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Friday, July 03, 2026

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Athens, Tennessee

## Downtown Resident Turns “Scary” Alley Into Award-Winning Green Space



An alley off Washington Avenue has been transformed into a vibrant pocket garden thanks to downtown resident Joshua Carroll, whose work earned him the Main Street Athens Beautification Award. Carroll said the narrow passage-way felt unsafe when he first moved in — “a little scary,” as he described it — prompting him to ask his landlord if he could add just a few plants. That small request grew into a two-year effort that now provides a welcoming outdoor retreat for neighbors.

Carroll filled the space with flowering cuttings from his mother — blue salvia, bee balm, and spider plants — along with reclaimed garden décor and comfortable seating. The alley, once dim and uninviting, is now a lively green space for downtown apartment residents.

His creative touch extends beyond gardening. Visitors may hear the deep, resonant sound of Carroll’s handmade didgeridoo, crafted from a yucca stalk he harvested in the San Bernardino Mountains. After living in Venice Beach and later Coker Creek, where he cared for his mother and stepfather and fell in love with East Tennessee’s rivers and fly-fishing, Carroll chose Athens as home.

Carroll works as a gardener for several local residents and hopes to start a community plant club where neighbors can share seeds, cuttings, and plant knowledge. Those interested in gardening services can reach him at: [jrosscoffman@yahoo.com](mailto:jrosscoffman@yahoo.com). *Source: Main Street Athens*

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**Friday, July 03, 2026**      **Morning Fax®...Today's News This Morning Page 2**      **Athens, Tennessee**

### Athens Set for Full Day of July 4th Celebrations at Regional Park

The City of Athens is preparing for one of its largest Independence Day celebrations yet, with a full slate of activities planned for Friday, July 4 at Athens Regional Park. This year's event features the America 250 Drone and Fireworks Show, presented as the Buddy Liner Memorial Fireworks Show, and will include music, family attractions, food vendors, and a first-ever patriotic drone display.

Festivities begin early, with the park's splash pad open from 10 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. The main event schedule starts at 4:30 p.m., when the free arcade inside the Conference Center opens and a model aircraft show takes place on Field 2. Music will fill the concourse from 4:30 to 7 p.m., leading up to a 6 p.m. time capsule burial between Fields 2 and 3.

The evening's headline entertainment begins at 7 p.m. with a free Sounds of Summer concert featuring *MendingWall*. Concessions and food trucks will be available throughout the day.

To ensure safety during the drone and fireworks displays, all traffic in and out of Regional Park will close at 8:30 p.m. The drone show begins at 9:30 p.m., followed immediately by the traditional fireworks finale once the drones land. Traffic will reopen after the fireworks conclude.

The event is free to attend, and city officials encourage families to arrive early, enjoy the day's activities, and celebrate America's 250th birthday with one of Athens' biggest community gatherings of the year.

### Community News You Can Use

- The Athens Municipal Building, Public Works, Recycle Center, and Animal Shelter will be closed Friday, July 3, reopening Monday, July 6; residential garbage routes for July 3 will run July 6 (totes should be out the night before), commercial/industrial pickup will operate on a limited basis, emergency services remain 24/7 via McMinn E911, and Public Works is available at 423-744-2745 for more information.
- AACA opens its 2026-27 House Blend Series on Friday, Aug. 14 at 7 p.m. with Jukebox Lounge, a one-night show in the Sue E. Trotter Black Box Theater featuring reimagined American hits across decades; directed and arranged by Wendel Werner and performed by a mix of new and veteran AACA vocalists.
- McMinn County invites residents and businesses to enter the Patriotic Outdoor Decorating Contest by submitting photos of exterior red-white-and-blue display. The deadline is July 10, entries may be submitted via email to: [brianna@makeitnmcminn.org](mailto:brianna@makeitnmcminn.org), prize valued at \$250, and the winner will be announced on July 17.



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Athens, Tennessee

## McMinn County Arrest Reports

### July 01, 2026

**James Ingram**, 52 of Athens, charged with schedule 2 meth, Bond \$12,000.

**Cheyenne Blackwell**, 27 of Madisonville, charged with violation of probation for possession of fentanyl, Bond \$2019.45.

**Richard Crawley**, 49 of Sweetwater, charged with violation of probation for theft, and vandalism, Bond \$1,393.85.

**Joseph Comer**, 65 of Loudon, charged with driving without a license in Loudon County.

**Christopher Elmore**, 43 of Sweetwater, charged with possession of meth for resale, drug paraphernalia, driv-

ing on a suspended license, and DUI, Bond \$36,000.

**Joseph Wingate**, 38 of Etowah, charged with theft of property \$1000 to \$2500, schedule 2 meth for resale, schedule 2 fentanyl, drug paraphernalia, state violation of probation for Loudon County, unlawful possession or carry of a weapon by a convicted felon, Bond \$50,000.

**Vanessa Marchesio**, 39 of Etowah, charged with theft of property, \$1,000 to \$2,500, schedule 2 meth for resale, schedule 2 fentanyl for resale, drug paraphernalia, possession and or carry of a weapon by a convicted felon, Bond \$50,000.

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



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Athens, Tennessee

### TrueCourse People Solutions joins Athens Chamber

A ribbon cutting was celebrated recently for new Athens Area Chamber of Commerce member, TrueCourse People Solutions, located in Cleveland and surrounding area. TrueCourse People Solutions specializes in leadership transformation and organizational effectiveness. Contact Mark at 423.819.1415 for more information.



Chamber friends joining the celebration and pictured here left to right are: Stephanie Devine, Stacey Hester (Chamber Diplomat), Paul Semenoff (Chamber Diplomat), John Rodriguez (Chamber Board), Mark Kammerdiener (TrueCourse People Solutions), Brad Johnston, Lisa Rhea (Chamber Diplomat), Shannon Willis (Athens Chamber). Back: Rob Preston (Chamber President/CEO), Doug Bailey (Chamber Diplomat), Petty Officer Dustin Coombs, Wes Skinner (Chamber Diplomat/Board), Nick Alumbaugh, Lindsay Ferguson

### Waller Named Living Heritage Museum's 2025 Volunteer of the Year



The McMinn County Living Heritage Museum has honored Michael Waller as its 2025 Tom Biddle Volunteer of the Year, recognizing his dedication to coordinating two major annual fundraisers that support the museum's mission as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Waller received the award during the Museum Guild's Appreciation Party on June 25, where Guild President Terri Kratz and Executive Director Brett

King presented him with a plaque now displayed at the museum entrance.

The annual award highlights volunteers who demonstrate exceptional commitment to preserving and promoting local history. Waller's diligence and hard work throughout the year earned him the museum's highest volunteer recognition.

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