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**Wednesday, September 09, 2026**

**Page 1**

**Athens, Tennessee**

## 24th Annual Pumpkintown Scheduled for Saturday, October 10



Historic downtown Athens and McMinn County Tennessee along with Friendly City Festivals are busy preparing for one of East Tennessee's favorite fall festivals – Pumpkintown: A Festival of history, harvest and heritage on Saturday, October 10th.

Scheduled from 10:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m., this will be the 24th annual event celebrating the rich cultural history of East Tennessee by highlighting Native American culture, local history and displaying elements of times past that are unique and interesting for all ages.

Pumpkintown is among the area's premier fall festivals and is one of the largest annually attended events with over 28,000 in attendance last year. The day-long celebration brings to life the rich cultural history and heritage of the county and is named after a former McMinn County settlement.

If you were to try to locate Pumpkintown today, you'd find yourself somewhere on Mayfield Dairy Farms about two miles North of downtown Athens and still within city limits. It's not certain when Pumpkintown began or who founded it. It is known that around 1820, a postmaster was named. Hugh Kelso, one of the first postmasters of McMinn County, distributed mail arriving by stagecoach. The county itself was a newborn formed in 1819 and named after Joseph McMinn who governed Tennessee at the time.

Pumpkintown was once described as a "home for transients and ne'er-do-wells" and it is surmised the

name came from the native crop grown on the premises.

Legend would have us believe that Pumpkintown was considered to be the actual site for what would become the City of Athens but that didn't quite happen. After much discussion and dissent, the permanent location of the county seat was located mid-point in the county on donated land, and the little pioneer settlement was eventually absorbed into Athens.

Friendly City Festival committee members expect the event will continue to provide a variety of events for all ages to enjoy. Old favorites will be returning including the Scott Crisp Memorial PowWow, the infamous Mutt Strutt and Pet Costume Contest sponsored by McMinn Regional Humane Society, the 42nd Annual McMinn County Living Heritage Museum Quilt Show, Mayfield Farm Corn Maze, 300 arts, crafts, info and food booths along with local shopping. There will be plenty of childrens' activities throughout the venue as well including a petting zoo, pony rides, inflatables, dinosaurs and lots of interactive vendors for all ages.

This year the festival will host the unveiling of "McMinn County Answers the Call" mural sponsored by the Patriot Memorial Project at the corner of Washington and Jackson Streets. The festival will also feature live entertainment on three stages throughout the day.

Pumpkintown is a free to the public production by Friendly City Festivals, a 501©3 subsidiary of Willsonthropic, Inc. made possible by the following sponsors: The City of Athens Tourism Fund, McMinn County Tourism Board, Madison Avenue Pharmacy, Tennessee Overhill Association, Tennessee Arts Commission, DENSO, VEC Customer Shares, Citizens National Bank of Sevier County, Simmons National Bank, Simmons Private Wealth, Mayfield Dairy Farms, Valley Oil, Starr Regional Medical Center, Kona Ice, WarrenJackson CPAs, Athens Kiwanis Club, Athens Insurance, Pendletons Playground, Let's Bounce Rentals, Smile More Orthodontics, The Retirement Guys, REMAX Freedom Realty, KARM stores and River Valley Health.

For more information, please contact Meredith Willson at 423/887-3544 or by email: [meredithw2009@comcast.net](mailto:meredithw2009@comcast.net). Website: [www.friendlycityfestivals.com](http://www.friendlycityfestivals.com)

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**Wednesday, September 09, 2026** Morning Fax®...Today's News This Morning Page 2 **Athens, Tennessee**

### Driver Injured After Rollover on County Road 360



A GMC Acadia crash left a 25-year-old woman with injuries Tuesday afternoon after the vehicle left the roadway and flipped in the 200 block of County Road 360 in Niota

around 2 p.m.

The driver declined EMS transport and was taken for treatment by private vehicle. Niota Fire, Athens Volunteer Fire, AMR, and the McMinn County Sheriff's Office responded. THP Trooper Jaylon Skipper is leading the investigation. *Source: David Prater, Niota Rural FD*

### Driver Hospitalized After Rollover Crash on I-75

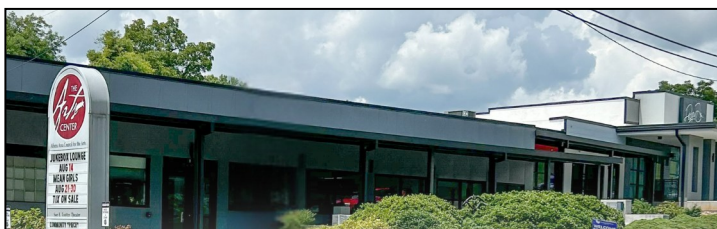


A BMW rollover crash early Saturday morning left a 20-year-old man injured after his vehicle struck the back of a semi truck on

northbound I-75 near the 56-mile marker around 7 a.m. on Sept. 5. The impact sent the BMW into the median, where it flipped several times.

The driver, the only occupant, was transported by EMS to a local hospital. Niota, North McMinn, and Athens Rural Fire Departments, along with AMR, responded to the scene. THP Trooper Preston Meadows is leading the investigation.

*Photos by David Prater, Niota Rural FD*

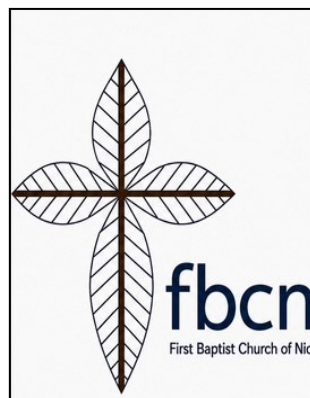


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Wednesday, September 09, 2026 Morning Fax®...Today's News This Morning Page 3 Athens, Tennessee

## McMinn County Arrest Reports

September 07, 2026

**Justin Smallen**, 39, of Niota, charged with violation of an order of protection. Bond \$3,000.

**Ashley Richeson**, 37, of Decatur, charged with schedule 2 meth, and drug paraphernalia. Bond \$8,000.

**Paul Peck**, 39, of Sweetwater, charged with casual exchange and possession of meth for resale, schedule 2 fentanyl for resale, simple possession casual exchange of schedule 3, and drug paraphernalia. Bond \$120,000.

**Andy Tran**, 31, of Athens, charged with disorderly conduct. Bond \$1,500.

**Christopher Cook**, 50, of Athens, charged with failure to appear, simple possession casual exchange of Schedule 6, and drug paraphernalia. Bond \$4,000.

**Lawrence Bowers**, 48 of Etowah, charged with aggravated assault, and domestic simple assault. Bond \$20,000.

**Jason Wittenmeyer**, 49, of Philadelphia, charged with violation of probation for driving on a suspended license. Bond \$610.

**Franklin Gomez**, 33, charged with DUI, driving without a license, and open container law.

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

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Wednesday, September 09, 2026 Morning Fax®...Today's News This Morning Page 4 Athens, Tennessee

## Obituaries

**Carla Sue Presswood Shifflett**, 71, of Athens, passed away on Monday, September 7. She was the secretary for the family-owned M&J Cabinets and retired after 35 years from Life Care Center. Visitation will be from 5:00-7:00 PM on Wednesday, September 9. Graveside services will be held at 2:00 PM on Thursday, September 10 at McMinn Memory Gardens. [Ziegler Funeral Home](#) has been entrusted with the care of Carla Sue Presswood Shifflett.

**Marcus Dylan Jolley**, 31, of Decatur, passed away on Sunday, September 06. Marcus was known for his passion for gaming, riding motorcycles, photography, and his love for music, both listening and playing. His adventurous spirit and creativity will be fondly remembered by all who knew him and was loved by all who knew him. A funeral service will be held at 7 p.m. on Thursday, September 10 in the Chapel of Decatur Funeral Home Home & Cremation Service. The family will receive friends from 5 p.m. - 7 p.m., prior to the service. [Decatur Funeral Home Home & Cremation Service](#) is honored to serve the Jolley family.

**Richard Allen Hubbard**, 69, passed away on Monday, September 7. Allen was a proud member of Meigs Lodge #213 F.&A.M. and the Chattanooga Carpenters Local #74. His favorite things to do were woodworking and traveling. He was baptized on July 2025. Most of all, Allen loved his family and put them first before anything. A graveside service will be held at 2 p.m., on Wednesday, September 9 in the Beta Cemetery. [Decatur Funeral Home & Cremation Services](#) is honored to serve the Hubbard family.

**Kenneth Alan Stokes**, 73, of Etowah, passed away on Saturday, September 5. Kenneth began welding at just 17 years old and went on to become a certified welder, working in a profession he truly enjoyed for more than 50 years. There are no formal services planned at this time. [Companion Funeral & Cremation Service of Athens, TN](#), and the Cody family are honored to assist the Stokes family during this difficult time.

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