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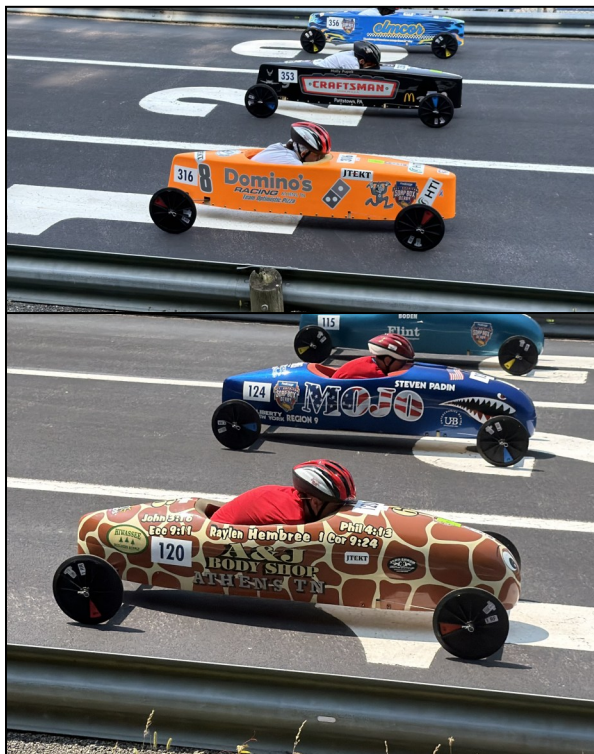
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Friday, July 17, 2026

Page 1

Athens, Tennessee

Athens Racers Take on Local Challenges; Radio Coverage Set for Saturday



The 88th annual FirstEnergy All-American Soap Box Derby race week continued Wednesday at Derby Downs in Akron, Ohio with the Local Challenge races across all three divisions.

In the Stock division, Athens champion Hannah Johnson made three runs against Molly Pupek of Pottstown, Pennsylvania and Sevin Coles of Flushing Meadows, New York. Johnson finished just behind Coles by a razor-thin margin of two thousandths of a second, while Pupek won the heat.

In Super Stock, Raylen Hembree advanced to round two after defeating Steven Padin Jr. of Liberty, New York and Boden Manning of Flint, Michigan. Although eliminated in the following round, Hembree said the extra trips down the hill gave her valuable preparation for Saturday's World Championship race.

Radio coverage of the Akron International Races is scheduled to air beginning after 10 a.m. Saturday on WYXI Radio 94.5 FM, AM 1390 and online at: LIVE365.com

Photos credit: Derek Phillips, Athens Parks and Recreation.



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Friday, July 17, 2026

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

Athens, Tennessee

Yukon Leaves Roadway After Being Cut Off on I-75; Driver of Toyota Fled Scene



A 2015 GMC Yukon left the roadway Wednesday evening after being cut off by an older model Toyota car on I-75 southbound near the 59 mile marker,

according to authorities. The incident occurred around 6:00 p.m., sending the Yukon into the wood line with both a driver and passenger inside.

Both occupants of the Yukon were evaluated by AMR personnel and released at the scene.

Witnesses reported that the driver of the Toyota stopped briefly, inspected his vehicle—which had airbags deployed—and then left the scene traveling southbound.

The Niota Fire Department responded, and THP Trooper Jake Delmonte is leading the investigation.

Photo by David Prater, Niota FD.

Community News You Can Use

- Thompson Gas Customer Appreciation Day is happening **TODAY**, July 17 beginning at 11 a.m. at 590 Congress Parkway North in Athens, featuring giveaways with no purchase necessary including a Blackstone Grill, Soaky Mountain Waterpark tickets, Captain D's and McAlister's Deli gift cards, Tidal Wave free car washes, and Downtown Beauty Lounge certificates, along with \$10 grill cylinder refills, a free lunch of hamburgers and hotdogs with all the fixings while supplies last, and live radio coverage from 11am-3pm on WYXI Radio FM-94.5 AM-1390 and online at: LIVE365.com
- The monthly meeting for the Cherokee Beekeepers Association will be on Thursday, July 23, 2026 at 7:00 P.M. The location of the meeting is the McMinn Senior Activity Center located at 205 McMinn Ave., Athens, Tn. The public is always welcome; you do not need to be a member to attend.
- The McMinn County Amateur Radio Club Hamfest will be held Saturday, July 18 from 7 a.m. to 12 p.m. at McMinn County High School, offering great parking, handicapped accessibility, and more than 40 double-long tables for vendors, plus an on-site food vendor so visitors and participants can enjoy a meal during the event.

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THIS WEEK
NEXT WEEK
EVERY WEEK

Friday, July 17, 2026

Morning Fax®...Today's News This Morning Page 3

Athens, Tennessee

Church News & Events

- **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 and Thursdays at **6:30pm** at **Spirit City Church North Etowah**.
- **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.*
- Allen Memorial United Methodist Church will welcome **former pastors** to lead worship throughout July: **Rev. Jeff Wright (July 19)**, and **Rev. Austin Meadows (July 26)**. All are invited to attend.
- Clearwater Baptist Church, 964 County Road 180, Athens, will begin a new GriefShare session on Thursday, July 23, 6–7:30 p.m. The 13-week, ongoing support group is open to the community and helps those grieving find hope, comfort, and guidance. Join anytime. More info at find.griefshare.org/ministries/213135 or by calling the church office.
- Tellico Avenue Baptist Church celebrates their homecoming on July 19 at 10:30 a.m. at 1605 Tellico Avenue in Athens, with Evangelist Ricky Burnette preaching.
- Redemption to the Nations Church will be giving out **free food boxes** on Friday, July 17 from 6:30–7:30 p.m. at 2329 Clearwater Road in Athens.
- Trinity United Methodist Church will host a one-day VBS on Saturday, July 25 from 10:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at 100 E. College Street, Athens. Open to children ages 3 and up for drop-off, with a fun beach party theme to celebrate the back-to-school season.
- Mt. Verd Baptist Church will host Vacation Bible School July 20–24 from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. nightly at 252 County Road 249, Athens, featuring lessons, crafts, and meals for all ages under the theme “*Jesus is in the House!*”. For more information, call 423-506-0599 or 423-506-6909. *See AD below for more info & a link.*

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Friday, July 17, 2026

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Athens, Tennessee

McMinn County Arrest Reports

July 15, 2026

Angel Apollinar, 37 of Athens, charged with violation of probation for possession of schedule 6 marijuana, Bond \$1,603.45

Aaron Walker, 34, of Etowah, charged with violation of probation for criminal impersonation, Bond \$1,784.40

Michael Derrick, 64 of Englewood, charged with unlawful carry or possession of a weapon by a convicted felon, Bond \$12,000.

Daniel Schooley, 40 of Athens, charged with DUI, simple possession of schedule 1 mushrooms, implied consent law, and violation of an interlock device.

Crystal Presley, 49 of Englewood, charged with state violation of probation for burglary.

Harrell Santiago, 40 of Athens, charged with driving without a license, and running a stop sign.

Joel Vandenberg, 53 of Athens, charged with driving without a license.

Lonnie Cody, 48 of Johnson City, charged with state violation of probation for theft of property \$2,500 to \$10,000.

Jessica Gambrill, 33 of Graysville, Tennessee, charged with violation of probation in Hamilton County.

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



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Friday, July 17, 2026

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Athens, Tennessee

Driver Rescued After Altima Crashes Into Creek Along Highway 11



A 2012 Nissan Altima traveling south on Highway 11 near the 1800 block in Niota crashed into a creek late Wednesday morning, according to first responders. The incident hap-

pened around 10:30 a.m. when the car left the roadway and came to rest on top of a fire hydrant and gas line, requiring a rescue to reach the 38-year-old female driver.

She was evaluated by AMR personnel and released at the scene.

The vehicle had to be lifted out of the creek using a boom operated by Benton's Wrecker Service and Athens Collision. Niota Fire Department and the McMinn County Sheriff's Office responded, and THP Trooper Chandler Lamar is leading the investigation.

Photos by David Prater, Niota Fire Department.

Obituaries

David Blaine Wright, 74, originally of Kingsport, passed away on Monday, July 13. A chemical engineer by profession, David had a special love for British motorcars and turned his hobby into a business opening Minor Classics Restorations. He was a founding member of the First UMC String Band. He will be laid to rest at Hiwassee Memorial Gardens in Charleston, TN. A celebration of life will be held at 3 p.m. on Sunday, July 26 at First United Methodist Church of Cleveland. To honor David's passion for vintage vehicles, the family welcomes friends to drive their antique cars. The family will receive friends from 2 - 3 p.m., prior to the service. [Decatur Funeral Home & Cremation Services](#) is honored to serve the Wright family.

Donald Melton, 78, of Athens, passed away on Tuesday, July 14. Donald dedicated twelve years of his life to military service with the United States Army, including during the Vietnam conflict. Family will receive friends Monday, July 20 at First Baptist Church, Athens from 11 am until 1 pm, with the funeral service at 1 pm, then proceed to McMinn Memory Gardens for the 2 pm committal service. [Good Samaritan Funeral Home](#) is in charge of arrangements.



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