.
- Athens Community Theatre will hold auditions for *The Crucible* on Sunday, July 26 at 2 p.m. and Monday, July 27 at 7 p.m. at The Arts Center. A large cast (ages 18+) is needed, including one role for a young adult Black actor. Participants should be ready to read from the script and bring schedule conflicts for July 28–Oct. 11. Show dates are Oct. 2–11, 2026. All interested cast and crew members are encouraged to attend.

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Athens, Tennessee

McMinn County Arrest Reports

June 28, 2026

Justin Fields, 46, of Riceville, charged with violation of probation for driving on a suspended license second offense, Bond \$724.

Lisa Lankford, 55 of Decatur, charged with failure to appear for driving on a revoked license.

William Buckner, 32 of Riceville, charged with possession of schedule 2 meth, Bond \$12,000.

Sarah Limeweber, 28 of Athens, charged with failure to appear for driving on a suspended license, Bond \$2,000.

Monty Adams, 65 of Athens, charged with state violation of probation for DUI 5th offense.

Chris Coleman, 60 of Athens, charged with failure to appear for driving on a revoked license, Bond \$2,000.

Gabrielle Beck, 23 of Rockwood, charged with disorderly conduct, and public intoxication, Bond \$1,000.

Amber Dassette, 52 of Athens charged with failure to appear for DUI, and violation of probation for DUI, Bond \$3,500.

Ricky Nation, 41 of Oliver Springs, charged with domestic assault.

Jamal Ferguson, 36 of Athens, charged with violation of an order of protection.

Logan Smith, 25 of Englewood, charged with DUI, reckless driving, reckless endangerment, and violation of implied consent, Bond \$2,500.

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

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AAA Warns of Rising Heat Dangers Across Tennessee

With extreme heat gripping Tennessee, AAA is urging residents to stay alert to a growing number of heat-related hazards — from deadly conditions in hot cars to an increased risk of roadside breakdowns. Temperatures inside a parked vehicle can climb 20 degrees in just 10 minutes, and more than 1,000 children have died in hot cars since 1998. AAA spokeswoman Megan Cooper said tragedies happen quickly and are preventable, urging drivers to check the back seat every time and call 911 if a child is found alone in a vehicle. Pets face the same life-threatening danger.

The heat is also causing more vehicle failures. AAA reports spikes in dead batteries, tire blowouts, engine overheating, and fluid breakdown as temperatures rise. Drivers can reduce risks by checking batteries, tires, cooling systems, and fluid levels, and by parking in shaded areas. A list of trusted repair shops is available at AAA.com/AutoRepair.

Obituaries

Shirley Ann Samples Carroll, 88, of Farragut and formerly of Athens, passed away on Saturday, June 27 at her residence. She was a member of the First Baptist Church of Concord. She was retired from AT&T after 30 years of service. A graveside service will be conducted at 2:00 pm on Wednesday, July 1 at McMinn Memory Gardens. Smith Funeral & Cremation Services of Athens is honored to serve the family of Shirley Ann Samples Carroll.

Andrew "Dru" Ackaouy, 38, of Etowah, passed away Sunday, June 28 in Chattanooga. He was a graduate of McMinn County High School and was a manager at CVS in Athens. He loved to travel and spend time with his family and friends. A celebration of life service will be conducted at 7:00 pm, Monday, July 6 at Smith Funeral Home. The family will receive friends from 5:00-7:00 pm Monday prior to the service. Smith Funeral & Cremation Services of Athens is honored to serve the family of Andrew "Dru" Ackaouy.

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HOSTED BY: **JULIE TILLIS**

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