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TVFCU Opens Applications for 10th Idea Leap Grant Competition

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IDEA LEAP GRANT

APPLICATION PERIOD:
September 25, 2026 at 9 a.m. ET -
October 26, 2026 at 5 p.m. ET

10TH IDEA LEAP GRANT

Tennessee Valley Federal Credit Union has opened applications for its 10th annual Idea Leap Grant Competition, offering a total of \$300,000 in funding to small businesses across its 17-county service area.

In recognition of the program's milestone year, TVFCU has increased the top grant award in each region to \$50,000. Grants ranging from \$10,000 to \$50,000 will be awarded through separate competitions in the Chattanooga, Ocoee and Northwest Georgia regions.

Eligible businesses must be for-profit companies with between two and 25 employees, annual revenue of \$2.5 million or less, and at least 12 months of operating history. Applicants must also be located within TVFCU's service area and may only apply in the region where their business primarily operates.

Applications opened Sept. 25 and will remain available through Oct. 26 at 5 p.m. ET. Information on eligibility requirements, competition rules and application details is available at: www.tvfcu.com/business/idea-leap/grant/

The Idea Leap Grant Initiative was launched as an extension of TVFCU's Idea Leap Loan program, which was established in 2016 to provide funding opportunities for emerging businesses. Through the grant program, TVFCU reinvests proceeds from Idea Leap loans back into local communities to support small business growth.

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Tuesday, September 29, 2026 Morning Fax®...Today's News This Morning Page 2 Athens, Tennessee

Etowah Rural FD Receives Opioid Grant Funding for Emergency Equipment



The Etowah Rural Fire Department has received \$14,334 in opioid settlement grant funding to purchase critical emergency response equipment. The grant was awarded through McMinn County's Opioid Abatement Grant Program, which is funded by proceeds from opioid lawsuit settlements. An Opioid Abatement Advisory Council reviews funding requests and submits recommendations to the McMinn County Commission for final approval. Funding provided to the Etowah Rural Fire Department was used to purchase four automated external defibrillators (AEDs), eight medical bags and two Stokes baskets. One of the Stokes baskets can also be utilized by the department's Swift Water Rescue Unit when paired with a flotation device.

Photo by Brittany Hancock, Etowah Rural FD

Traffic Delays Expected as Signal Project Begins on Old Riceville Road

Motorists traveling along Old Riceville Road in Athens should expect traffic delays beginning Oct. 5 as construction crews install a new traffic signal at the intersection of Old Riceville Road and West Madison Avenue. The project is expected to continue through the end of the year.

According to the City of Athens Public Works Department, the work will affect the intersections of Old Riceville Road at West Madison Avenue and Old Riceville Road at Rocky Mount Road. During portions of the construction, trucks with trailers will be prohibited from using Old Riceville Road between West Madison Avenue and the railroad tracks. Intermittent lane closures affecting all vehicles are also expected on select days.

City officials are encouraging drivers to use alternate routes, including the Dennis Street overpass, and to use caution in the work zone. Motorists should allow extra travel time due to potential delays.

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Tuesday, September 29, 2026 Morning Fax®...Today's News This Morning Page 3 Athens, Tennessee

Morganton Pilot Identified in Fatal Murray County Plane Crash



The pilot killed in a small plane crash in Murray County (Georgia) has been identified as Dean Dale Worthingstun of Morganton, Georgia.

Worthingstun was an orthopedic hand surgeon with Georgia Foothills Hand Surgery, according to the Union County Chamber of Commerce.

Murray County Sheriff Jimmy Davenport described the incident as both "tragic" and "unfortunate" as investigators continue working to determine what caused the crash.

The wreckage was discovered Saturday when a man bush-hogging a field on Brown Bridge Road found the downed aircraft and alerted authorities. Deputies responded to the scene just before noon and located Worthingstun deceased inside the single-engine plane.

Officials said the aircraft had departed from Athens, Tennessee, and was scheduled to land at Dalton Municipal Airport, located only a few miles from the crash site. Authorities have not determined when the plane went down.

A photograph from the scene showed extensive damage to the front of the aircraft.

The Federal Aviation Administration and the National Transportation Safety Board are investigating the circumstances surrounding the crash. Deputies removed the pilot's body after receiving clearance from federal investigators.

Source: [Local 3 News](#)



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Tuesday, September 29, 2026 Morning Fax®...Today's News This Morning Page 4 Athens, Tennessee

McMinn County Arrest Reports

September 27, 2026

Johnny Kidder, 56, of Sweetwater, charged with violation of probation for driving on a suspended license.

Charlotte Womack, 42 of Ten Mile, charged with violation of an order of protection, restraining order.

Joshua Howard, 40, of Athens, charged with casual exchange, possession of meth, and drug paraphernalia.

Roxanne Moses, 60, of Athens, charged with casual exchange, possession of meth, and drug paraphernalia.

Inyi Chavez, 35, of Cleveland, charged with violation of parole for Bradley County.

Fabian Garcia, 21, of Athens charged with DUI, and possession of a handgun while under the influence. Bond \$2,000.

Those accused are considered innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

Information gathered using public sources.

Starr Regional Earns Zero Harm Award for Patient Safety

Starr Regional Medical Center has been recognized by the Tennessee Hospital Association with a 2025 Zero Harm Award for achieving zero healthcare-associated infections in multiple categories.

The hospital earned the distinction for preventing catheter-associated urinary tract infections in its intensive care unit, as well as preventing central line-associated bloodstream infections and MRSA infections hospital-wide.

The annual award honors Tennessee hospitals that demonstrate a strong commitment to patient safety and infection prevention. This year, 100 hospitals received Zero Harm Awards, recognizing efforts to provide safer, higher-quality care for patients.

Hospital officials credited the achievement to the dedication of physicians, nurses and staff members working together to maintain high standards of patient safety.

Obituaries

James E. Moore, 90 of Riceville passed away on September 27, 2026 at his residence. A native of the "Nobs" of Englewood and resident of Riceville. He was a member of Valley Road Baptist and was a former employee of the McMinn County Highway Department where he worked as a heavy machine operator. He was an avid hunter. Funeral services will be 7:00 PM Tuesday, September 29, 2026 in the chapel of Laycock-Hobbs Funeral Home with Rev. Chris Everhart and Rev. Chris Crowder officiating. Graveside services will be 2:00 PM Wednesday, September 30, 2026 at Valley Road Cemetery. The family will receive friends from 5-7 PM prior to the service at the funeral home. [Laycock Hobbs Funeral Home](#) of Athens is in charge of arrangements.

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